



TAX BANKERS NOT BEDROOMS!



Dave Carr

While people struggling to survive on low incomes are being hammered by pay cuts, bedroom tax, cuts in council tax support and other benefits, Tory Chancellor George Osborne recently slashed the top rate of income tax for himself and his millionaire chums.

In fact fat cats in the UK's top 100 companies have seen their 'fees' rise by 14% from last year, compared with average workers' 1.9% pay rise, lower than the rate of inflation. Earnings of non-executive chairs of top companies now average almost £400,000. Of course that figure doesn't include lucrative share options and 'gold-plated' pension schemes.

People living in social housing could face eviction and homelessness due to rents arrears caused by the government's bedroom tax. Yet Osborne, while talking tough

about making the corporate fat cats pay their share of taxes in this age of austerity, has also seen fit to slash the rate of corporation tax down to a paltry 20%. In the 1980s the rate was around 50%.

Not that the likes of Amazon, Starbucks, Google and numerous other mega-companies pay any or much tax anyway – despite raking in billions of pounds in sales and making vast profits.

Many tax avoiding companies are also enjoying highly profitable government infrastructure contracts. Any government that has any sense of social justice would cancel these contracts, but not this government.

Now it has been revealed that the big accountancy firms (who earned more than £2 billion last year) not only exploit legal loopholes to help their corporate clients avoid paying tax but they are also employed by the government to write the tax laws. Talk about putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank!

Since the onset of the banking crisis and the capitalist recession both Labour and Con-Dem governments have spent nearly one trillion pounds of our money to bail out this rotten system. This money, instead of underwriting the profits of the 'banksters' and corporate fat cats, could have been invested in jobs, social housing, services and decent living standards for millions of cash-strapped people.

It's clear that working class people have to stand together to resist austerity. We have to push the trade unions into organising a 24-hour general strike as a first step in this fightback.

What we need is not a bedroom tax nor any other government attack but a 'boardroom tax' on big business, along with other radical measures, to make the super-rich pay for their crisis. Better still, let's take into public ownership the big corporations and use the profits and resources to create a socialist society.

How to fight the bedroom tax – see page 5

Capitalist parties rejected: Time for a new mass workers' party

The results of the county council election on 2 May marked a new low for all three major parties in Britain. For the first time ever not one of them got 30% or more of the vote, Labour scored 29%, the Tories 25% and the Liberal Democrats a dismal 14%. This is yet another illustration of the hollowing out of the base of support of all the major capitalist parties.

As austerity continues to bite, the coalition parties are becoming increasingly unpopular. Labour, the 'official opposition', is not turning anger at the Con-Dems into support for itself. The county council elections are not the most favourable terrain for Labour, but its performance – only taking control of two councils – was poor.

Even in the parliamentary byelection in South Shields, which has been a Labour stronghold since 1935, Labour's majority halved compared to the 2010 general election. No wonder – the Labour candidate, Emma Lewell-Buck, was a local Labour councillor that had unwaveringly defended the closure of day care centres for the elderly and disabled, along with other cuts in local services.

Labour implemented pro-rich, anti-working class policies in government. The deregulation of the City of London, begun under Thatcher, continued apace under New Labour. Now in opposition Labour is continuing to trail behind the Tories; refusing to promise to reverse the Con-Dems' vicious austerity policies. The inevitable result is that – while many workers will reluctantly vote Labour to try and defeat the

government – there is no enthusiasm for Labour's 'austerity-lite' – or not so lite.

Disillusionment

At this stage, the most common response to profound disillusionment with all the major parties is to stay at home and not vote at all. However, in last Thursday's elections a substantial minority, 23% of those who voted, showed their anger by voting for Ukip. Ukip voters include many disillusioned Tories, but also a section of working class ex-Labour voters, as is indicated by the 5,988 people who voted Ukip in South Shields.

The Guardian quotes David Bell, a South Shields voter who helped push the party to second place: "I was very disappointed that Labour made no effort whatsoever to stand up for ordinary working people's rights... But I've found a party now that represents some of the views that I would like."

Ukip poses as the party 'for the little man and woman', brushing over the fact that its leader Nigel Farage is the son of a stockbroker who used to be a commodities trader himself. Ukip's treasurer, Stuart Wheeler, is a multimillionaire old Etonian who lives in a Jacobean castle. And Ukip's current income tax policy is for a 'flat rate tax' where everyone – from a cleaner to a commodities trader – would pay exactly the same tax.

Ukip is a right-wing nationalist populist party that offers no way forward for the working class. It poses as being against corruption and yet

has lined up Neil Hamilton – who was forced out of parliament in the face of public disgust because he accepted brown envelopes full of cash from Mohammed al Fayed – to head its list for the European elections! Nonetheless, on 2 May 2013 a section of working class voters used Ukip as a stick with which to beat the government.

Ukip's vote in this election has been aided by the enormous amount of publicity the party received. Despite not having a single MP, in the four years until the end of 2012 Nigel Farage was on Question Time eleven times, more than any other politician except Lib Dem Vince Cable. Farage was also given a platform on the programme the week before the election – virtually promoted as the opposition.

There has been a semi-conscious policy by the capitalist class to encourage votes for Ukip as a 'safe' outlet for voters' anger, as compared to the far-right racists of the British National Party (BNP) and, in particular, to try and prevent the development of a mass workers' party with a socialist programme. Whether Ukip continues to be promoted by the capitalist media, and also whether it can make further electoral breakthroughs, remains to be seen.

Socialist response needed

It is already clear, however, that Ukip's vote has deepened the crisis in all of the major capitalist parties, particularly in the Tory party. After Ukip's vote in the Eastleigh bye-

lection the Tories responded by increasing their anti-Europe, and particularly anti-immigration, rhetoric. The same is likely to happen again now. The Tories are consciously using workers' fears about the consequences of increased immigration in order to justify attacks on universal access to essential services and benefits.

The workers' movement needs to warn that this is the thin end of the wedge; and the result will be the destruction of public services that are vital for all workers. Labour, however, is once again echoing Tory propaganda rather than standing up to this blatant attempt to set one worker against another.

The need to build a new mass party of the working class has never been more urgent. That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is beginning to lay the foundations for the creation of a powerful electoral voice for working class people. TUSC brings together trade unionists, including the transport workers' union the RMT, and socialists, including the Socialist Party.

TUSC stood in 120 seats in the county council elections, more than the left have been able to contest in this round of elections in living memory. It also stood a candidate for mayor of Doncaster, receiving a creditable 1,916 votes. This vote, along with the 750 votes received by an independent socialist in the South Shields byelection, give a glimpse of the possibilities to begin to win electoral support for a socialist alternative to endless austerity.

1,900 votes for TUSC in Ed Miliband's back yard

Doncaster Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate Mary Jackson received 1,916 votes in the town's mayoral election, finishing sixth out of ten with 3.1%. In pro-cuts Labour leader Ed Miliband's back yard, for every ten Labour first preference votes there was a vote for an anti-cuts, socialist candidate.

Mary's election campaign, which also beat the Lib Dems by 800 votes, was backed by the Doncaster branch of the RMT trade union, a Prison Officers' Association branch secretary and the local Unison council branch secretary. Mary spoke to the Socialist about her campaign.

"It was an excellent result for TUSC. We ran a very vocal campaign, 20,000 leaflets delivered by hand, six public meetings and four anti-bedroom tax groups set up.

The media tried to ignore TUSC. It took a lot of lobbying to get TUSC to be acknowledged on TV as standing in Doncaster.

We had a brief entry on the council election report website but they took the word 'Socialist' out of the name on the full list of candidates on election day – they had me listed as Trade Unionists Against Cuts!

We used my mobile number, Facebook page and email address so we could have a dialogue with people. This went out to the whole electorate, almost 224,000 people, in the mayoral booklet.

Right up until election day, I was receiving calls for my opinion on issues from the local bus service, the arts, unemployment, young people to traveller sites (certainly not a complete list). To each we gave the socialist approach, putting the interests of working class people first, and how it could be achieved despite the constraints of local



Mary Jackson photo A Hill

government and Con-Dem cuts.

I think everyone who contacted us decided to support TUSC because socialism is the only sensible answer to the economic crisis that is currently being paid for by the majority.

Almost 2,000 votes is very creditable particularly because the Labour Party message on the street used the scare tactic of 'if you vote TUSC you

will let the right-wing present mayor back in'.

It has laid a marker for the future here, we shall now go on the offensive and campaign on the streets for the new Labour mayor and Labour council to stop the bedroom tax and cuts to council tax benefit, build houses, employ workers and create apprenticeships.

Watch this space!"

Southampton: Rebel councillors support socialist byelection candidate

Keith Morrell and Don Thomas
Southampton Councillors Against
The Cuts

We are giving our full backing to Woolston resident and local campaigner Sue Atkins, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the upcoming Woolston byelection.

Sue wants the city council to protect local services and jobs by refusing to make cuts in spending and demanding back from the government the money it has taken away from Southampton.

Our city desperately needs more affordable housing, more jobs, improved public transport and support for our young people. The government's austerity programme is eating away at the public services so important to Southampton's citizens.

The courageous fightback by Southampton's council staff to resist the attack by the previous Conservative administration on their pay and conditions led directly to Labour's victory in the May 2012 elections, with a mandate from the people of Southampton to protect local public services and jobs.

But within weeks of the election we were told by the leadership of the Labour Group, without any prior discussion, that the popular Oaklands Swimming Pool in our ward of Coxford was to be closed down, despite Labour's election campaign promise to keep the pool open.

Our refusal to break this election pledge and vote for the pool's closure resulted in our suspension from the Labour Group. But we resolved to continue campaigning to save the pool, and to challenge the idea that there was no alternative to making draconian cuts, by forming a new Group on the City Council: 'Labour Councillors Against The Cuts'.

On the very same day we made the announcement we were kicked out of the Labour party.

We have given our full support to all those fighting to maintain their local public services: youth workers, play centre users, library users, and others.

City councillors have been democratically elected by their communities to represent them and are not simply the government's local enforcers.

We believe that it is possible to mobilise popular mass support across the city behind a campaign to demand from the government the money it has taken away from us.

Electing Sue Atkins as the voice of Woolston residents would dramatically reinforce the growing city-wide campaign to defend public services and jobs.

**TUSC Woolston byelection
launch rally**
Saturday 18 May, 2pm
St Mark's Institute
37a Victoria Road, Woolston
Southampton SO19 9DY

One in five borrow to buy food



Food prices have risen much faster than wages

Five million families in Britain are struggling to pay for food and are reaching “breaking point” according to a ‘Which?’ survey. One in five surveyed had to borrow money to meet food costs, a third of these had borrowed from family members. Unsurprisingly the poorest are the worst affected – mainly households with an annual income under £21,000. Many are using credit cards, overdrafts or savings.

Incomes fall

Real incomes have fallen to the level of a decade ago as prices have risen much faster than wages, which are frozen for many workers. Combined with the devastating attacks on benefits, working class people struggling for food is the inevitable outcome. 83% of teachers report seeing children hungry at school.

Without action the problem will only get worse. More than 50% said that they would be cutting back on food costs in the next few months. Food prices took a very small dip in April but this does nothing to counteract the hugely above inflation price rises over the course of the economic crisis. Meanwhile MPs, who each get paid at least £65,738, continue to enjoy subsidised food in parliament, at a public expense of £5.8 million a year. We keep hearing about banks being back to making huge profits. The luxury goods market is one of the only ones to have avoided the recession. The wealth that exists in society is more than enough to provide plentiful, nutritious food for all – it’s the least we should be able to expect. But capitalism means that food producers prioritise their profits. Even be-

fore the current economic crisis billions went hungry around the world. We need food production planned democratically by the working class majority. And we need benefits and

£5.8m
tax-payer subsidy to food in parliament

wages that are enough to live on. As a first step in a movement to fight for these things, the TUC must call a 24-hour general strike against austerity and its devastating effects on our lives. **See page 11 for food banks feature**

Big business threatens bees

Pete Mason

The Con-Dem government has been accused of bowing to the agro-chemical industry, supporting bad science, and threatening food production around the world. Prime Minister David Cameron, ‘life patron’ of the Oxfordshire Beekeepers’ Association - but now apparently dismissed from that position - led his government to vote against a ban on a group of pesticides called neonicotinoids which are suspected of killing bees in huge numbers. Bees, which pollinate 71 out of the 100 most common crops, providing 90% of food in 146 countries, are facing a massive decline in numbers. Six species of bumblebees have declined by 80% and most species are declining, while 35 British bee species are considered to be at risk of extinction.

Big business

By far the worst culprits are neonicotinoids, developed originally by the oil company Shell, which have been identified as causing colony collapse disorder - the complete destruction of bee colonies. Big business is playing its usual hand against science – just like the dishonest campaign waged by the tobacco industry against the over-

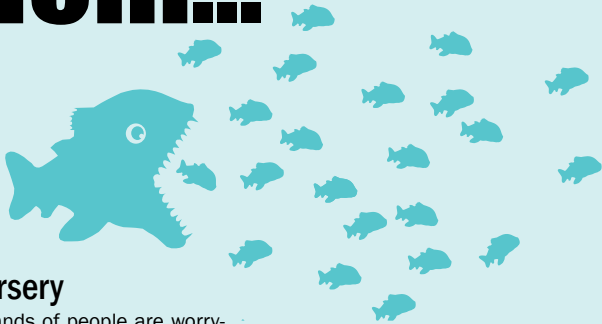


Neonicotinoids can cause the complete destruction of bee colonies

whelming scientific evidence that cigarette smoking causes cancer. Claims by the government’s Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), that the scientific evidence against neonicotinoids is inconclusive, are backed up by grand sounding research institutes set up by the pesticides industry to confuse the issue. This Machiavellian nonsense is familiar to climate change scientists battling against oil company-backed fake climate change sceptics. The European Food Safety Authority has stated that neonicoti-

noids pose an unacceptably high risk to bees, and that the industry-sponsored science upon which regulatory agencies’ claims of safety have relied on may be flawed. The US government’s mis-named Environment Protection Agency is being sued by beekeepers for failing to ban the pesticide. Friends of the Earth said: “It’s very clear that some of the large farming interests and chemical companies have been lobbying very hard.” In reality, they are pushing at an open door with this big-business government.

Them...



Hotel nursery

When thousands of people are worrying about paying the bedroom tax, the Grosvenor House hotel in London has shown the way forward for the better off family. They’ve just done up a suite into a children’s nursery, created to coincide with the birth of the Royal baby. It has hand-made furniture and a £1,400 dolls house made to look like the outside of the hotel, among other things. The owner of the design company responsible for it cooed: “Going away to a hotel with a new baby can be such a pain, but every issue has been taken care of so visitors to London can arrive without a care in the word.” So true. It’s £2,230 a night. An adjoining suite for the nanny is only another £1,100 a night.

Average Bob

Poor, hardworking, vilified Bob Diamond. The former boss of Barclays, who caused uproar with his £2.7 million proposed bonus in 2012, months before he quit, has told the New York Times that he never worked for money and that his wealth was the result of his hard work. He claims he doesn’t have flash cars and only drives an old Jeep. I suppose when he’s not at his London home a Jeep would be the best way to travel between his New York penthouse and holiday homes in Nantucket and Beaver Creek...

Up in smoke

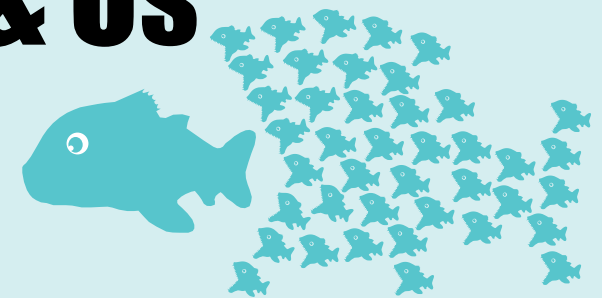
One government proposal that isn’t in the Queen’s speech is the introduction of plain cigarette packets. The removal of branding from cigarette packets is to make them less

attractive and help prevent the uptake of a health damaging habit. This measure has recently been introduced in Australia. However, after intense lobbying by Imperial Tobacco, BAT, Philip Morris International and Japan Tobacco International - who ‘warned’ David Cameron of significant job losses in the UK - the government has scrapped its proposal. This is despite plain packaging being supported by the government’s own health advisor. However, it has since emerged that an aide to the PM, Lynton Crosby, runs a PR and lobbying firm whose clients have included cigarette giants. ‘Big baccy’ clearly fears the impact on their profits if they lost such a powerful marketing tool as branding.

Hunger strike

Around 100 of the 166 detainees in Guantánamo bay are on hunger strike. The Economist gives a glimpse of the horrific force-feeding process: “This can cause gagging and bleeding in a compliant patient, and is a lot nastier when done against his will. It takes up to two hours, during which time an uncooperative prisoner must be restrained to stop him pulling out the tube.” In November 2008 Barack Obama, elected on a wave of optimism and hope, wrote an executive order to close the prison camp. But some inmates have now been incarcerated there for eleven years without ever having been charged. Only seven individuals have been convicted. All of those convictions are being challenged, two have been overturned and some of those remaining could still be in jeopardy. Shut it now!

...& Us



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



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What we saw

Teachers demand action

Martin Powell-Davies
Member of the NUT executive

Education secretary Michael Gove's announcement that he plans to attack our holidays and conditions, on top of his attacks on pay, have angered teachers right across the country.

In the North-West, those attacks will only encourage an even stronger response to the call for joint NUT/NASUWT regional strike action on 27 June.

Over 500 teachers packed into rallies in Liverpool and Manchester on 27 April. Reps left inspired and even more determined to bring out every school on strike.

In London, according to the calendar of action agreed at NUT conference, teachers will not be called out on strike until the Autumn. But national executive members for both Inner and Outer London agreed to propose to this month's regional

council that we confirm plans for a London NUT march and rally after school on 27 June and to encourage leafleting on public stalls, particularly on Saturday 8 June.

This is to explain to parents why Gove's attacks are a danger to children's education.

Our calendar of regional and national strike action continues next term. I understand it is likely that London teachers will take regional action alongside others in October. Teachers in other parts of the country may also strike in September. These regional strikes should build to a joint national strike in November - and action beyond that.

A Lewisham NUT general meeting proposed that the NUT call on other TUC unions to join with us in coordinated national strike action on that day - a demand that I fully support. Joint strike action across teaching and non-teaching unions can really help to pile the pressure on government to pull back from its



NUT members demand united action against attacks photo Paul Mattsson

continued programme of cuts and privatisation.

For more see: <http://electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk/>

Sacked tubeworkers protest



The 33 sacked tubeworkers, previously employed by Trainpeople, who were sacked when London Underground (LU) ended the contract a year early, continued their protest outside Edgware Road tube station on 3 May. The workers, backed by their union RMT, are campaigning to be re-employed on proper LU contracts. See www.socialistparty.org.uk for details of hardship fund photo Paul Mattsson

Trade unions recommend more cuts in Neath/Port Talbot

After lengthy discussions the trade unions Unison, GMB, Unite and Ucat in Neath/Port Talbot council have announced an agreement which they claim will protect jobs while allowing the Labour council to make cuts due to the £21 million financial gap in its funding.

Unison and the other trade union members will have a feeling of déjà vu as they vote on the proposals. A couple of years ago employees suffered a 2% pay cut across the board advocated by the leadership of the Unison branch.

Socialist Party Unison members warned at the time that this lack of fight from the Unison branch committee would not protect jobs in the long term and would only embolden the Labour council to demand

more cuts in the future.

The agreement will mean pay cuts, a draconian sickness absence policy and overtime and unsocial hours cuts. But there are no promises about protecting jobs. Employees are doing all the giving and the employer is doing all the taking.

We have only seen a small fraction of local authority cuts in Wales thus far.

So how will branches like Neath/Port Talbot Unison oppose swingeing cuts when they have worked in partnership with the Labour council to cut their members' pay and terms and conditions?

Clearly the vote their members should be having is a vote of no confidence in their branch leadership.

A Unison member

Usdaw ADM - fightback begins

A delegate

If you attended this year's shopworkers' union Usdaw annual delegate meeting (ADM) you would have been forgiven for thinking you'd walked into a Labour rally. With leader, Ed Miliband, addressing the conference, the union's leadership were keen to keep down dissent. They continually reiterated their line that workers' lives could only be improved by the election of Labour in 2015. General secretary John Hannett admitted: "I can't defeat the government".

Yet if Miliband's speech was anything to go by, workers will be offered very little. While speaking 'left', Miliband only proposed two minor positive concrete measures. One was repealing the Health and Social Care Act, although the previous Labour government's measures meant that most of the Con-Dems' destruction of the NHS could be carried out without it.

The other measure was re-introducing the ten pence tax rate by introducing a mansion tax to pay for it, although many workers will have had their taxable incomes reduced by recent measures increas-

ing tax-free personal allowance.

The only other concrete proposal Miliband had was to reduce energy prices - but instead of re-nationalising the utilities, he proposed introducing even more of a market in energy!

Despite this, Socialist Party members and others were able to move some propositions at ADM which attempted to put forward a fighting programme on crucial issues facing union members such as housing and pay. The union has now committed to launch a campaign for a living wage for all retail workers, including pressing for this as a minimum in all pay negotiations.

To make this a reality, the bureaucracy will have to feel the hot breath of the membership on their backs. Socialist Party members, who also produce the Activist bulletin, had the biggest delegation for a number of years, selling 60 copies of the Socialist and recruiting new members. We will be contributing to the battle for a fighting union for retail and distribution workers.

To subscribe to the Activist, please email usdawactivist@gmail.com

CWU supports 24-hour general strike

CWU conference delegates

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) conference on 21 and 22 April was held against the backdrop of the constant threat of wholesale postal privatisation and unprecedented attacks, union busting and sackings of CWU members across Royal Mail, BT and the communications industry.

It ended with a rousing debate which resulted in an overwhelming vote for the CWU to continue to support the call for a 24-hour general strike and for the national executive to do all in its power to prepare CWU members for the action.

In the CWU's two industrial conferences, the mood for action continued. At the letters conference postal workers voted unanimously for a full ballot of Royal Mail workers on a boycott of private mail companies' final-mile mail.

The ballot will run from 22 May to 18 June, with the result being announced on 19 June.

There was a triumphant mood among delegates afterwards with a

determined attitude to 'up the ante' against privatisation.

In the telecoms and financial services conference, the main debate focused on 'performance management' within BT.

Socialist Party members and other lefts demanded an immediate programme of action but the executive wanted to 'give BT one last chance'. They submitted an emergency motion that was eventually carried by a small majority after a card vote.

Socialist Party members Judy Griffiths and Clive Walder gave rip-roaring speeches in the debate, tearing into BT and their bullying tactics. They demanded that the union leadership stop giving last chances and start an immediate programme of industrial action.

The struggle for a fighting left leadership within the CWU still remains. But it is also clear that there is a new emerging layer of younger members who hold no illusions in Labour and what this system can provide for working people.

For a longer version see www.socialistparty.org.uk

In brief

Airport strike

Cleaners at Manchester Airport took solid strike action on 3 May against a drastic worsening of their conditions. Members of the Unite union mounted ten-hour pickets outside each of the three terminals. Their employer, Mitie, is trying to halve their current lunchbreak. Cleaners are already working harder than ever before, after 27 redundancies last month were not replaced with new staff. A cut in lunchbreak is a cut in paid hours, equating to a loss of £69.50 every month. On top of that, a £20 attendance bonus which staff could try to win in the past, is being withdrawn. Mitie took over the contract from Initial. Initial staff were on better terms and conditions. Now Mitie wants to drive down everyone's pay and conditions. The strike sends a solid signal to Mitie that any further attacks will be met with action.

Blacklisting

Unite the union held a very successful protest outside the Scottish Parliament on 2 May. About 50 activists gathered in a vibrant, colourful and vocal expression of their disgust at blacklisting. Later, activists entered the public gallery to listen to the debate about blacklisting which was led by Neil Findlay MSP of the Labour Campaign for Socialism group, who is also a member of Unite. The SNP refused to commit to the call for the Scottish Parliament to launch its own enquiry into blacklisting, saying it was 'open minded' to the suggestion.

Luke Ivory

East Manchester

Unite members protested at the Manchester City construction site. The main company on the job, BAM, has been involved in the illegal blacklisting of construction workers including many Unite members. The protest featured the giant inflatable rat, symbolising the employers' orchestrated "ratting" on trade unionists. This and many other protests are the first part of Unite's new "leverage strategy" against blacklisting companies such as CrossRail in London. There will be many more.

Hugh Caffrey

Northern Rail

Rail union RMT members working for Northern rail are being balloted for strike action over casualisation and the use of agencies. In spite of negotiations, Northern Rail are continuing to use firms like Trainpeople and G4S while the RMT's policy is for those workers to be brought in-house. The ballot started on 7 May.

Crown PO

Communication Workers Union members in Crown post offices were on strike for the fourth time on 7 May, over office closures and pay. The proposed closures and franchising of 20% of the Crown network affects 800 jobs and the workers have had no pay rise since April 2011. The pay offer which has been made is conditional on accepting 76 office closures and the second and third payments are attached to unachievable targets. The workers voted nine to one to strike and 4,000 staff are likely to have been involved in this latest round of action.



The 7th annual conference of the NSSN
29 June 2013 11am - 5pm in the Camden Centre, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE
Speakers include union general secretaries
Mark Serwotka, PCS, Billy Hayes, CWU and Steve Gillan, POA
info@shopstewards.net • PO Box 54498, London E10 9DE
www.shopstewards.net

Enough is enough – fight the bedroom tax

We won't pay for the bankers' crisis!



The Con-Dems' 'under occupancy' penalty has been dubbed the bedroom tax. It's a good name but not the most accurate. More precise would be 'yet another way the poorest people pay for the crisis caused by the spivs and speculators' – but that would be a bit long.

It would also make it difficult to differentiate between the bedroom tax and all the other ways the 99% is called on to bail out the super-rich 1%: universal credit; benefit cap; public sector pay freeze; university fee hike; and so on.

Since 1 April around 660,000 households in the social renting sector, two-thirds of them including disabled people, have been told they will lose 14% of their housing benefit (HB) because they have a spare room. In reality there has been a means test to establish which families have the least ability to pay – and then the bedroom tax, averaging £728 a year, is levied on them.

Knowing that the bedroom tax is unfair is not enough – we have to stop it! For people affected by the bedroom tax this attack is being seen as the straw that threatens to break the camel's back. Until now they may not have been involved in the fight against the cuts – but now they are getting stuck in! Socialist Party members, many using their experience of fighting Thatcher's hated poll tax, are helping to organise meetings and protests.

Estate meetings

At estate meetings, often outdoor and informal, the key slogans are worked out – the essence of which is 'can't pay and won't move.' This is because people literally can't pay and don't want to move away from family and friends, jobs and schools.

Tactics are also being worked out. Some of those threatened with the tax have appealed the claim. Any way that frustrates the process is useful in



Fighting for a bedroom tax-free future needs to start early
photo Jim Halfpenny

the battle to make the bedroom tax unworkable.

Those who have been in receipt of 100% housing benefit should not sign up to direct debits – this will allow councils to take money whether you can afford it or not. For future appeals tenants should keep a record of the amounts they have been unable to pay.

Tory ministers try to fob people off telling individuals in difficult situations they can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment. But if all those affected who receive Disability Living Allowance were successful in a DHP application they would get

just £2.09 a week each. But mass applications will also gum up the works helping to make the tax unworkable.

Faced with mounting anger, councils bewail the difficult situations they face. A few have made limited pledges. North Ayrshire and Edinburgh for example have said they won't evict those who fall into arrears because of the bedroom tax for a year – where households are trying their best to pay.

Nottingham city council has re-designated 1,000 two-bed properties as one-beds. Some housing associations have also taken this route – although many are moving into market renting and other commercial activities. Campaigners demand every council finds ways to not implement this crushing attack.

People could be forgiven for thinking Labour might be opposed to the bedroom tax. But are they? Labour leader Ed Miliband would not commit to reversing the bedroom tax when asked during the election campaign.

Fight all cuts

But the bedroom tax can be beaten. Demanding councils refuse to implement the tax will be a good start but can't be relied on. Anti-bedroom tax campaigns should discuss standing candidates against those who help enforce this tax.

If it comes to it, evictions can be stopped – but lists of names and numbers should be collected from the off to build a resistance army should bailiffs approach.

Fighting the bedroom tax has also got to be linked to building a huge movement in opposition to the Con-Dems and all their policies. That will require a new mass political voice, as Labour proves itself a determined defender of cuts and capitalism.

The case for a 24-hour general strike should also be made at every bedroom tax meeting to unite the mass opposition to cuts in action and reveal the power of the working class. For many moving into struggle the idea of linking this battle to the need to change society along socialist lines will increasingly be understood.

'IT'S NOT JUST ROOMS, IT'S OUR HOMES!'

Leeds

Since the 1,000-strong demonstration on 20 April, the 'Hands Off Our Homes' campaign against the bedroom tax has been developing. People have been getting in touch about establishing local groups in areas across Leeds which we haven't yet reached.

The campaign has been distributing model letters to residents, which they can use to challenge their benefit decision, with the bedroom tax withdrawn altogether for some people. That the council is taking a month to reply shows how unworkable the bedroom tax is.

But the council is desperate to collect the bedroom tax, hiring extra housing officers to chase the money and harass residents. Many people fear losing their home and are desperately paying, but this will be impossible as other bills mount up.

In Little London and Woodhouse, the campaign has lobbied local councillors, asking them to support a policy of no evictions and to not implement the bedroom tax which they are currently doing.

In Armley, the local group is organising street meetings and is also preparing to make an appeal to Labour, ahead of a District Labour Party meeting where a motion from a union branch that supports the campaign will be heard. Every local group should be putting pressure on Labour councillors in their area. If Labour councils implement this Con-Dem attack, anti-bedroom tax campaigns should prepare to stand candidates against them.

For more info about the campaign, visit handsoffourhomes.org.uk

Iain Dalton

Activist in Hands off our Homes

Coventry

Around 65 people packed out the first Coventry Against the Bedroom Tax public meeting in Henley on 30 April to discuss how to fight this vicious attack. Former Labour MP and Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist spoke passionately attacking the government's welfare reforms and asking the council to support tenants.

Local residents shared stories of how the bedroom tax is affecting them – one couple wanted to downsize their house, but as they were in rent arrears the Whitefriars housing association wouldn't let them move!

Others spoke of the need to organise within their communities to defend people against evictions.

The mood of the meeting was passionate and determined to fight back – as one woman said: "it's not just rooms, it's our homes!"

Dan Crowter

Middleton and Rochdale

A packed meeting launched Middleton and Rochdale Against the Bedroom Tax on Thursday 2 May. The meeting was initiated by North Manchester Socialist Party following our tremendously successful campaign stall a couple of weeks ago, followed up with the distribution of leaflets across the Langley estate.

Salford Against Cuts secretary Kevin

Corran explained how the bedroom tax can be smashed. The 23 people there heard Kevin outline how solid community organisation, mass non-compliance, organised defence of tenants and linking up campaigns can prepare a victory against this hated policy.

Kevin also explained how a socialist solution to the housing crisis would be to build one million affordable council homes, funded by nationalising the banking system and putting the resources to good use. Debate from the floor ranged across the political situation to the involvement of more young people, to the legal struggle, to lobbying the Labour councillors, to the detail of developing a local campaign.

Young activists are drawing up a leaflet to be distributed at colleges, and other campaigners will plan lobbying the councillors, getting more local media attention, and contacting unions for support. In the future, links will be built with campaigns across Greater Manchester.

Get involved – www.facebook.com/events/559089884113017; email middleton.rochdale.nbt@gmail.com or ring 07591 400 666.

Hugh Caffrey

Braunstone, Leicester

The Braunstone population has a history of resistance. This is a community that occupied the then new Leicester Ring Road after their worst fears had been realised – a child had been killed. Top county hall officials told an angry meeting that it takes months if not years

to change the speed limit on a road. After a week of blockading the road the speed limit was changed from 50mph to 30mph until an underpass could be built!

This is a community that convincingly saw off the bailiffs during the Anti-Poll Tax Campaign. After seeing the reception waiting for them they turned tail and never came back to collect poll tax debts.

Now this community has set up two anti-bedroom unions. Cameron, watch out!

Leicester byelection

Council houses are our homes. This point was driven home by a lady who was recently phoned by the council and asked if she would like to move. She has lived in her house for 28 years and raised her children there. She has lived on the estate for 58 years as she was born there. Why should she move? It's her home.

It is for people like this that Tessa Warrington is standing for TUSC in the Leicester city council Abbey ward byelection on 9 May.

Labour currently has 52 out of 54 of the city's councillors, yet it is implementing the Con-Dem cuts – including the bedroom tax.

Tessa is the only candidate that will oppose all cuts.

Both by Heather Rawling
Leicester Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation steering group

Bedroom tax

- Under occupancy is a myth. These households use their rooms: for young people to study; for people with life-disrupting conditions, to store equipment, host carers or sleep alone; for children to visit separated parents; among other needs.
- Even where people try to cooperate there is nowhere for them to move to: the National Housing Federation (NHF) estimates that for the 180,000 households 'under-occupying' two-bedroom properties there is a shortfall of 95,000 one-beds. That's before the 970,000 people on the waiting list in England are taken into consideration.
- February's house-building figures showed an 11% decrease in the number of new homes started in the last year, down to just 98,280. The government's professed aim is to get people into work – a mass council house-building programme would provide much needed jobs.
- The Con-Dems are using the bedroom tax as a way to undermine the idea of social housing. They claim the bedroom tax is a way to reduce the £23 billion housing benefit bill. But if, as the NHF estimates, the 95,000 households denied one-beds in the social sector seek accommodation in the private sector, benefit claims could increase by £143 million a year. There is only one sure-fire way to cut the HB bill – cap rents.

Universal Credit:

- Replaces six benefits including: income support, HB, income-based JSA and ESA, child tax credits and working tax credit
- Pilot is underway with aim of rolling it out nationally from October
- Households with incomes of less than £247 a week and single-parent families will be hardest hit
- £4bn to implement with estimated 'savings' of £2bn a year

Benefit cap:

- Combined income from most existing benefits (including HB but not working tax credit) is capped at £500 a week or £350 for single-adult households
- Affected households can expect to lose an average of £93 a week
- Aim to spread it across UK by October from four pilot boroughs
- The government claims it will 'save' £110m by 2014/15

Benefit uprating cap:

- While food bills rose 2.9% on last year a 1% uprating cap has been imposed for three years
- By 2015/16 9.6m households will be losing £156 a year

For leaflets, posters and advice on campaigning in your area call 020 8988 8777

The Palestinian struggle

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, recently discussed with Arab League officials on how they can revive the Israel-Palestine peace process. However, as Israeli governments have progressively increased the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, eating into the Palestinian territories, more and more people are questioning whether a viable Palestinian state next to Israel is now possible. Some have shifted from the idea of a 'two states' solution to join those who call for one state. But is a struggle for one state viable? Judy Beishon of the Socialist Party executive committee addresses the crucial question: what programme should socialists adopt today on the route towards a Palestinian state and the ending of this protracted national conflict?

How can a state be realised?

Over four million Palestinians across the West Bank and Gaza suffer acutely under Israeli occupation, with very high levels of poverty and unemployment. They are subjected to regular brutal incursions and missiles from the Israeli army to kill, maim and intimidate; over 6,500 Palestinians have been killed during the last 12 years. Desperate for relief from these nightmare conditions, Palestinians were inspired by the 2011 dramatic overthrow of Arab dictators in Egypt and Tunisia and hoped that their own struggle could be revived and advanced.

Demonstrations have taken place over the last two years across the West Bank, in solidarity with protests and hunger strikes by Palestinian prisoners and against austerity measures. These included a 48-hour strike of Palestinian Authority (PA) employees in December to demand unpaid wages. Tear gas and batons have been used by the PA security forces against protesters.

Much of the anger at PA-imposed austerity is directed at the occupation. Nevertheless it's also directed at Palestinian leaders who collaborate with the occupation. Among the demands raised has been the ousting of PA prime minister Salam Fayyad and president Mahmoud Abbas, who have abjectly failed to advance the Palestinians' interests.

Capitalist failure

The struggles against austerity and for national liberation are closely linked, because neither can be fully successful without a fundamental change in society. Capitalism has proved to be totally incapable of ending the conflict over land, resources, markets, etc. No capitalist strategists globally are able to come up with a solution that will deliver a genuine Palestinian state and investment into it, while also satisfying their counterparts in the Israeli ruling class.

The Israeli capitalists have multiple



reasons for preventing moves towards a genuine Palestinian state. These include not wanting a regime on their doorstep with arms and a claim on the land taken by Israel; the added competition they would face for natural resources, foreign investment and markets; the inspiration it would be to Israeli Palestinians to struggle for equality and for Palestinian refugees in surrounding countries to return; the inspiration to working class and middle class Israeli Jews and Palestinians to struggle for better living standards; and not least the inevitable outrage of the ardent far-right Jewish settlers and their supporters who regard 'Judea and Samaria' (most of the West Bank) as for Jews only.

This doesn't mean that in between pe-

riodical bouts of increased bloodshed in the conflict the Israeli leaders won't shift and manoeuvre under enormous pressure internationally or in forced response to an inevitable future mass Palestinian struggle – or to pre-empt one. Entering sometimes into 'peace' negotiations and occasionally feeling compelled to make some concessions have been a byproduct of the conflict to one degree or another.

The Israeli elite is highly alarmed about Israel's international isolation and events in the region (the nuclear developments in Iran, change of regime in Egypt, civil war in Syria, anti-austerity protests in Jordan, etc) and many within it want to bolster their position and try to prevent a new Palestinian uprising by embarking on a new peace process.

However, at present they differ widely on what overtures to make, some wanting none while others argue strenuously for renewed talks with the PA. Former Shin Bet security agency chief Yaakov Perry bluntly stated in January: 'Are we on the edge of a third intifada? It is a real possibility because of the amount of despair coupled with the [political] stalemate' (Haaretz 13.1.13).

The recently formed post-election coalition government, still led by Netanyahu, has given former foreign minister Tzipi Livni the task of restarting peace talks. How farcical are Livni's 'peace' credentials, considering that she was foreign minister during the 2008/09 brutal onslaught on Gaza. Nevertheless, she may feel compelled to preside over some concessions; and in the longer run a deal could possibly go as far as the granting of a Palestinian 'state' of some type while capitalism remains. But it would be a state with its wings firmly clipped militarily and economically and wouldn't satisfy the Palestinians' yearning for genuine self-determination and raised living standards.

Mass struggle needed

The CWI in Israel-Palestine (Maavak Sotzyalisti/Nidal Eshteraki) and internationally – including the Socialist Party in England and Wales – calls for the Palestinians to build democratically organised mass action. This is crucial for advancing their struggle and for much-needed defence, with the right to arms, against the brutal operations launched by the Israeli military and the murderous assaults by some of the rabid right-wing Jewish settlers.

Palestinians in the territories rose up as a mass in the first intifada that began in 1987, which led to the concession of the Oslo peace process and setting up of the PA in 1994. When that process not only failed to deliver significant im-

provements and a state but in many ways made the Palestinians' situation worse, the second intifada eventually broke out, a movement that mistakenly moved away from mass action.

Instead it was based on individuals and organisations resorting in desperation to undemocratically decided suicide and other attacks on Israeli civilians and other targets. Attacks on civilians are counter-productive, mainly because they strongly propel Israeli Jews away from supporting the Palestinian cause and into the arms of the propaganda of their right-wing government. Their indiscriminate nature leads to a pointless loss of life of Israelis – including children and Israeli Palestinians.

Mass struggles could be organised against many targets, including the separation wall, blockades, land seizures, house demolitions and other aspects of the occupation. The Israeli ruling class greatly fears a determined, unified and escalating movement of Palestinians, as it wouldn't be able to quell it by military means.

Along with struggles against the occupation, Palestinians in the territories face the necessary task of removing their pro-capitalist political leaders, whether Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad or other, as they are incapable of delivering decent living standards and national liberation. Grassroots committees need to be built, drawn from local communities, workplaces, colleges, etc, coordinating to build a new mass workers' party capable of challenging and removing capitalism.

One state

While doggedly resisting the development of a genuine Palestinian state alongside Israel, a one-state 'greater Israel' or 'Palestine' encompassing the Israeli population and all the Palestinians in the territories and giving the latter equal rights to other Israelis, is not seriously contemplated by most Israeli strategists. It would mean Israeli Jews becoming a minority – by around 2020 – in the state they have built as their own, originally as a Jewish safe-haven following the Holocaust.

The overall dilemma for the Israeli capitalists – the national conflict and demographic trend – has led them to use military repression and their settlement and infrastructure programme to progressively confine the Palestinians to poverty ridden enclaves.

Other outrageous 'solutions' have been regularly discussed, especially by the most right wing politicians, such as handing repression of the Gazans to an Arab elite, annexation of the West Bank, or driving sections of the Palestinians out of Israel-Palestine altogether.

Contrary to their ruling class, Israeli Jewish workers have nothing to gain from the national conflict – a seemingly



Palestinians across the West Bank and Gaza suffer acutely under Israeli occupation

endless 'bloody trap' for them. A majority genuinely support the idea of a Palestinian state next to Israel, at least to end the constant insecurity they face. But the idea of 'one state' in which they would become a minority is an anathema to most of them too. They fear being discriminated against in the country they or their forebears went to as a Jewish homeland and made sacrifices for; ie the tables being turned on the present situation where it is the Palestinians inside and outside Israel who are discriminated against.

Demonstrating this stance, a survey last October showed that 69% of Israelis would oppose giving Palestinians the right to vote if Israel were to annex the West Bank.

Decades of conflict together with Zionist propaganda in Israel and blind-alley strategies by the Palestinian leaders have created huge obstacles to mutual trust, which will only be fully removed when imperialist interference and capitalism in the region no longer exist. In the meantime, socialists in Israel-Palestine and internationally, rather than dismissing the fears of Israeli workers – and of Palestinians too – about 'one state', as some do, should help to expose the class division in Israel – the diametrically opposed interests of the working class and capitalist class. The Israeli working class has the potential power – through its key role in production – to bring the Israeli economy to a halt and Israeli capitalism to its knees.

Many Marxists opposed the creation of Israel in what was then the British imperialist controlled Mandate for Palestine, knowing that it would uproot Palestinians and fail to be a safe solution for Jews. But now that Israel and a fervent Israeli national consciousness have been established, that reality cannot be dismissed.

An Israeli state with six million Jewish people and one of the strongest military

apparatuses in the world, including nuclear weapons, can't be defeated militarily by the Palestinians or the Arab states' armed forces to impose a one-state solution or removal of Israel.

Route to a solution

While generally having significantly better living standards than Israeli Palestinians, there is widespread poverty and financial insecurity in the Israeli Jewish population. Waves of neoliberal attacks from Israeli governments have rained down, cutting services, jobs, rights and benefits.

As a result, there have been many protests and strikes by Israeli workers – Jewish and Palestinian – on social and economic issues. Workplace disputes have included struggles against privatisation, for unpaid wages and against low pay. In 2011 there was a vast 'tent city' movement against the shortage and high costs of housing and against 'social injustice' in general. This included demonstrations of unprecedented size for Israel, involving hundreds of thousands of people.

It is through the further development of such movements – next time armed with a programme for change and a call for a new mass party of Israeli workers – that the Israeli ruling class with all its brutality (not unique to the Israeli capitalists!) will be challenged and eventually removed.

Two states

As well as being able to adopt a programme for a democratic socialist society to serve the interests of ordinary Is-



raelis, including the Palestinian minority, an Israeli new mass workers' party will be able to demand the end of occupation and exploitation of the Palestinian territories. As part of this programme, the idea of two states would meet with much greater acceptance than one state by a majority of workers on both sides of the national divide. This is not to deny that there is presently widespread scepticism on whether it can be realised, following the many failed and destructive attempts by capitalist politicians.

But few Israeli Jewish workers want to live with a permanent state of conflict, so a combination of developments would be likely to bring most of them closer to directly aiding the Palestinians' cause, including their own struggles against Is-

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raeli big business, a supportive approach to their struggles from workers in the territories and internationally, witnessing new mass struggles of the Palestinians and workers in other countries, and an end to indiscriminate killings of Israeli civilians by Palestinians.

Socialism

The adoption of a socialist programme on both sides of the divide would lay the basis for negotiations to be possible that would be spearheaded by democratically elected Palestinian and Israeli workers' representatives capable of solving the issues that have been unsolvable under capitalism.

Socialist societies can't be built on the basis of compulsion of either nationality; it is important to uphold an equal right of self-determination. It will be up to the workers and poor in the region to democratically decide the exact form of a settlement – the borders, access to water and other resources, how Jerusalem would encompass two capitals, the resourcing and organising of return of refugees, guarantees for the protection of minority rights, and other vital issues.

The 'facts on the ground' imposed by the capitalist classes can be changed on the basis of democratic debate, consensus and guaranteed rights. Contrary to the massive obstacles under capitalism, it will be possible to arrive at agreement because improved housing and raised living standards could be given to all as a result of the increased productive forces unleashed under socialism – through public ownership and a planned economy, with the ending of unemployment.

The proposing of two states – a socialist Palestine and a socialist Israel – is the route towards socialism that is most willingly listened to today, given the present situation. At any stage along the way or afterwards, on the basis of increased trust and confidence in mutual gains, living together in one state, as part of a socialist confederation of the Middle East, can be democratically decided.

Either way, through socialism the Middle East would be on course to be transformed from being the scene of one of the most protracted and complex national questions in the world, to one in which different nationalities can live harmoniously alongside each other, enriching lives economically, socially and culturally.

This feature is part of our occasional series of articles that explains the Socialist Party's approach on various questions of debate in the labour movement. Are there other issues you would like to see addressed? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

For the full version of this article see: www.socialistparty.org.uk
For additional reading, see: **Israel: "There is a future" – of cuts, racism and resistance** <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/6228>
Occupied West Bank: Protests against high prices and the Oslo Accords <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/5951>

News of the Middle East is currently dominated by the horror unfolding in Syria. A future issue of the Socialist will carry analysis of that conflict

'Two states' origin

Laying the basis for decades of bloody conflict, UN resolution 181 of 1947 was voted through to partition the Mandate of Palestine to create an Israeli state. Israel then seized more territory and ultimately complete control of the Palestinian areas through the 1948-49 and 1967 wars. Today nearly five million Palestinians are UN-registered refugees as a result of these wars, over three million of them in surrounding countries.

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) decided in 1988 to abandon its unrealised demand for a Palestinian state with the pre-partition borders and instead called for a two state solution – Palestine next to Israel. This was based on Israel having the territory it had before the six-day 1967 war, which would leave the Palestinians with the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem as a capital, amounting to 22% of pre-1948 Palestine.

In the 1990s the PLO leaders went further and voted to accept Israel's existence. Even the right-wing Islamist Hamas leaders, outside the PLO, while refusing to recognise Israel have at times referred to possible long term negotiated co-existence.

Building the anti-cuts alternative

Clive Heemskerk
TUSC national election agent

One hundred and twenty candidates, standing in 117 wards in 20 councils, contested the English local elections on 2 May under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) umbrella. TUSC also stood in the Doncaster mayoral contest and two candidates in council byelections held on the same day.

It was mainly county councils – last polled in 2009 – up for election, overwhelmingly Conservative – although Cumbria had been run by a Labour-Conservative coalition! The Tories had 1,477 (62%) of the seats to Labour’s 273 going into the 2 May poll.

It would be totally wrong, however, to caricature this year’s elections as mostly rural ‘shire contests’.

County councils administer a range of services – from education, adult social care and youth provision, to libraries, highways and emergency services – that cover a population of 24 million, control combined budgets of £43 billion, and employ 750,000 workers (including school staff).

County council cuts
Workers living and using public services in these local authority areas are being hit by austerity politics.

But the councils up this year are not the same terrain as the metropolitan boroughs that will be facing elections next year.

It will be harder then for Labour

candidates to present themselves as ‘anti-cuts’ in Labour-controlled councils.

The total vote for all TUSC candidates on 2 May was 10,182. Where TUSC contested council seats, for every person who voted TUSC (8,188) there were 14 people who voted Labour (119,204).

This ratio has widened compared to the 2011 and 2012 local elections – although, in a metropolitan council comparator, the ratio narrowed in Bristol compared to the 2011 local elections in that city (the last council elections there) and last November’s Bristol mayoral poll.

Across the local council wards and county council divisions that TUSC contested, the ratio of Green voters (19,652) to TUSC voters (8,188) was two and a half. For the Liberal Democrats, defending 353 seats, the ratio of their voters (43,521) to TUSC voters was five to one.

The Labour Party put up more candidates this year – 2,174, in 92% of the seats – than in recent previous local elections. In 2011, for example, still recovering from the 2010 general election defeat, Labour fielded candidates for just 72% of the seats available and eight TUSC candidates did not face a Labour opponent.

This year every TUSC candidate faced a Labour candidate, in a context where Labour controlled just one council before 2 May.

Next year though, nearly half of the councils up for election are Labour controlled – and they will have just set their budgets for a fourth year of implementing the Con-Dem cuts. The Trade Unionist and Social-



TUSC is the largest national electoral group which opposes all cuts photo London SP

ist Coalition’s fight to present an anti-austerity alternative to the establishment parties will move into a different gear.

See www.tusc.org.uk for a fuller version of this report and all the TUSC election results, including a ‘league table’ presenting the TUSC results in percentage order and, separately, the results of all parties’ candidates for each seat contested by TUSC.

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

TUSC local election reports

Derbyshire
Standing for the first time in Bolsover North, TUSC gained 9.4% of the vote. Our candidate, former miner Pete Neeve, is very well known in both Creswell and Whitwell, two of the ex-mining villages making up this electoral division. Many people told him and his campaigners how glad they were that there was alternative to Labour they could vote for. TUSC also stood in three of the other five divisions within Bolsover District. Wherever we spoke to people on the doorstep or in the street, we got a very good reaction to our ideas. There was little enthusiasm for Labour in this Labour stronghold in the former Derbyshire coalfield, although many appreciate help that MP Dennis Skinner has given them over the years. There is also widespread cynicism towards all political parties.

Jon Dale

Leicestershire
I stood as a TUSC candidate for Loughborough East, Leicestershire and was pleasantly surprised to receive 170 votes (7.7%), placing me third in front of the Lib Dems. Over 1,000 TUSC national leaflets were distributed in the ward, and the local paper ran an article on all the candidates. My personal reason for standing was to

highlight the lack of representation for vulnerable people.

The reaction I received from people was mostly positive and supportive, many genuinely concerned about the impact of the cuts on society. I experienced bullying from a couple of Labour men, which is very sad and I think shows how far removed Labour have become from working class issues.

Lauren Foster

Bristol
TUSC candidates stood in 14 seats for Bristol city council, offering an alternative to the cuts policies of the main parties. Our campaign got an excellent response on the street and on the doorstep. We focussed on important issues such as defending council services and opposing the bedroom tax. Other parties, none of which have an alternative to meekly passing on Tory austerity, were reduced to competing on who was toughest on dog mess!

We explained how anti-cuts councillors would make a massive difference in the city but since Bristol elected a mayor individual councillors have virtually no power. This, and a widespread disgust at the main parties, was reflected in a significantly decreased turnout. The biggest winners on the day were La-

bour and the Greens as people tried to kick out councillors from the government parties, especially the Lib Dems. Despite this, our percentage of the vote improved in where we’d stood before, including to over 9% in our best seat.

Some of the Greens’ popularity was due to a pledge to protect public services, despite them voting for £35 million of cuts this year. They won’t be able to get away with this hypocrisy as easily next time.

Standing has helped us build the profile of TUSC in Bristol and helped us uncover new people to help with the ongoing campaigning to defend the living standards of ordinary people.

Tom Baldwin

Essex
David Brown and Paul Lenihan from Harlow Socialist Party stood in the Essex County Council elections on a ‘no-cuts’ platform. The time from nominations to the election seemed to go by very fast. We ran stalls in the town centre, and leafleted when and where possible. We also joined Harlow welfare rights and anti-bedroom tax campaigners.

Dave Brown received an almost hostile response from the Unison regional branch when he asked to speak about TUSC at their AGM. He was not allowed to hand out TUSC leaflets at the meeting

– although a private insurance company was! The lesson must be that we need more support from our trade unions for TUSC as, if nothing else, a few words or an article in branch newsletters could have gained us far more votes.

The end result was 270 in Harlow West for David Brown (3.5% – beating the Greens and Lib Dems) and 88 for Paul Lenihan in Harlow North (2%).

Tracey India Brown

Staffordshire
Almost 500 people voted for TUSC’s eleven candidates across Staffordshire. As well as standing in Newcastle-Under-Lyme this was the first time that TUSC candidates stood in Rugeley, Leek, Stafford and Burton-on-Trent. We spoke to thousands of people and gave out over

10,000 leaflets.

TUSC was alone in raising the need to oppose all cuts and privatisation in the fight to save Stafford hospital, which is currently in administration. Labour made significant gains but failed to win control from the Tories. The Lib Dems lost all four of their seats. The Green Party saw their vote halved from 9% in 2009 to 4.5%, despite the Sentinel local paper carrying the headline: “The Green Party bids for power”! TUSC was not mentioned once by this paper, despite standing more candidates than the Greens.

TUSC supporters across Staffordshire will continue our fight against the savage cuts, closures and privatisation programme supported by the three main parties and Ukip.

Andy Bentley

London walk: Radicals and revolutionaries of the East End
Sunday 12 May, 12.30pm
Meet at Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street E1 7QX. Ends at Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road E1 6LA
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Northern	600	176							
East Midlands	1,550	447							
South East	750	208							
London	6,100	1,404							
Southern	1,200	210							
Eastern	1,200	181							
Yorkshire	2,900	239							
England & Wales	3,700	522							
TOTAL	25,000	6,429							

Portugal: Government in disarray... Left must seize the opportunity

Goncalo Romeiro

Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI, Portugal)

The situation in Portugal is explosive. The decision of the Constitutional Court (CC) to declare four measures of the state budget illegal, amounting to a value of €1.3 billion, only confirmed what many had already said: it was an impossible budget to implement. But, the government said it had to put it forward. The Troika demanded it. Portuguese capitalists demanded it. They didn't have a Plan B.

The government appears to be breaking down. The prime minister's right hand man and minister, Miguel Relvas, has resigned, and more ministers are bound to follow his example.

The finance minister, Vitor Gaspar, feeling the end of his 'reign' drawing near, declared what could be likened to a 'state lockout' by suspending spending in all departments until further notice. This threatens every important public service with breakdown: schools without food, hospitals without medicine, etc.

Given all of these huge events, the response of the Left and the trade unions has been weak. Whereas the government 'screams', they 'whisper'. Although they demand the fall of the government more loudly, they fail to give any answer whatsoever in terms of a concrete struggle to achieve this.

After more than one million peo-

ple took to the streets on 2 March, in Portugal's biggest ever demonstration, showing the willingness of the working class and youth to fight back, the Left keep blocking the struggle and refuse to organise any mass protest or strike.

Weak government

We've seen the military demonstrate their anger in the streets already in their thousands on repeated occasions. They have also showed open solidarity with the people's protests, saying they are on their side and not the government's.

Sections of the police have also joined big demonstrations. The state machine is not stable. The government knows it doesn't have their clear support in an explosive social situation.

The mass protests and general strike at the end of last year, the 2 March demo, and now the CC's decision, has sent the government into its biggest crisis so far.

At first they said they would find an alternative only through cuts in spending but that was not enough to fill the gap. Now they say they will bring forward measures that were deemed illegal, such as the taxing of unemployment and sickness benefits, only with slight changes.

They are also trying once again to reach a "wide consensus" with the Socialist Party (PS). This is a clear attempt to get a 'national salvation' government strong enough to attack the constitution itself, but the PS is reluctant, knowing it will mean a huge loss in popularity for the com-



An anti-austerity plan should start with a 48-hour general strike

ing local and regional elections.

However, many of its leaders also point in the direction of 'consensus'. In reality, it is more a matter of time before such a broad right-wing coalition will be placed on the table, with or without elections.

The CC ruling has not been enough to stop the government and Troika coming back for more blood.

General strike

Demanding the resignation of the government and the expulsion of the Troika, as the leaders of the CGTP (trade union federation), Communist Party and Left Bloc do to their credit, is all very good. But saying it isn't enough. Calling for a big protest every now and then isn't enough either. The government is determined to stay in power at all costs, and the president supports it.

To bring down the government we need to make it unable to rule. Only the struggle in the streets, workplaces, universities and com-

munities will be able to turn these words into reality.

We need to replace the government with one of working people and youth, a plan that uses every mobilisation and concrete struggle to make the next one even stronger and wider.

After four 24-hour general strikes, that were unable to stop these policies, we need longer strike action that gives workers a perspective of how they can stop austerity. Such a plan should start with a 48-hour general strike and be linked internationally like on 14 November 2012, (in Spain for example a general strike in education is taking place on 9 May).

Such a plan would also include big demonstrations, occupations and boycotts of the fiscal robbery imposed upon working people, which the government already says will become worse with the CC's decision.

This plan of struggle must continue until the government falls,

the Troika leaves the country, and a workers' and young people's government replaces it, to implement policies in the interests of the majority. The government is at its weakest moment, give a strong enough push and it will fall.

Socialist alternative

The crisis is not a merely 'cyclical' crisis, but a structural crisis of capitalism, where the system's biggest contradictions are crudely exposed. Capitalism is unable to solve its crisis without condemning millions of people to poverty. This means that a solution to the crises must challenge the capitalist system.

The trade union and social movements have to arm themselves with a clear alternative to capitalism, ie socialism.

In Portugal, we call on the Left, particularly the Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE), to form a United Front with the trade unions and the social movements to draw up such a plan of action and a minimum programme to break with capitalism.

This programme has first of all to declare that we can't pay a debt made by speculators, and that condemns an entire nation to poverty. Nationalise the banking system under workers' and consumers' control and management, so that we can generate and deploy the funds necessary for a mass public investment plan to restore our devastated public services and create real and decent jobs for the 1.5 million unemployed.

Nationalise all the strategic sectors of the economy and run them democratically under workers' control so that the resources of the country that belong to everyone are not run in the interests of private profit, but on the real needs of society.

May Day - fighting capitalist oppression internationally

Around the world, trade unionists and socialists celebrate May Day (1 May) as a commemoration of past struggles but also to rededicate the workers' movement to fighting capitalist austerity and oppression. CWI members, often in difficult circumstances, organised and participated in May Day events around the world. Here are a few short reports.

Pakistan

This year's May Day came in the middle of the general elections campaign in the country. The turnout in the rallies, public meetings and seminars were low compared to previous years. The deteriorating security situation played a role in the low level of participation. The Pakistan People's Party failed to organise its traditional May Day rally in Lahore for the first time in 40 years.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties the Progressive Workers Federation, Trade Union Rights Campaign Pakistan and Socialist Movement Pakistan (CWI) organised and intervened in the May Day activities in more than 38 cities and towns across the country. Over 5,000 in-



May Day demo in Sindh photo Socialist Movement Pakistan

dustrial and public sector workers participated in these activities. A special issue of the Socialist newspaper was also produced.

Syed Fazal Abass Shah,
secretary general PWF, Pakistan

Nigeria

Twelve members of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM - CWI, Nigeria) were arrested at May Day rallies in Abuja, Niger, Oyo, Kaduna

and Anambra states for circulating a leaflet issued by the Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN - a new left party initiated by the DSM) on monumental corruption and pension fraud and selling the paper of DSM, Socialist Democracy, with a bold headline on the pension fund scam.

However, local and international pressure mounted by comrades and supporters forced the authorities to release the comrades.

It was an atmosphere of siege at

all the May Day events across the country with more vicious attacks on democratic rights than what existed even under the military rule. Apart from the five states where we experienced arrest, comrades were also harassed at gun point and threatened with arrest in Lagos and Osun, and chased out of the venues in Delta and Imo states.

The Jonathan government has employed strong arm attacks on democratic rights as its response to the growing criticism of its anti-poor conduct and policies as well as monumental corruption.

We commend comrades and supporters locally and internationally for their prompt intervention with protest letters, calls and text messages as well as collaborators and lawyers who helped secure the bail of some of the comrades.

Segun Sango,
general secretary DSM

Taiwan

Around 20,000 Taiwanese workers used this year's May Day to rally against austerity and cuts to the pension. Workers weaved through the central Taipei city streets, despite the cold weather and pouring rain, chanting "defend the pension!" and "stop corruption!"

A CWI contingent also marched in the demonstration.

The government stepped up its attacks on workers, pensioners, students and communities such as that in Miaoli (scene of a long and bitter struggle by textile workers last year). Fighting for an end to these attacks means fighting against capitalism.

Chris Dite, Taipei,
chinaworker.info

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

the Socialist postbag

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

Victimised for pregnancy

Employers use the economic recession as an excuse to victimise pregnant women and mothers. Last year 2,634 working parents and carers called the Working Families Charity free legal helpline.

A woman with four years' service as a cleaner called when she was seven months pregnant. Sick the previous week due to her pregnancy, she planned to go on maternity leave in two weeks' time. She was surprised to find her name was not on the rota this week and no shifts were assigned to her.

Her employer then said she had to agree to take three months of maternity leave or they would send her a P45. They asked her to email them confirming she required a P45. The caller said she did not know what a P45 was.

It is illegal to discriminate against women on the grounds of maternity, yet when employers can, they will. The Working Families Charity scored some victories in industrial tribunals but their latest report shows they're fighting against the stream as employers erode workers' rights to flexible working.

Employers will always push their luck when trade union organisation is weak. Only strong union organisation can maintain what rights we have. And the Labour Party will not do anything which might offend employers. We need a new mass party of the working class.

Derek McMillan

Stop the drones

Around 700 anti-war campaigners marched from Lincoln to RAF Waddington on 4 May to protest against drones. The national demonstration, called by groups including the Stop the War Coalition and War on Want, took place just two days after the government announced that the drones had begun to be operated from this base rather than operated from Nevada.

Nick Parker, secretary of Lincoln Trades council and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for Lincoln East, asked at the closing rally: "Why are we living under a system which can afford to spend billions of pounds on weapons of mass destruction, but cannot provide money for schools, hospitals, jobs and homes?"

"We must commit ourselves to fighting against imperialist wars for oil and gas, and also to fighting the system which causes wars; and for a peaceful socialist world organised for the millions, not the millionaires".

Peter Nagle

Politics yes – Labour no

Ballot papers went out last week to members of my union, Unite, to vote whether we should keep the union's political fund. It is legally necessary to re-ballot every ten years to retain the fund. A good leaflet - "Vote yes! Vote for a voice" explains why we need to keep the fund. For instance the High Court stopped a campaign to support public services by former local government union Nalگو because it had no political fund.

Compared to many unions Unite generally supports members. That is why the Socialist Party campaigned for the return of Len McCluskey in the recent election for general secretary.

Unite is the Labour Party's biggest donor. Yet there are few remarks about Labour in the leaflet. The first mention is: "Did you know your political fund is NOT a fund for the Labour Party?" So Unite leaders understand Labour is not



very popular with our members! Unite should help build a new mass workers' party. Why fund a party that now opposes most of our union's policies and our members' interests? Ballot papers must be in by 22 May. But don't just vote yes. Get involved and ask when we're going to overcome this obstacle to our union's progress.

Andy Beadle

Stop this drop-out

Coventry's City College saw a 10% drop in retentions in 2011-12, with just 77% completing their courses. According to the Coventry Times, college principal Paul Taylor believes government cuts had an impact on the number of students forced to drop out.

"During the last year we lost a number of young students. I can't prove it but I believe that is partly due to changes to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). It meant some students had to get a job to support their families." Education is a right, not a privilege for the elite but more and more working class young people are being denied this right to education. The NUS should be defending students by building nationwide action against EMA cuts and tuition fees. Socialist Students continues to campaign on the issues but we need a fighting National Union of Students.

Robert McArdle
Coventry

Victory for cuts campaigner

Anti-cuts campaigner, Don Macdonald, won the first step of a battle to clear his name when charges of threatening Newcastle council's Labour leader, Nick Forbes, were dropped.

Don Macdonald was arrested on 16 February. After Newcastle's big anti-cuts demonstration, he waved a banner at Forbes, saying he'd sold out the city. At ten that evening, the police knocked on his door and arrested him.

Don was offered a fixed penalty notice for threatening behaviour but refused to accept the charge as he had simply told Forbes what many people think about the £100 million cuts. This attack on the right to free speech produced a campaign of emails, letters, leaflets and public meetings calling for charges to be dropped. Don said: "This made me more determined to keep fighting the cuts."

An advice worker said: "Fixed penalty notices are increasingly used to circumnavigate the courts but people do not have to pay them and should seek advice. Action against Don for speaking out against a local big-wig aims to deter others from standing up to injustice. His bravery means that free speech won out over intimidation and bullying."

Salvar Servici

Defend Liverpool's jobs and services - then and now

My old mate Derek Hatton, interviewed in the Liverpool Daily Post, laudably defends the historic 47 councillors from 1983 to 1987, but justifies the savage cuts policy of Liverpool's present day mayor Anderson and his council.

If opposition to all cuts was right then, it's right now, particularly as today's cuts are even more savage than those demanded by Thatcher. Derek, who was deputy leader of Liverpool Labour Party, reasons that because the 1980s mass movement is absent today Anderson has no choice but to do the bidding of his Con-Dem masters.

But the absence of mass activity now is because of the lack of leadership by the council and the local authority trade unions.

If the campaigning stance of the 47 fighting councillors and the joint shop stewards' committee of the 80s was replicated today, instead of bending the knee to Tory axe-man Eric Pickles and his collaborators, we would see the kind of mass sup-



Derek Hatton (left) on a march supporting the council with Tony Mulhearn
photo Militant

port for the council from Liverpool's working people that we saw in the courageous 1980s.

In justifying Anderson's cuts policy, Derek does a disservice to all

those suffering from the most draconic cuts since the war.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool Labour party president, 1980-1985 and Liverpool 47 surcharged councillor

Liverpool council's record against 1980s austerity

In Liverpool between 1971 and 1981 87,113 or 25% of the city's jobs had disappeared. One in four was unemployed and in certain parts of the city 90% youth unemployment existed.

22,000 were on the council house waiting list, 20,000 houses needed urgent action and council house rents were Britain's highest outside London.

Between 1983 and 1987 Liverpool Labour City Council did not make one person redundant. Not one job was privatised. 1,000 jobs were saved and 1,000 additional jobs created.

10,000 people were employed on the council's Capital Programmes. 6,300 families were re-



housed from tenements, flats and maisonettes.

2,873 tenement flats were demolished along with 2,086 flats/maisonettes. 4,800 houses and bungalows were built; 7,400 houses and flats were refurbished; and 600 houses/bungalows were created by knocking down 1,315 walk-up flats.

Six new nursery classes were built and opened and £10 million was spent on school improvements. Five new sports centres were built and opened.

Compare the 1983-87 record to the current Labour council which made £141 million cuts over the past two years and will make £32 million cuts this year.

Paul Astbury

Salford - two-faced attack on mental health

Salford council still aims to 're-organise' mental health services, despite acknowledging the "strong opposition" of service users. Salford's mental health service users, the "United Service Users Committee" (USUC) have waged a massive campaign, backed by Salford Against Cuts and Salford City Union, to demand the plans are dropped.

Steve Cullen of USUC says: "We remain totally opposed to the reorganisation and will keep lobbying elected mayor Ian Stewart and the councillors. The fight is not over yet but we're seriously concerned that

some people with mental health issues will get into arrears on the bedroom tax or not understand the letters sent out.

Some people could take their own lives. One service user did so after he queried when his Drop-In centre would re-open. He was met with the response that the authorities: "don't know and hope it doesn't open again". In turn he must have thought he had been kicked out of the Drop-Ins, which he had used for some years, which was like a little community or family network.

Now Salford city council are to put community care workers' role out to

tender from April 2014. If community care workers are privatised, we fear we won't get the same level of support and some people won't get any support.

Greater Manchester West NHS and the council are also to put Drop-Ins in local community shared buildings, which many service users won't go into. Peter Connor, Assistant Mayor for Adult Social Services, made this decision. When we met him last year he told us: "they should not be closing these drop-ins, if anything they should open more of them." This shows how two-faced he really is!"



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Food banks and fighting austerity

Time to get political

Nancy Taaffe

In the last six months an extra 100,000 people have been added to the food bank queues. Attendance at food banks seems to be one of the few growth areas of the economy.

They play an important role in preventing a whole layer of people falling into absolute destitution. The volunteers and coordinators are selfless individuals who want to do good.

But I think food banks should organise those that they feed, they should get unapologetically and resolutely political. Food banks should imitate the best traditions of the soup kitchens and squatter camps of the 1930s.

They should not only feed people but inspire and organise those that they feed to join up with the wider labour movement to defeat this unnecessary austerity. This crisis is not a tsunami or hurricane, it is a man-made crisis. There is no need for such suffering, and to defeat this onslaught needs politics - I would argue, of the socialist variety.

Even though many of us are suffering, there are those doing just fine. The stock market is surging, luxury goods are flying off the shelves and in central London, multimillion-pound properties are selling like hot cakes. According to the recently published Sunday Times Rich List, the UK's 1,000 richest residents have



Nancy Taaffe (centre) photo the Socialist

a total wealth of £450 billion.

There are 88 billionaires among the UK's super-rich, including 15 individuals and families - a combined wealth of a staggering £119 billion.

Imagine if that money was invested in jobs and public services and decent council housing. Then the 350,000 people queuing at food banks could be employed, housed and fed. Surely that's not too much to ask in the 21st century?

One of the most shocking statistics has been the creation of 13

new billionaires during the economic crisis. How can it be, if 'we are all in this together', that billionaires are created as food bank queues swell?

Surely if the stock market recovers then the queues at the food banks should shrink? If big business's balance sheet goes back into credit then the banks should pay the money back that they owe the British public. Remember we gave them £500 billion in bailout money.

Morgan Stanley has repeatedly

I believe charity without politics disguises the role that victims could play in fighting back against the injustices they face

pointed out that many companies' cash balance sheets are some of the highest since 1988. Companies are sitting on literally mountains of cash.

To add insult to injury many of these companies are now employing ex-HMRC tax officers to take tax avoidance measures to the tune of billions every year - £6,000 for every man, woman and child is stolen through corporate tax avoidance.

I believe charity without politics disguises the role that victims could play in fighting back against the injustices they face. A movement that organised those receiving food parcels would be a force to reckon with. This is without counting all those at the night shelters, in the job centres and those having their benefits cut and undermined.

As a start I would like to see the TUC organise a 24-hour general strike. The TUC is still the biggest and most authoritative organisation for the working class, it represents over six million people.

For all those suffering at the moment, whether queuing up at food banks or queuing in the unemployment lines, a 24-hour general strike would fuse all the helplessness, discontent and the anger together and direct it against the people who did this to us.

I think the time is not only ripe

for this to happen, it is rotten ripe. If the labour movement doesn't step forward and organise these victims of this crisis into a united struggle against austerity then other forces will.

People who are receiving food parcels at the moment will be questioning how this happened to them. If it is not answered with class politics it could be answered with right-wing nationalism, as in Greece.

In Greece whole villages that were wiped out by the Nazi invasion during the Second World War are now voting for the fascist Golden Dawn.

The Golden Dawn built their organisation by feeding the unemployed first and then fused this service with right-wing racist propaganda.

Their organisation has gained some traction in working class communities based on the failure of the trade union leaders and social democracy to build a coherent fightback.

We can't let that happen here.

This is an extract from a guest piece on <http://thefoodbankers.wordpress.com>. Nancy is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition prospective parliamentary candidate for Walthamstow, east London, offering a working class alternative to austerity.

Greece: Challenging the Golden Dawn

On 2 May the neo-fascist Golden Dawn attempted to distribute food in Syntagma square in Athens to people holding proof of Greek nationality.

The stunt was broken up and closed down by riot police and the mayor. But as the article below shows, socialists and other activists have been

building opposition to these dangerous tactics by the far right, who mix action like this with extreme violence against the left and others.

Katerina Kleitsa
Xekinima (CWI Greece)

In the elections of June 2012, the neo-fascist party Golden Dawn (GD) got 7% of the votes and entered the Greek parliament for the first time, with 18 MPs.

GD was first formed in 1985, but activated in 1993.

Since then, their main activity has been ultra-nationalist demonstrations and attacks against immigrants, activists and people known for their anti-racist beliefs.

Official unemployment is at 26% but, in reality it is around 30-35% of the working population. Official youth unemployment is at 58% and official unemployment among women is at 30%.

The health care system is being dismantled. Undernourishment, which was non-existent three years ago, is now prevalent.

Children faint in school because they have not eaten for a couple of days or have eaten very little.

This economic crisis has allowed GD to gain support. They use hate speech against immigrants and the political system, using slogans like "Greece for the Greeks" and "foreigners out".

They have organised handouts of food and clothing to desperate people. But these are for Greeks only.

Opinion polls show that around 10% of voters are planning to vote for the GD in the next national elections.



Collected food photos Xekinima

But at the same time a significant number of people are willing to participate in anti-fascist actions.

Since September 2012, Xekinima has been building and participating in anti-fascist campaigns in local communities.

Our aim is to expose the dangers of the neo fascists' campaigns.

We want people to take action and play an active role against fascism in their neighbourhoods. We organise public meetings and discussions and events to build solidarity.

We have organised free or cheap food and 'street markets without

middlemen', where people can buy basic products cheap, directly from their producers.

In some areas there are families that receive our help of free food regularly, since they don't have any income and they can't support themselves.

We do this to provide practical help and show that the way to fight against austerity and impoverishment is by solidarity and cooperation among the working class, not through developing hate and division.

We try to explain that these actions are not enough alone to fight poverty and the rise of the GD. It is



Mobilising communities against the neo-fascists

the capitalist system's crisis which has pushed four million people below the poverty line and it's the capitalist system that allows fascist ideas to sound appealing.

For us, the fight against fascism must be accompanied by the struggle for a socialist society.

This would include:

- Fighting for the abolition of the debt and immediate cessation of its payment.
- Nationalisation of the banking system.
- Debt relief for all working class households, small businesses, small to medium-sized working farmers and for

all those who have been hit by the crisis.

- Heavy taxation on capital, the end of bank secrecy for big depositors and a massive reduction of arms expenditure.
- Nationalisation of all the strategic economic sectors and big business.
- Real democracy, with workers' control and management, across the entire economy.
- The creation of a socialist plan of production in the interests of the masses.

That's the only way to abolish inequality, poverty and suffering for the 99%.

NHS WARNING!

Privatisation puts patients at risk



Marching against health cuts in Dewsbury photo Socialist Party

Roger Shriver

BMI Healthcare runs 65 private hospitals in Britain where it is the biggest private health firm. It usually gets an easy ride from the media, but less so recently. A devastating report from the Care Quality Commission showed that failures at BMI's Mount Alvernia Hospital in Guildford, Surrey, put lives at risk.

Examples of 'chaotic and dangerous care' included a surgeon who operated without gloves in blood-stained shirtsleeves. A child whose condition was deteriorating was not seen by a paediatrician for seven hours. One patient had a nerve block pain relief on the wrong side of his body. Blood transfusions were not managed safely.

Senior nurses and other staff repeatedly told Mount Alvernia managers that patients were being put at risk but they were

ignored at the top.

The hospital did not regularly deal with very sick children, and had no guidance on it; no early warning system to alert staff to a child's deterioration; and no policy on pain management for children. Children's resuscitation equipment was broken and there was only one trained children's nurse. The report found untrained staff with limited experience.

Private health firms tend to cherry-pick what ailments they deal with and children's illnesses may not be as profitable as others. Private healthcare's preferred speciality would be diseases of the rich.

The NHS local clinical commissioning group in Guildford had been using the hospital's services but it banned local hospitals sending patients to Mount Alvernia, the first time the NHS had imposed such a block. BMI was forced to apologise even though the investigation only happened

because of concerns raised by whistleblowers.

The report shows a hospital where surgeons broke rules and refused to listen to criticism. If such revelations had come out about NHS hospital care there would, quite rightly, have been an uproar.

BMI Healthcare claims that all the issues at Mount Alvernia have now been put right and there are no comparable problems elsewhere. But BMI treats a million patients a year in 'partnership' with the NHS. As a private company, profit is the bottom line and BMI's parent company General Healthcare Group has had crisis talks over possible debt problems this year.

Despite the huge problems, there is still pressure on Britain's NHS hospitals, facing huge austerity cuts, to consider deeper links with the private sector, even takeovers.

Don't let our NHS slip into the far from tender care of the capitalist market in a severe recession! Fight the Con-Dems' attack on our hospitals.

- Kick big business out of the NHS
- All hospitals to be fully run and funded by the NHS
- Adequate staffing levels to provide good quality care for all patients. Decent pay and conditions for all staff
- Health service unions to organise industrial action to defend every part of the NHS

Defend London's NHS

All-London demonstration organised by trade unions and health campaigners. Saturday 18 May. Assemble 12 noon, Jubilee Gardens, Waterloo. March to parliament.

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!