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

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 TUSC 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 and a local Trades Council. Mary spoke to the Socialist about her campaign.

‘It was an excellent result for TUSC. We ran a very vocal campaign, 28,000 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 coverage 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 Twitter accounts so we could have a dialogue with people. This went 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, the lack of a local information point, schools and public transport. We even had people who travelled to Doncaster to discuss the issues!

I think many voters were appalled by the negative campaign that is currently being waged by the Liberal Democrats, and many felt that it was a waste of money and time.

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 Southampton.

The workers’ movement needs to warn that the government’s economic policy will let down the Right-wing present mayor of Doncaster, receiving a creditable 1,916 votes. This vote, along with the 750 votes received by a candidate for the Communist Party, opened up the possibility for a socialist candidate to win.

We have given our full support to TUSC for the upcoming Southampton by-election. Sue Atkins, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the upcoming Woolston by-election, is standing for the Trade Unionists Against Cuts.

The debate about the future of the Woolston swimming pool needs to be turned into an election campaign – a campaign to demand from the government the money it has taken away from Southampton.

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 Southampton for the Woolston swimming pool.

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 by-election.

Sue wants the city council to protect local services and jobs by refusing to continue the threat to keep the swimming pool open. 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 Southampton.

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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 ben-efits, working class people struggling for food is the inevitable out-come. 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 before the current economic crisis billions went hungry around the world. We need food production planned scientifically by the working class majority. And we need benefits and 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.

£5.8m tax-payer subsidy to food in parliament

Hunger strike

Around 500 of the 156 detainees in Guantanamo 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 unconscious 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 convic-tions are being challenged, two have been overturned and some of those remaining could still be in jeopardy. Shut it now!

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Teachers demand action

Martin Powell-Davies
Member of the NUT executive

Education secretary Michael Gove’s announcement that he plans to at-
tack car oil payments and conditions, on top of his attacks on pay, have
good-natured 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
April. Over 500 teachers packed into ral-
lies in Liverpool and Manchester on 27 April. Beps left inspired and more determined to bring out every school on strike.

In London, according to the calendar of action agreed at NUT confer-
tence, teachers will not be called to strike on Saturday, but the na-
tional executive members for both London 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, particu-
larly on Saturday 8 June.

This is to explain to parents why Gove’s attacks are a danger to chil-
dren’s education.

Our calendar of regional and na-
tional 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 coun-
try may also strike in September. These regional strikes should build to a joint national strike in Novem-
ber - or even beyond that.

A Lewisham NUT general meet-
ing 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

Trade unions recommend more cuts in Neath/Port Talbot

After lengthy discussions the trade unions Unison, GMB, Unite and Unif
in Neath/Port Talbot coun-
uncle 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 suf-
fured 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 com-
mittee 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 prom-
ises about protecting jobs. Employ-
ers are doing all the giving and the every day is doing all the taking.

We have only seen a small frac-
tion of local authority cuts in Wales that far.

So how will branches like Neath/ Port Talbot Unison oppose swing-
cuts when our friends are working in partnership with the Labour coun-
try council to cut members’ pay and terms and conditions?

Clearly the vote their members should be taking is a vote of no con-
fidence in their branch leadership.

A Unison member

NUT members demand union 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, sacked by their union RMT, are campaigning to be re-employed on proper LU contracts.

See www.socialistparty.org.uk for details of hardship fund

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

Usdaw ADM - fightback begins

A delegate

If you attended this year’s shop-
workers’ union Usdaw annual de-
egate meeting (ADM) you would have been forgiven for thinking you’d walked into a Labour rally. With leader, Ed Miliband, address-
ing the conference, the union’s leadership were keen to keep down dis-
content. They continued to repeat their line that workers’ lives could only be improved by the election of Labour in 2015. General secretary John Hannett admitted: “I can’t de-
face the government.”

Yet if Miliband’s speech was anything to go by, workers will have been 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 pre-
uious Labour government’s meas-
ures meant that most of the Con-
Drets’ destruction of the NHS could be carried out without it.

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

ing tax-free personal allowance.

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

Despite this, Socialist Party members and others were able to move to some propositions at ADM which attempted to put forward a fighting programme on crucial is-

sues facing union members such as housing and pay. The union has now committed to launch a campaign for a living wage for all retai-

ers, including pressing for this as a minimum in all pay nego-
tiations.

To make this a reality, the bu-
reaucracy will have to feel the hot breath of the membership on their backs. Socialist Party members, who also produce the Activist bul-
letin, had the biggest delegation at the letters conference on 21 and 22 April 2011. The pay offer which
continued. At the letters conference, the union’s
campaign for a living wage for all retail workers, including pressing for this as a minimum in all pay nego-
tiations. We will be con-
tributing to the battle for a fighting union for retail and distribution workers.

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

Blacklisting

Union members held a very suc-
cessful protest outside the Scottish Parliament on 2 May. About 50 activists gathered outside with a colour and vocal expression of their disgust at the situation.

Liam Macmillan, Labour MSP for the Edinburgh North and Leith constituency, entered the public gallery to listen to the debate about blacklisting which was led by Neil Findlay MSP of the Labour Campaign for Socialist group, who is also a member of Usdaw.

The SNP refused to commit to the call for justice on 2 May, but has now committed to launch its own enquiry into black-
listing, saying it was “open minded” to the suggestion.

Luke Irvin

East Manchester

Unite members gathered at the Manchester City construction site. The main company on the job, BAM, has been involved in the illegal blacklisting of construc-
tion 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 “leaver-
age strategy” against blacklisting companies such as BAM, 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 casualisa-
tion and the use of agencies. In spite of that fact, Northern Rail are continuing to use firms like Trainpeople and G4S whilst 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 on 4 May. The £20 attendance bonus which was attached to unachievable targets.

The workers voted nine to one to
continue with the ballot on 7 May, over office closures and pay. The proposed closures and loss of 250 jobs means the postal network affects 800 jobs and the worker’s pay has only increased by £69.50 every month. On top of that, a £20 attendance bonus which is given only in the past, is being withdrawn.

Mitie that any further attacks will
continue. Mitie has now committed to launch its own enquiry into black-
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Luke Ivory

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**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 rich and speculators’ - but that would be a bit long.

It would also make it difficult to describe the consequences of the bedroom tax and all the other ways the 99% is called on to bail out the super-rich 1% - 100% privatisation, 25% VAT 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 benefiting disabled people, have been involved in the fight against the bedroom tax. But now they are getting stuck - although many are moving into the private sector.

Knowing that the bedroom tax is unfair is not enough - we have to stop it! For people to stop being locked in by the bedroom tax this attack is being seen as the straw that threatens to break the camels back. Until now they may not have been involved in the fight against the cuts - but now they are getting stuck! Socialist Party members, many unoccupied houses, councillors fighting Thatcher’s hated poll tax, are helping to organise meetings and protests.

*Estate meetings* (in Salford) are about the tax, 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 by the tax have appealed the claim. Any way that frustrates the process is useful in 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 lоб people off telling individuals in difficult situations they can apply for a Discretionary Housing Allowance. But 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 meeting 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 won’t commit to reversing the bedroom tax when asked during the election campaign.

**Fighting for a bedroom tax-free future needs to start early**

Joe Harmey

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**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 their equipment; to keep alone; for children to visit separated parents; among other needs.
- If 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 in one-beds in England are taken into consideration.
- February’s house building figures showed we are building fewer new homes than in the last year down to just 98,800. The government’s professed aim to get people into work - a mass council housing programme - would provide much needed jobs.
- The Con-Dems are using the bedroom tax as a way to us 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, 95,000 households denied one-beds in the social sector seek accommodation in the private sector, benefit claims could increase by £43 million a year. There is only one sure-fire way to cut the bedroom bill - cap rents.

**Universal Credit**

- Replaces six benefits including: income support, HB, income-based ESA 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.
- £40bn to implement with estimated ‘savings’ of £2bn a year.

**Benefit cap**

- Combines three from most existing benefits (including HB but not working tax credit) is capped at £500 a week or £315 for single-adult households.
- Affected households can expect to lose an average of £393 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 paid a £110m by 2014/15.

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**Corporation tax**

- Since the 1,000-strong demonstration on 20 April, the Con-Dems’ anti-bedroom tax campaign against the bedroom tax has been developing. People have been getting organised, with trade union, local government and council 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 write into their own councils. The council has taken a month to reply to show what unworkable the bedroom tax is. But the council is desperate to keep the bedroom tax, hiring extra housing officers to chase the money and harass residents. Many are already losing their homes and are desperately paying, but this will be impossible as other bills mound up as well.

In Little London and Woodhouse, the campaign has lobbed local councilors, 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 meeting where a motion from a union branch that supports the campaign will be heard. Every local group should be getting pressure on Labour councillors in their area. If Labour councils implement this Con-Dems’ anti-bedroom tax campaign should prepare to stand candidates against them.

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

**Activist in Hands off our Homes**

**Councillors**

- And 65 people packed out the first Council Against the Bedroom Tax public meeting in Henley on 20 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 Whitefield Court Housing Association wouldn’t let them move! Others spoke of the need to organise within theirTenants’ Homes to defend residents 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 last a couple of years ago, followed up with the distribution of leaflets across the Langley estate.

Saffron Against Cuts secretary Kevin Carrigan explained how the bedroom tax poses an attack on the pensions of the working class.

The 25 people there heard Kevin outline how solid community organisation, mass non-compliance, organisation of defence 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. Doing this would floor the 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 avoiding evictions.

Young activists are driving 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/ event/339830983594479?ref=ts & efr=ee2017, email middleton.rochdale.rnt@gmail.com or ring 0754 400 666.

Hegh Caffery

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**Braunstone, Leicester**

The Braunstone housing estate is a community that occupied the then 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 would take a month of nights as to change the speed limit on a road. A week after blocking off the road the speed limit was dropped from 50mph to 30mph until an underpass could be built!

Braunstone is a community that convincingly saw off the ballistics 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 Warner is standing for TUSC in the Leicester city council Abbey ward by-election on 9 May.

Leicester currently has 52 out of 54 of its city councillors, it yet is implementing the Con-Dems’ cuts - including the bedroom tax.

Tessa is the only candidate that will overturn this.

**Both by Heather Rawling**

Leicester Anti-bedroom Tax Federation steering group
The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, recently discussed with Arab League officials on how to 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, entering into the Palestinian territories, more and more people are questioning whether a viable Palestinian state exists in the Middle East is possible. Some have suggested that the conflict will continue indefinitely, while others argue that the road to peace is still possible through a two-state solution.

For the full version of this article, see www.socialist.org.uk
For additional reading, see: Israel - Palestine - Egypt - Lebanon: Grassroots movements 
for a new mass party of Israeli workers

How can a stalemate be realised?

Despite the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, there are hopes that a two-state solution could be achieved. However, many obstacles stand in the way, including the lack of trust between the two sides, the refusal of either side to make concessions, and the support of the international community for a solution that includes the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Israel's continued settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have been a major obstacle to a peace deal. The Israeli government has consistently refused to recognize the validity of any Palestinian proposals for the establishment of a Palestinian state, leading to a breakdown in talks between the two sides. The International Quartet, comprising the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, has been working to broker a peace agreement, but so far, their efforts have been unsuccessful.

The Palestinian leadership has been divided on the issue of a two-state solution, with some calling for a continuation of the intifada and others advocating for a more moderate approach. The Israeli government has also been divided, with some calling for a continuation of the settlement policy and others advocating for a more moderate approach.

One state or two?

The question of whether Israel and Palestine should be divided into two separate states or whether they should be united into one state remains a major obstacle to a peace deal. The Israeli government has consistently refused to recognize the validity of any Palestinian proposals for the establishment of a Palestinian state, leading to a breakdown in talks between the two sides. The International Quartet, comprising the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, has been working to broker a peace agreement, but so far, their efforts have been unsuccessful.

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The struggle for a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, with both sides calling for a two-state solution. However, the continued Israeli settlement of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, coupled with the lack of international support for a two-state solution, makes it unlikely that a peace deal will be achieved in the near future.
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 by-elections held on the same day.

It was mainly county councils – last polled in 2009 – up for election, especially Conservative - although Cumbria had been run by a Labour-Conservative coalition! The Tories had lost 11% 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, ambulance, fire and police services, to libraries, highways and emergency services – that cover a population of 24 million, control combined budgets of £43 billion, and employ 1.3 million workers (including school staff).

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 Bolsover and Whitwell, two of the ex-mining villages making up the traditional division. Many people told him and his campaign they agreed with TUSC but were not prepared to vote for a Trotskyist party. Our candidate got 275 votes (8.2%), placing third in the three-way contest.

I 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 strong city, but since Bristol elected a mayor this year of implementing the Con-Dem cuts in a new way, I think shows how far we have to go.

The biggest winners on the day were Labour, followed by Conservatives, while UNESCO and TUSC candidates stood in 14 seats for the councils up for election and, separately, the results of all county councils. TUSC was not mentioned once by this line: “The Green Party bids for power”! The Sentinel local paper carrying the headline: “The Green Party tests for power!”

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

Andy Bentley

Leicestershire
I stood as a TUSC candidate for Loughborough East, Leicestershire and was pleased to receive 370 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 present themselves as ‘anti-cuts’ in Labour-controlled councils.

The total vote for all TUSC candidates on 2 May was 18,582. Where TUSC contested council seats, for every person who voted TUSC (8,188), there were 14 people who voted Labour (119,204).

This ratio was widened compared to the 2011 and 2012 local elections – although, in a metropolitan council, the ratio narrowed in Bristol compared to the 2011 local elections in that city (the last poll before the 2011 elections). Tim Farron, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, decided to take the seat of Bristol Mayoral pollary.

The election seemed to go by very fast. Dave Brown received an almost unanimous victory. The results of the local elections in that city (the last one before 2011 and 2012 local elections) and the 2011 local elections there) and last November’s Bristol mayoral pollary.

I stood as a TUSC candidate for Loughborough East, Leicestershire, and was pleased to receive 370 votes (7.7%), placing me third in front of the Lib Dems. Despite this, our percentage of the vote improved to 9.4% in 2009 to 4.5%, despite the Lib Dem majority being reduced from 2 in 2009 to 1.5%.

The end result was 270 in Harlow West for David Brown (3.5%) - beating the Greens, who had 3.2% 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-jyme this was the first time that TUSC candidates 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, leafleted and where possible, we also joined Harrow welfare rights and anti-bedRoom tax campaigners.

Dave Brown received an almost unanimous victory. This, and a widespread disgust at the main parties, was reflected in a significant increase in the vote for TUSC.

The biggest winners on the day were Labour and the Greens as they tried to kick out councillors from the government parties, especially the Lib Dems. Despite this, our percentage of the vote improved to 9.4% in 2009 to 4.5%, despite the Lib Dem majority being reduced from 2 in 2009 to 1.5%.

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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
£5, £2 concession
Contact piddox@hotmail.com or 07786 438 779
Find out about Socialist Party meetings and other events at www.socialistparty.org.uk/whaton
Portugal: Government in disarray... Left must seize the opportunity

Goncalo Rameiro
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 €3.1 billion, exposed 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 termed a ‘state lockout’ by suspending spending in all departments until further notice. This threat was matched by the Lisbon experience with bankruptcy: schools were closed, patients were turned away from hospitals without medicine, etc.

Given all of these huge events, the response of the government was left and the trade unions has been weak. Whereas the government ‘scorns’ them ‘whisper’. Although they demand the fall of the government more loudly, they fail to give an answer whatsoever in terms of a concrete struggle to achieve this.

After more than one million people 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 kept blocking the struggle and refuse to organise any mass protest or strike.

Weak government

We’ve seen the military demonstrate against the government 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 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 would say they found 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 coming local and regional elections.

However, many of its leaders also point in the direction of ‘comer’’sus’. 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 communities 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 means available to 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 on 16 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 expressed. 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 itself.

The trade union and social movements have to arm themselves with a clear alternative to capitalism, in the form of a stateless, classless society.

In Portugal, we call on the Left, particularly the Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE), to join the trade unions and the social movements to draw up such a plan of action and a programme of struggle against capitalism.

The state apparatus has first of all to declare that we can’t pay a debt made by speculators, and that competitors of workers and the poor. 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.

A CWI contingent also marched in this last one.

The government stepped up its attacks on workers, pensioners, students and communities such as that in Mísiau (scene of a long but brave 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 international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

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

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3689, London E11 1YE, email cwi@world社会主义.org.

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

www.socialistworld.net

May Day demo in Sindh photo Socialist Movement Pakistan

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Around the world, trade unionists and socialists (who fight against capitalist austerity internationally) as a commemoration of past struggles but also to reeducate the workers’ movement to fighting capitalist austerity and oppression. CWI members, often in difficult circumstances, continued to participate in May Day events around the world. Here are a few short reports.

Pakistan

This May Day came in the middle of the general elections campaign in the country. The turn-out 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, despite all the 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 30 cities and towns across the country. Over 5,000 industrial and public sector workers participated in these activities. A special issue of the Socialist newspaper was also produced.

Syed Fazal Abass Shah, secretary general PWPF, 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 scandal.

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 riot police attacking on democratic rights than what exists 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 monomaniacal 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 waved 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 this last one.

The government stepped up its attacks on workers, pensioners, students and communities such as that in Mísiau (scene of a long and bitter struggle by textile workers last year).

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www.socialistworld.net
Defend Liverpool’s jobs and services – now and then

My old mate Derek Hatton, interviewed in the Liverpool Daily Post, audaciously 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 1983-87 unemployment movement is absent today Anderson has no choice but to do the bidding of his employers.

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 council house workers and welfare workers offended employers we would see the kind of mass support 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 mostdraconian of cuts to the welfare state.

Tony Mulhern, Liverpool Labour Party president, 1980-1985 and Liverpool 47 surcharged councillor

Liverpool council’s record against 1980s austerity

In Liverpool between 1973 and 1981, 87,113 or 25% of the city’s jobs were saved and 1,000 additional jobs created.

In 1973, 80% of the city’s 90% youth unemployment was caused by the closure of factories. The council’s Capital Programme created new jobs and prevented closure of many of the city’s biggest employers.

Liverpool’s ruling council should still be running a massive campaign of public meetings, leaflets and public notices calling for a ballot every ten years to retain the union’s funding.

Salford council still aims to ‘reorganise’ 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 Unison, to demand the plans are dropped.

Steve Cullen of USUC says: “We remain totally opposed to the reorg. A public meeting was held today, attended by the 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 quizzed 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 see the same level of support and some people won’t get any support.

Greater Manchester 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.

Salford - two-faced attack on mental health

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Defend Liverpool’s jobs and services – now and then

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

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

Send your views, news and criticisms 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 has won her eight-month pregnant sickness. 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 the rights we have. And the Labour Party will not do anything which might offend employers. We need a new Labour party, the working class.

Derek McMillan

Stop these drones

Around 500 anti-war campaigners marched from Lincoln to RAF Waddington on 4 May to protest against these drones.

The national demonstration, called by groups including the Stop the War Coalition and War on Tort, took place just last two days after the government announced that the drones had begun to be operated from this base rather than operated from Nevada.

Nick Allen, author of the 1985 book The Treason of the Labour Party, said: “If one of the Ministry of Defence’s hosting towns then gives the money back to the MoD, that is like a town selling itself out to a foreign power.”

We must commit ourselves to fighting against imperialist wars for oil and gas, and also to fighting the system which produces them.

Paul Astbury

Politics yes – Labour no

Salford city council have been told that the NHS will no longer pay for privatised services by former local government union NaHce because it had no political support.

Compared to many unions Unité strongly supports members. That is why the Socialist Party campaigned for the return of Len McCluskey in the recent election for Salford South MP, secretary, Unité 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, Unité leaders understand Labour is not very popular with our members!

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

Andy Beadie

Victory for cuts campaign

Anti-cuts campaigner, Don Macdonald, won the first step of a battle to clear his name when charges of threatening councilors were dropped.

Don was offered a fixed penalty notice on his door and arrested him. He had just two days after the government announced cuts to accept the charge as he had simply produced a campaign of emails, letters, leaflets and public meetings calling for a massive campaign, backed by Salford Against Cuts and Salford City Unison, to demand the plans are dropped.

Stop this drop-out

Croydon’s City College saw a 30% drop in retentions in 2011-12, with just 77% continuing 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 strong fighting National Union of Students.

Robert McArdle

Defend Liverpool’s jobs and services – now and then

Salford council still aims to ‘reorganise’ 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 Unison, to demand the plans are dropped.

Victory for cuts campaign

Anti-cuts campaigners, Don Macdonald, won the first step of a battle to clear his name when charges of threaten- ing councilors’ lives. Why fund a party that now opposes most of our union’s policies and all our members’ interests? Ballot papers must be in by in 22 May. But don’t just vote yes. Get involved and ask when we’re going to overcome this obstacle to your union’s progress.

Andy Beadie

Stop this drop-out

Croydon’s City College saw a 30% drop in retentions in 2011-12, with just 77% continuing their courses. According to the Coventry Times, college principal Paul Taylor believes government cuts had an impact on the number of stu- dents forced to drop-out.

“If one of the Ministry of Defence’s hosting towns then gives the money back to the MoD, that is like a town selling itself out to a foreign power.”

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

Peter Nagle

Stop these drones

Around 500 anti-war campaigners marched from Lincoln to RAF Waddington on 4 May to protest against these drones.

The national demonstration, called by groups including the Stop the War Coalition and War on Tort, took place just last two days after the government announced that the drones had begun to be operated from this base rather than operated from Nevada.

Nick Allen, author of the 1985 book The Treason of the Labour Party, said: “If one of the Ministry of Defence’s hosting towns then gives the money back to the MoD, that is like a town selling itself out to a foreign power.”

We must commit ourselves to fighting against imperialist wars for oil and gas, and also to fighting the system which produces them.

Paul Astbury
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 facing homelessness, 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 politically. Food banks should return to the traditions of the soup kitchens and scrounger camps of the 1930s.

Although we should not only feed people but inspire and organise those that they feed to join up with the wider labour movement to defeat this unecessary 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 economic failure we need to campaign.

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 the UK’s super-rich, including 15 in-their-own-right billionaires, a total wealth of £450 billion. The rich are doing very well indeed, there are those doing just fine.

We have organised free or cheap events. We do this to provide practical help and inspire and organise those that 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 union in the country. But I think food banks should play an important role in fighting back against the injustices they face.

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

Nancy Taaffe (centre) photo the Sociallist

Food banks and fighting austerity

Greece: Challenging the Golden Dawn

On 2 May the neo-fascist Golden Dawn attempted to destroy 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 fascists it could be answered 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 democrats to build a coherent left fightback.

I don’t think it will 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.

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

Katerina Kleitsa

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 1983, 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 are not being fed. Surely that’s not too much to ask in the 21st century?

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

We have organised free or cheap food and street markets without middlemen, where people can buy basic products cheap, directly from their producers. We have organised free or cheap food ‘street markets without middlemen’, where people can buy basic products cheap, directly from their producers.

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

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 divisions.

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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 all payments; 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 reduc tion 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 why we could resist the crisis.

Greece: Challenging the Golden Dawn
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 organized working class has the potential power to provide good quality homes with low rents.

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). Renationalize all privatized 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.
• 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...

• Scraps 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.

ENVIROMENT

• 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.

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.
• 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.

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.

B

MI 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 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 specialty would be diseases of the rich.

The NHS local clinical commissioning group in Guildford had been using the hospital’s services but 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.

Privatisation puts patients at risk

Roger Shrives

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

NHS WARNING!

Privatisation puts patients at risk

www.socialistparty.org.uk