



FOOD BANK BRITAIN

Con-Dems turn the clock back



Steve Score
East Midlands Socialist Party secretary

At anti-bedroom tax meetings many people report that they are going without food as they try to pay their rent. The level of cuts in benefits for people on already low incomes means that the struggle to pay rent will be too much for many – leading to the threat of evictions.

Bedroom tax-enforced poverty contributes to a situation where 500,000 people in Britain are relying on food banks. The number has more than tripled in the last year. Oxfam reported on “destitution, hardship and hunger on a large scale”. The charity predicts more people will be forced to turn to food banks which “may not have the capacity to cope with the increased level of demand.”

Increasingly, people who are in work but on poverty pay are also being forced to go to food banks. One in four children in Britain – 3.4 million – are expected to be in relative poverty by 2020.

Food banks were meant to be a temporary measure for exceptional circumstances, but are now officially part of welfare provision. Some local authorities give grants to food banks. The Department for Work and Pensions issues food bank vouchers. Is this Cameron’s “big society”?

Actually, it is a return to Victorian times of haphazard and degrading charity support for the ‘deserving poor’, or the days when people had to plead in front of the Poor Law guardians for help.

But Britain is the seventh richest country in the world. Earlier this year Oxfam reported that the piles of un-taxed wealth hidden in tax havens internationally are sufficient to eradicate world hunger.

It’s not complicated, is it – we need benefits, tax credits and minimum wage levels that are sufficient for everyone to have adequate housing and to buy their own food.

We need to take action to end poverty and make food banks unnecessary. Reverse cuts in benefits, reverse public spending cuts, tax the rich to make them pay for the crisis they created!

To achieve that means getting organised! And getting political. Socialists argue for building mass action against the bedroom tax, including anti-eviction armies, and standing ‘no cuts’ candidates against councillors who implement austerity.

These attacks on the living standards of the poorest are the direct result of the demands of the rich to get richer. They are an inevitable part of the system of capitalism that we live under – we need to get rid of it. That means building a new system based on meeting the needs of the billions instead of the greed of the billionaires.

Join us in the fight for a socialist future



Mass joblessness wrecks lives!

Youth Fight for Jobs campaigners at the modern-day workhouse of Westfield, east London photo Senan



Youth must fight for a future

Ian Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

In Sweden, where youth unemployment is 24%, riots have struck the capital Stockholm. Rage has exploded onto the streets following police repression and racism and decades of neoliberal attacks and privatisation in an increasingly unequal society.

Unemployment, at 12%, and youth unemployment, at 24%, have both reached a record high in the eurozone.

In Italy, 40% of youth are unemployed. In Spain, more than half of young people are out of work. Tragically in Greece, two thirds of youth are jobless, contributing to rapid rises in homelessness and suicides. No one can deny this is a disaster for humanity. Europe is sinking under the weight of austerity.

One million young people are unemployed in Britain, with millions more now underemployed, in and out of work, facing terrible conditions, zero hour contracts, low pay, and barely enough income to survive.

Surely, then, it can only be promising that European Union leaders have been seeking a solution to mass youth unemployment?

Germany's pro-big business finance minister, Wolfgang Schaeuble, starkly

warned that if young people were made to pay for the crisis through further cuts, it would bring "revolution... on the very same day".

So what solutions do the EU leaders have? None.

Another forum, headed by former US president Bill Clinton, championed

look elsewhere for ideas about how a decent future with jobs and education can be realised.

But Schaeuble is correct on one thing – the continued slaughter of jobs and the even further impoverishment of a section of workers and youth are making a whole generation angry.

Schaeuble, German chancellor Angela Merkel, and their super-rich counterparts in Britain don't have to look far for the consequences of their vicious cuts policies.

Thousands have taken to the streets in Turkey, which exploded following police brutality.

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) offers an effective way for angry young people to organise themselves in action.

YFJ explains that the trade unions could provide a powerful attraction to young people if they took decisive action on pay, jobs and apprenticeships with real jobs. The call for a 24-hour general strike against austerity would give an immediate authority to the trade unions among young people who at this stage can often see no hope for their future.

Get involved:
Visit www.youthfightforjobs.com
Phone 020 8558 7947
Email youthfightforjobs@gmail.com
Text 07749379010

Create real jobs!

- A record 370,000 young people applied to the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) from February to April this year – an average of 11.31 applicants for every vacancy
- 41 young people are applying for every plumbing apprenticeship
- Youth Fight for Jobs calls for a massive government scheme to create socially useful jobs and apprenticeships which pay at least the minimum wage (with no youth exemptions) and offer guaranteed jobs at the end
- All work-for-your-dole schemes should be scrapped. Unemployed people should not be used as slave labour. If a job needs doing, someone should be employed for a proper wage to do it
- Instead of banker bailouts and tax cuts for the rich, we need huge investment in public services and the nationalisation of companies threatening closure, under democratic control

privatisation of education – and big profits for greedy private sector vultures – as their preferred option to somehow reducing unemployment. Clearly young people will have to

A day in the life of a Primark employee

Recently we were given the chance to fill out an employee survey to inform our bosses of our experiences in our time working at Primark.

One question was along the lines of: 'Do you feel proud of working for Primark?' No.

No, I don't feel proud of working somewhere that makes obscene profits and yet pays me less than I need to pay rent.

No, I don't feel proud to work at a place in which people younger than me get paid even less despite doing the same job.

No, I don't feel proud of working in a place that made me buy my own uniform, structures my contract to avoid paying me overtime pay, doesn't make me feel a part of a welcoming, happy environment despite telling me to be welcoming and happy to anyone who comes into the store.

Like so many others at Primark, I had intended for this to be merely a temporary position, a springboard to help propel me onto something more fulfilling, but the stress and anxiety that has built up since my first day has felt like a weight holding me back. I know I shouldn't feel stressed about a job that means so little but no one

wants to feel like the effort they put in is meaningless and I work hard at a thankless job.

The store is organised into various self-explanatory departments and yet if one person is away from one de-

partment, whether sick or on organised holiday, it is often the case that the rest of the workers in the department have to pick up the slack without cover to help. Sometimes I have

to essentially do the work of two people. It's bad enough being forced to do the work of one person in Primark. I utilised the survey to vent some of my frustrations, assuming that none of my anger would be taken into account and no change would come from it. The survey itself consisted of simple multiple choice questions but the comments section at the end allowed us a chance to express our issues. I probably wrote the most that I've written since my university dissertation!

I told them of my irritation that I requested more hours to help with my finances and yet they instead decided to hire more workers on temporary, part-time contracts.

I wrote about how it was ridiculous that a store that makes the profits it does can't give its employees a discount beyond the two weeks before Christmas. Simply put, I don't think that those working in Primark get the respect or reward that they deserve.

I don't live in the hellish conditions of those who make the clothes I end up selling, but Primark does just as much to make my working experience a monstrous hell of my own.

Sick Of Your Boss?

YFJ has launched the Sick Of Your Boss initiative, taking up the growing problems of underemployment and poor working conditions that face young people who find jobs – often on low pay and temporary contracts.

A Sick Of Your Boss week of action from 8 July is targeting high-street tax dodgers Primark with action, stunts, and protests. Primark is one of the worst employers in Britain, but its callous contempt for garment workers around the world has also been exposed. We will be demonstrating to Primark staff, and all young people in and out of work, that they're not alone. The only way to improve their lot is to get organised together and fight for their rights.

The Labour Party, having blatantly accepted capitalism and the need for cuts, is incapable of even pretending to be in opposition. These articles show two examples of the party's continued deterioration.

On the one hand Labour is as embroiled as any of the other capitalist parties with corruption and dishonest lobbying practices.

On the other, the Labour leadership seems to have decided that the way to prepare for the general election in 2015 is to work hard at convincing us all they would be just as vicious as Cameron, Osborne et al. We need to build a new mass, working class political alternative that genuinely stands up for ordinary people and our interests. See pages six and seven for more.

Peer caught with nose in the trough

Bob Labi

The ex-Labour minister Lord John Cunningham, one of the latest batch of parliamentarians caught selling their services to the highest bidder, is no stranger to corruption.

Nearly 40 years ago his father, Andy Cunningham, was jailed for his part in the Poulson corruption scandal that rocked both the Labour Party in north east England and the then Tory government.

Andy Cunningham was not just another corrupt local politician, he was a prominent right winger in the trade unions and Labour Party. The older Cunningham was leader of the General and Municipal Workers' Union (now GMB) northern region, as well as Chair of the Northern Region Labour Party and a member of the Labour Party's National Executive. As well as corruptly lining his pockets Cunningham senior played a key role in parachuting right wingers into (then) safe Labour parliamentary seats.

The young Cunningham also worked for the General and Municipal Workers' Union before being elected as an MP in 1970 for a north-east England seat.

Liverpool City Council

In the mid-1980s, when Liverpool City Council, led by supporters of the Militant tendency (today the Socialist Party), struggled against cuts and to secure extra funding from the Thatcher government, Cunningham played a key role in helping to ultimately isolate and defeat the Liverpool council.

In 1985 he strove to prevent any deal that helped Liverpool because the Labour Party leaders did not want to give credence to Militant's and Liverpool council's strategy of mass mobilisation to prevent cuts. The Times explained that an agreement was "being sabotaged by the



photo Wales Socialist Party

Labour front bench", reporting that leader Kinnock and John Cunningham "want to delay any attempts to save the council" and instead "leave Militant to hang themselves" (October 19, 1985).

Clearly for Cunningham the plight of the people of Liverpool was of no concern in his fight against the Militant. How different it is when it's a question of his personal gain as the latest revelations show that Lord Cunningham has no reservations about grabbing as much loot as he can, in this case an extra £144,000 a year by selling himself.

This incident shows that elements like the Cunninghams, who spent their political lives fighting to make the Labour movement safe for capitalism in the end, like George Orwell's pigs, turned into capitalists themselves. It shows the utter hypocrisy of the Labour right

wing who claimed they 'saved' the Labour party by expelling Militant supporters, purging the left and moving the party to an unashamedly pro-capitalist position.

Worker's wage

Cunningham's greed stands in complete contrast with the policies and actions of the Militant activists he attacked. When three Militant supporters were in parliament during the 1980s, alongside fighting for socialist policies they rejected joining the gravy train, lived on a worker's wage and donated the rest of their parliamentary salaries to the labour movement.

This is the tradition that needs to be a hallmark of a new political voice of the working class, not the rotten family tradition of Andy and Jack Cunningham.

No cuts from Labour? No hope!

On 3 June Labour shadow chancellor Ed Balls made a speech to his shadow cabinet in which he laid out his intention to fully accept the draconian austerity inaugurated by the Con-Dems. It is clear that Labour has now given up any pretence of being an opposition, buying wholesale into the logic of a neoliberal austerity which forces ordinary people to pay for the gigantic mistakes of the reckless super-rich.

One of the most perfidious cuts outlined by Balls in his speech is the means-testing of the winter fuel allowance. But surely the rich should not be given benefits that they 'don't

need'? This reaction is understandable, but misguided - universal benefits have an extremely important function in society.

We have to resist all attacks on the welfare state - a cut for the better off quickly can become a cut for all. When tens of thousands of elderly people die from the cold every winter, society has a responsibility to contribute to their heating costs. Universality makes sure that the welfare state doesn't simply become minimal 'poor relief'.

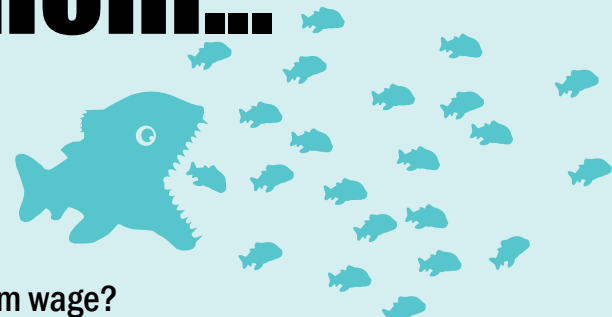
And at the end of the day, the amount of money saved by means-testing universal benefits is around

£100 million - a drop in the ocean compared to the £120 billion which goes avoided, evaded or uncollected in tax in the UK every year.

The response of socialists to this most recent in the long line of Labour's shifts to the right must be clear - the majority of working people have no faith that a Labour government would be able to solve the crisis we are in. We need a new mass party of working people, based around the trade unions and community groups, which is able to clearly put the case for a socialist alternative to cuts and crisis.

Chaz Lockett

Them...



Minimum wage?

You might think the point of a minimum wage is to make sure all workers are paid at least enough to afford the very basics. You'd be wrong. Apart from the fact the measly amount is so pitiful, many are forced to top up their income with benefits to survive, and some employers don't even bother paying this insufficient legal minimum. Last year the government found that 26,000 workers had been underpaid and were owed compensation - 708 employers were fined. And that's just the ones they found out about!

post online subject to prosecution for serious crimes.

Corporate sponsorship

Any Londoner will tell you that navigating your way around the capital now requires a detailed knowledge of the biggest international companies. We have the O2 arena (previously the millennium dome), Emirates Airline (a cable car across the Thames) and the EDF energy London Eye (the big wheel).

And now there's a proposal to make the trend even more widespread - a report by a Tory London assembly member has suggested that tube stations adopt corporate branding. So you could soon be alighting at 'Burberry by Bond Street' or 'Virgin Euston'.

Redesign madness

£30,000 is more than the annual salary of most of the public sector workers who've lost their jobs as a result of the government's cuts. It's also the cost (paid for by us of course) of a redesign for a piece of paper. MPs had previously been assured there would be no additional cost as a result of the redesign. But clearly Parliament's 'day's business document', outlining the order of the day and questions on the agenda, deserves more than nurses, social workers and teachers.

A new report by the OECD has shown that crisis and austerity have fuelled the growth in inequality. In fact the wealth gap grew faster between 2008 and 2010 than at any other point in the previous 12 years

Free Bradley Manning!

The trial of US soldier Bradley Manning, accused of leaking documents to Wikileaks, is underway. Bradley faces several charges, some of which he has pleaded guilty to.

But it is the charge of 'aiding the enemy' - potentially carrying the death penalty - that is causing controversy. The prosecutors argue that releasing information onto the internet is the same as knowingly handing over information to Al-Qaeda.

Many legal experts and civil liberties campaigners have condemned the charge as a dangerous attack on freedom of speech which could set a precedent that leaves millions who

"Moronic"

When George Osborne announced details of his new 'Help to Buy' scheme, he hoped it would be hailed as a great help to young people otherwise unable to get onto the housing ladder.

But the scheme, which offers to underwrite up to 20% of a mortgage, is being seen straight through, even by business leaders. One rightly commented that what young people need is affordable housing, not greater availability of debt increasing house prices even further. He called it "a moronic policy". Hear hear.

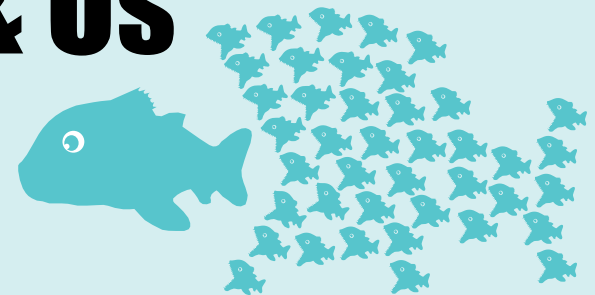
A study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies has revealed that the average middle-income family will be £1,800 a year worse off by 2015 because of the cuts

Waiting times

Waiting times in accident and emergency departments of hospitals are at a nine-year high. The most recent figures show that almost 6% of patients wait for four hours or more. This is an increase of a third on the previous quarter.

At the same time seven in ten chief executives and chairs of hospital trusts believe waiting time for treatment and patient's experience of the NHS will get worse over the next year because of the £20 billion planned 'efficiency savings'.

...& Us



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

What we heard

At a recent meeting against the bedroom tax, a woman described how her friend had saved up for ten years for an expensive new carpet for her council house. Now, the council are threatening to evict her as she cannot afford the bedroom tax, and the carpet cannot be removed, so she can't take it with her.

Joe Fathallah



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PCS rolling strike programme

On 3 June, a week of rolling strike action in the two largest government departments, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and

the tax department HMRC, began. This involves 135,000 workers in a dispute over pay cuts, jobs and working conditions. This action

was preceded by strikes in other departments, including the vehicle licensing agency DVLA. Ronnie Job reports from the Swansea picket line.

For once it was nice weather for the civil service union PCS pickets at the DVLA in Swansea, when I went to give solidarity greetings on behalf of the Swansea trades council and the Socialist Party on 31 May. PCS members in the Department of Transport and the Land Registry were on strike as part of a programme of departmental action that will see DWP and HMRC members joining later.

Pickets told me that they were striking over a raft of issues. These include:

- Pay - this is the fourth consecutive year that they've been offered

no cost of living pay award.

- Privatisation - you can see giant private firms like IBM and Fujitsu muscling in to the public sector in pursuit of profit at the DVLA.

- Job cuts - the decision to close the DVLA regional offices is leading to the loss of hundreds of jobs around the country.

- Attacks on union facilities - one of the pickets at the DVLA was a PCS branch official who's seen his facility time cut by 50% already.

Despite all these, and more, attacks, the pickets were resolute and aware that this is a fight that has to be won.

I've always experienced a good reception on PCS picket lines. The only unfriendly greeting I had was from a visiting Labour MP who made sneering comments about selling 'magazines' (the Socialist). When I offered her one she told me she'd 'been there, done that and got the T-shirt'

It was good to see a Labour politician who knows what a picket line is; it's just a shame that the majority of Labour MPs didn't back John McDonnell MP's attempt to defend PCS members' right to strike in the Home Office and Border Agency. Each of the three pickets the MP

had been talking to when I arrived bought a Socialist paper off me.

Manchester

On 4 June, Hugh Caffrey visited the HMRC picket line in Manchester. Martin Ayres, PCS Salford Revenue branch vice-chair and assistant branch secretary said: "We've had great support today. Members are totally opposed to the draconian changes to terms and conditions, and despite the pay freeze most people are prepared to lose a day's pay in support of the PCS-organised action."

Brewery workers vote to strike

Brewery workers in Burton-on-Trent have voted 97% in favour of strike action against a vicious assault on pay and conditions from their employers Molson Coors.

As Molson Coors CEO of Europe counts his £360,137 a year, brewery workers face £8,000-£9,000 a year pay cuts, cuts in working conditions and a threat to sack everybody if they don't agree to the proposals by 14 June.

Some workers face losing their homes as a result of this savage attack and have no choice but to fight against this ultimatum. But as Unite branch secretary Phil Salt says: "We are a well-organised site with over 90% membership. We believe that if we allow this to happen, employers will believe they can do anything, anywhere."

The outcome of this struggle will be watched by workers and employers in the food, drink and tobacco industry across the Midlands and nationally. It's in the interests of all these workers that Burton brewery workers win this battle to defend pay and conditions. To do that they will need maximum support.

Trade union members should raise it in their branches and discuss what practical and financial support they can give.

Messages of support may be sent to burton.brewery@unitetheunion.org or via #burtonbrewery on Twitter. A fighting fund has been established. Cheques should be made payable to 'Unite' with 'Burton Brewery' written on the back and sent to Unite the Union, Finance Department, Transport House, 9-17 Victoria Street, West Bromwich, B70 8HX.

Andy Bentley

Thera Trust: the campaign moves up a gear

Following the strike on 18 April, Unison members at Thera East Midlands (TEM) struck again on 29 and 30 May against a new contract which severely attacks their terms and conditions. The strike certainly had an effect.

It was reported to the Socialist that in Derbyshire, TEM had to bring in Community Support Leaders from as far as Northamptonshire and Leicester and also operations managers to cover the houses where staff were on strike.

It was also reported that management also had to cover for striking staff in Nottingham.

On 29 May, in driving rain and despite a letter from Thera's lawyers trying to undermine the will of the members to protest, almost 30 Unison members held a noisy protest with banners, placards and flags outside the TEM head office.

One striker delivered an impromptu and witty serenade to TEM management. Brian, an officer from Notts County Unison, is bringing his guitar next time.

After the protest one striker told the Socialist: "We had a meeting in the nearby hotel with an excellent discussion."



Outside TEM head office photo East Midlands SP

"There was a strong determination to carry on the campaign to get the new contract thrown out, to fight for a wage increase for non-TUPed staff and to protect wages of TUPed staff."

"It was reported that TEM have already started to attack our sick pay. One member told me that it has already been implemented on her

with a cut of over £300 in her wages.

"There was a discussion about the campaign for union recognition and it was agreed to step this up. There will be meetings aimed at non members."

After the strike, a Unison officer found out that Notts county council has suspended all future referrals to TEM. The pressure is building up.

Unison and Labour: Welsh government cuts are still cuts

A Unison member

Socialist Party members attending Unison conference tell me that there are motions on the agenda congratulating the Welsh government for supposedly protecting Welsh workers from the worst impact of the cuts. There must be another Wales besides the one I live in.

As a Welsh worker, I worry about the cuts taking place in the NHS, £660 million of them in the last three years. When A&E units are shut in London in the name of 'centralising expertise', Unison quite rightly labels it as cuts. But when a Welsh Labour government downgrades hos-

pitals and services, giving the same reason, our union calls it 'reform', 'reorganisation' or 'modernisation'.

I'm well aware of the disgusting role played by Welsh Labour councils in attacking members' conditions and cutting services. Two Welsh Labour councils, Neath-Port Talbot (NPT) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT), were enthusiastic pioneers of threatening those refusing to sign new contracts, with worse terms, with the sack.

Not a single Labour council in Wales has publicly committed to not evicting those too poor to pay the bedroom tax. Not one Welsh Labour MP voted against the Con-Dems' retrospective legislation over

workfare. There is no Welsh local authority councillor willing to sign up to the 'councillors against cuts' pledge to vote against all cuts.

If Unison members want to fight Welsh NHS cuts then they can't wait for a lead that's never going to come from above - join with other rank and file trade unionists in the Welsh Shop Stewards Network to build a fight against all cuts. And we need a political alternative, a fighting, socialist alternative. We need to build the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Wales Shop Stewards Network Conference 2013. Saturday 8 June, 10.00am - 3.00pm, Maldron Hotel, St. Mary Street, Cardiff (Close to Cardiff Central station)

Lecturers' union UCU members vote to fight austerity

Thomas House and James Naish

On 29-31 May, the University and College Union (UCU) held its national congress in Brighton. The congress took place against the backdrop of vicious Con-Dem cuts, which had provoked massive anger among delegates who voted to reject employers' insulting pay offers and to ballot for industrial action in further and higher education.

Another important vote involved support for a national strategy to defend post-16 education, which was successfully amended to call on the TUC to: "lay urgent concrete plans for united strike action against Tory austerity policies".

There are, however, dangers of a repeat of the recent failure to defend pensions due to the dominance of general secretary Sally Hunt (who was not present at congress due to illness) and her sup-

porters. Socialist Party members have always warned against the direction that this section of the union wishes to pursue, attacking its democratic structures.

Their arguments that UCU should pursue its own version of austerity to balance its books, at the expense of democratic and campaigning activity, were defeated.

Now the task is, in the words of the congress, to 'Build the Union', which can only be done if a serious coordi-

nated battle on pay is pursued.

The attacks on the pay and conditions of academics and academic-related staff in higher and further education are not taking place in a vacuum.

The UCU membership understands that and delegates therefore voted for united action across all unions to defeat the Con-Dems' austerity, and to call on all Labour councillors to refuse to implement cuts.

In brief

Equinox strike

Strikers on a noisy and well supported picket line at the New Cross office of Equinox Care were wearing stickers saying 'Equinox don't care', on 29 May. Nobody there had gone into work on the first of two days of strike action at this drug and alcohol services charity. The workers were furious that top management aimed to cut their pay by up to a quarter - by between £4,000 and £6,000 a year. "Top management are putting pressure on staff, saying striking would harm vulnerable, poor people," pickets told us. "But their cuts could push workers here into poverty - that's why we had a 98% backing in our ballot for this industrial action."

Striking Equinox staff from west London joined their fellow workers on picket lines in south London then moved to the company's main office in Southwark. Equinox chief executive Bill Puddicombe is not subject to these cuts, in fact, for the first time in the company's history he was offered "a small amount of performance related pay".

The pickets made it clear that, if Puddicombe and Co's 'performance' in resolving this dispute does not improve very quickly, there will be a second strike on Wednesday 12 June.

Roger Shives

One Housing



Housing workers will not accept cuts in pay and conditions photo Sarah Wrack

Workers at One Housing Group (OHG) have voted to strike over wage cuts. OHG's chief executive has just had a £31,000 a year increase in pay and bonuses, while he expects frontline support staff to accept pay cuts of up to £8,000 a year, £2,000 on average. This follows a three-year pay freeze. 83% of the Unite members have voted to strike, probably in mid-June.

02

The Communication Workers Union is balloting its members in Telefonica O2 call centres for strike action in a battle over outsourcing. This affects call centres in Bury, Glasgow, Leeds and Preston Brook. The company wants to outsource 3,500 jobs to Capita and there are reports that it wants to close the centres in Bury and Glasgow. The ballot closes on 18 June.

Website

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

Protesting against racist division



On the central London protest photo Paul Mattsson

Sheffield

Around 500 anti-fascists occupied Barkers Pool in Sheffield on Saturday 1 June to stop the racist English Defence League (EDL) from politically exploiting the death of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich. The EDL, who numbered less than 100, cynically said they wanted to pay respects by laying a wreath at the Cenotaph in the square.

They marched from a nearby pub with England flags and Union Jacks but were halted by the police before the square. A stand-off ensued while the police tried to persuade protesters to let the EDL through. "No pasaran" was the reply.

So the police tried to force their way through with a wedge charge but the crowd held firm. Then the police prepared the horses, which drew chants of "We remember Orgreave". Significantly, the banner of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign was on the demo. The horses were blocked and pushed back too, to cheers of "Two nill two nill!"

After a further stand-off, the police proposed that an officer lay one of the wreaths. After checking that the inscription did not refer to the EDL, this was agreed by the crowd on the frontline of the counter demo.

This 'compromise' represented a defeat for the EDL who had not got through, so then started 'kicking-off', including throwing their flowers at anti-fascists - not very respectful! A celebratory mood ensued on our side as the EDL were eventually forced to disperse.

However, the EDL have announced a national demonstration in Sheffield on Saturday 8 June, which will require an even bigger and more organised mobilisation by the anti-fascists to stop them again.

Alistair Tice

**Demonstrate against the EDL
12pm, Saturday 8 June
Barkers Pool/City Hall, Sheffield**

Lewisham, south London

Saturday 1 June marked a defeat for the British National Party (BNP). Its leader Nick Griffin started the week hoping that he could rebuild support for the BNP's racist lies on the back of the killing of Lee Rigby.

But swayed by the strong trade union and community support for unity rallies, the BNP was instructed by the police to abandon its planned march to the Lewisham Islamic Centre (LIC), in the borough neighbouring Woolwich. Only a small and heavily outnumbered group of BNP supporters gathered in central London.

While the LIC and local National Union of Teachers branch had felt able to call off the planned opposition rally in the light of the ban, three of us from Lewisham Trades Council kept our promise to provide protective stewarding outside the mosque, just in case there was any attempted provocation from the far right.

Some of the protesters who would have rallied in Lewisham travelled to the Westminster counter-protests instead. In the end, outside LIC there was no sign of any trouble. There was a united and celebratory mood as we stood with members of the LIC management committee in the sunshine to chat with the many local residents and trade unionists who passed by. We were well-rewarded with food and coffee!

Nick Griffin has been making a great play of the fact that the LIC stands next to a Wing-Chun and yoga school - according to his twisted logic, clear evidence of a sinister 'training centre'. In reality, this is a longstanding martial arts centre run by a respected instructor, offering classes across the whole community.

Nick Griffin, regrettably, doesn't let such a mundane reality get in the way of his propaganda. However, in London he found that there were many who were prepared to stand in his way.

Martin Powell-Davies

Central London

On 1 June up to 1,000 protesters took part in a protest in central London against the far-right racist BNP and successfully prevented them from marching the short walk from the Houses of Parliament to the Cenotaph.

Not long after the anti-BNP protest had begun to assemble 2-300 of the anti-racist protesters marched down to parliament to confront the BNP, preventing its 100 supporters from leaving. This was soon followed by a bigger section of the anti-BNP protest marching down and eventually blocking one of the exits from Parliament Square. The anti-BNP protesters were then joined by several hundred anti-badger cull protesters.

Protesters were eagerly taking copies of the Socialist Party leaflet, "Unite against racism, terrorism and war". The leaflet recognised the important role that trade unions can play in building unity against racism and austerity but also the importance of building a political alternative to the BNP, EDL and the three main pro-cuts political parties. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an important part of this process - see page 7.

Several people said that they were interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Chris Newby

Rae Lewis-Ayling, who was on the central London protest, said: "58 arrests were made at random (no missiles or punches were thrown by anti-racist protesters). One ambulance had to be called for an injury caused by police and a man was dragged behind police lines and beaten. Linking arms and refusing to be pushed back, we blocked the street and after six hours, the police were finally forced to disperse the BNP in the opposite direction."

See socialistparty.org.uk for analysis of the Woolwich killing from last week's Socialist

Stop drone attacks!



Matt Gordon

"To say a military tactic is legal, or even effective, is not to say it is wise or moral in every instance," said US president Obama in a major speech recently where he promised to scale back the use of unmanned drones to attack targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere. But pious hand-wringing will not bring back the lives of the civilians indiscriminately bombed in their homes by Obama's killer robots.

Nor does one speech change the tactics of the US Military and the CIA on the ground. On 29 May a drone strike in the North Waziristan, on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, killed at least four people, including Wali Ur-Rehman, second-in-command of the Pakistani Taliban.

However these attacks are rarely as accurate as that. One source estimates that only 2% of drone attacks kill targets as high profile as Wali Ur-Rehman. It is also common practice for the Taliban to name a commander as killed only for them to later resurface elsewhere alive and well.

Civilians killed

Obama and the US government have consistently downplayed the use of drones and the havoc they cause, but in truth their use has grown exponentially during his presidency. It is yet to be seen if Obama's most recent speech is any more genuine.

Afghanistan is undoubtedly the epicentre of unmanned drone attacks, with 506 incidents in 2012 and no way to verify the number of civilian casualties accurately.

In Pakistan there have been 369 since 2004, and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that between 2,541 and 3,540 people have been killed, and that between 411 and 884 of those have been civilians.

On receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, Obama declared that America, "must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war". But unmanned drones are not used because they are more 'surgical' or less deadly than traditional weapons, they are used because they save the lives of American troops in the short term and so are more politically and financially expedient back home.

For those on the receiving end, a hellfire missile is just as deadly and indiscriminate whether it is fired by a drone or by a piloted aircraft.

Failure

The reality is that the war in Afghanistan is an expensive and bloody failure. Obama tripled the number of troops in Afghanistan, making it the mightiest and most technologically advanced military occupation in the world, but still failed to make any real gains against the Taliban insurgency, which is likely to become apparent when combat troops leave at the end of 2014. Replacing human troops with robots will not change this.

Drones terrorise entire populations. This will leave thousands if not millions of people psychologically traumatised and deeply opposed to the United States, and will also continue to fuel anger. The billions spent on war could instead be used for schools, hospitals and creating jobs - both in America and in Afghanistan. The war and use of drones must be ended now.

Crackdown on democratic rights

Derek McMillan

For the first time ever, Britain's home secretary Theresa May revealed on 2 June that since 2010, nearly 5,700 separate articles and websites have been taken off the internet by the UK government. The excuse for this is the war on terror. So any website thought to be encouraging terrorism (or supporting animal rights, apparently!) can be taken down by the government.

At the same time the government has utilised the revulsion following the Woolwich killing to seek to read all your emails and mine.

Privacy campaign group Big Brother Watch says police already have the ability under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (Ripa) to demand communications data - "who sent what to

whom from where and when" - from internet and phone companies on terror and serious crime suspects.

494,078 such requests were made by police and security services in 2011 alone.

Experts have pointed out that increased draconian powers will actually make it harder to combat terrorism because the police will have to wade through oceans of information to find what they actually need to know. This suggests that the 'war on terror' is a smoke-screen.

The government wants to use the horror and fear of terror attacks to gather more authoritarian powers. These could be used to clamp down on opposition to the cuts. As ever the trade union movement and the left will be among the targets of any clamp-down. The government know who their real enemies are.

A POLITICAL VOICE FOR THE WORKING CLASS

Thirty years ago, on 9 June 1983, the gloom cast by Thatcher's re-election as Tory prime minister was partly offset by the election of two campaigning supporters of the Socialist's predecessor Militant, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, as Labour MPs. They stood as workers' MPs on a worker's wage, which would be a shining example

to today's sleazy politicians. To celebrate the years they spent providing genuine working class representation in Parliament, and to hasten its return, we reprint part of The Rise of Militant by Peter Taaffe and a report of part of Terry Fields' maiden speech in Parliament.



Today, as Labour councils implement the Con-Dem cuts, the Socialist Party stands for the building of a new mass party to represent working class and young people. As a step towards this, we are part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.



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

Socialist and campaigner Sue Atkins (above) explains why she is standing for TUSC in the Southampton Woolston ward byelection on 13 June. Sue has the support of rebel councillors Don Thomas and Keith Morrell who have been expelled from Labour for voting against cuts!

The Tories, Lib Dems and Labour are all signed up to making the working class pay for the crimes of the bankers and the political establishment. I want to join like-minded people on the council, such as anti-cuts councillors, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, who put principles first, rather than lining their own pockets.

In the face of Con-Dem cuts, people in Woolston are increasingly unhappy with the way local Labour councillors have voted through cuts to Sure Start, local libraries and the Woolston Youth Centre. As well as having a hard-working local councillor, electing a third anti-cuts councillor in Southampton would send a powerful message to the political establishment in Southampton: 'It doesn't have to be like this - there is a choice - enough is enough.'

The bedroom tax will hit many Woolston ward residents. We have met many people worried about how it will affect them. Last month the two Coxford ward rebel councillors proposed that the council remove the threat of eviction if a tenant falls into arrears because they are unable to pay the bedroom tax increase in their rent. With a large majority, you would think Labour councillors would have backed their verbal opposition to the Bedroom Tax with decisive action to end the financial stress and anxiety

many families currently face, yet they voted with the Tories and Lib Dems to oppose the motion. If elected, I will play my part in the campaign to force the government to repeal this spiteful tax on those least able to afford it. This year's council budget saw £1 million axed from the Sure Start programme across Southampton. Parents are furious about the cuts to these services, where staff have been cut along with money for children's trips. Woolston library has had its opening hours cut by one day a week. The Save Southampton Youth Services campaign fought hard to stop the closure of the local youth centre in Woolston. While a reprieve for a year has been won, its sessions have been cut from three to one a week. How many of these services will disappear next year unless Labour councillors stand up and refuse to implement the Con-Dem cuts? On the day after this byelection, Labour will still have a majority whatever the result. What is the point of electing one more Labour councillor who will put their hand up for Con-Dem cuts? Every vote we receive will be a powerful message to Labour councillors, 'Stand up and fight the cuts, or step aside for those who will!'

1983 - when Marxists became MPs

The 1983 general election, when Labour nationally received its lowest share in the poll since 1935, was not the overwhelming triumph for Thatcher which historians claim. The Tories' popular vote fell nearly 2%, or 700,000 votes, compared to 1979. But three million fewer workers voted Labour than in 1979.

The capitalist-inspired scheme for splitting the Labour vote had partially succeeded. Disenchanted Tory voters and some Labour voters also swung over to support the SDP [Social Democratic Party - a right-wing split from Labour - eds] / Liberal Alliance.

The right wing effectively sabotaged Labour's campaign. Party leaders Denis Healey and James Callaghan explicitly distanced themselves from the manifesto commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Labour's radical proposals were undermined when the leadership was incapable of answering the question: "How will it be paid for?" Foot emphasized the need for borrowing and devaluation, reinforcing the impression that Labour intervenes to spend its way out of a crisis. This raised the idea of a massive expansion in public expenditure but without the economic base [ie a socialist plan of production - eds] to sustain it.

The election results in Liverpool, however, stood out in marked contrast to most other regions. Completely against the national trend there was a 2% swing to Labour in Liverpool. This, Militant commented, "was due in no small measure to the influence of Militant supporters in that city, where Terry Fields was elected as MP in Liverpool Broadgreen". Broadgreen was the second or third largest swing to Labour nationally in 1983.

Alongside Terry Fields in Parliament was Dave Nellist, Labour MP for Coventry South East, who also chalked up a notable victory in the election.

In Parliament the working class found no better representatives than Terry Fields and Dave Nellist. The class loathing which workers on Merseyside felt for the Tory victors was voiced in Terry Fields' maiden speech in Parliament.

New MPs are expected to congratulate opposition speakers and wish well to their retiring or defeated constituency rivals. Such pleasantries were cast aside when Terry Fields spoke. He was there to represent the Liverpool workers. His full speech was printed in Militant [see extract, right].

In 1983, half a million youth were to be subjected to industrial conscription at £25 a week. Dave Nellist's forceful maiden speech highlighted gathering opposition to the Tories' Youth Training Scheme (YTS). Dave ardently championed the rights of youth in his nine years in Parliament. His speech pointed out:

"Only one in ten of those leaving the fifth form last summer have found work. In a city (Coventry) built on engineering, only 243 out of 5,000 who left school this summer found apprenticeships... I speak today as the youngest Labour member elected in last month's general election.

"That gives me a special responsibility in this place to champion rights, and to give voice to, the hopes and aspirations of millions of young workers."

Pointing to a switch in the Tory government's attitude towards youth he asked:



Dave Nellist (right) during the '83 election campaign, speaking alongside miners' strike leader Arthur Scargill photo John Harris

"What changed their attitude? The principle answer is the events of the summer of 1981 - the riots on the streets of Liverpool, London, Manchester and other major cities - desperate action by tens of thousands of teenagers to draw attention to the poverty, despair, demoralisation, harassment and anger of being young and unemployed under a Tory government..."

"Thousands of YOPsters [young people on the government's Youth Opportunities Programme for 16-18 year olds] have been recruited by the Labour Party Young Socialists into membership of the trade unions... I issue a warning to the government. Do not be misled by the siren voices of the media into believing that we are witnessing the creation of a right-wing generation of youth or that the labour movement is demoralised or weak when faced with another term of Tory rule..."

Our labour produces the wealth, which the government's capitalist society squanders on useless weapons of nuclear destruction, on tax cuts to the super-rich, on stockpiles of food at a time of growing poverty and on keeping five million people unemployed. As society approaches a crossroads, the socialist programme will gain significant support."

Unfortunately the election of Neil Kinnock [following Michael Foot's post-election resignation] as Labour's new leader with Roy Hattersley as his deputy, was the start of many changes in the party. Kinnock was the perfect "left" screen, behind



which the right began the counter-revolution against the gains on policy and programme registered between 1979 and 1982.

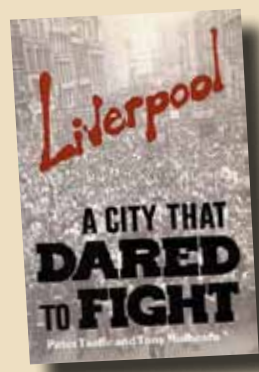
Soon after the election, the reselection of Labour MPs was challenged by the right. All the conservative forces in the Labour Party - the place men and women, self-seekers, the party's officialdom, and the union leadership - looked for a figure to front their "counter-revolution" which laid the basis for New Labour."

Sadly Terry Fields died in 2008. Dave Nellist is a member of the Socialist Party and helping to build for the time when the working class, in Terry Fields' words, arise from their knees and banish capitalism to history.

Want to read more?



The Rise of Militant by Peter Taaffe £9.99



Liverpool: A City That Dared To Fight by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn £14.95

Available from Socialist Books PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD 020 8988 8789 bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

socialistbooks.co.uk

Terry Fields (left) introduces the third Militant-supporting MP, Pat Wall, to Parliament following Pat's election in 1987 photo Dave Sinclair

Terry Fields: 'A militant is a moderate who has got up off his knees'

"Maiden speeches are supposed to be non-controversial but having listened to the cant and hypocrisy from the Conservative benches it is difficult to keep my temper let alone observe the proprieties of this place. For the working class people who sent me here to represent them, matters in our area are far too pressing and urgent.

The solutions I will be proposing to the problems of our people will be controversial to the government but not to the people of Broadgreen and Liverpool. Because of those policies, we obtained victory in Broadgreen in the general election.

Conservative members talk about privatisation. Let us call it by its proper name - asset-stripping. It is the reward and rake-off for those who gave £20 million in handouts to the Tories to fight the election.

I hope that members of the Post Office Engineering Union [now part of the CWU union - eds] and other organised workers will stand up and fight the government's proposals to close their industries and sell them to private individuals.

Since the Tories came to power in 1979 Merseyside has lost 48,000 jobs. One firm a week has closed its doors. About 12,000 jobs a year are going - that is 33 jobs every day of the year. Unemployment on Merseyside is currently about 150,000. In some areas 94.7% of young people are unemployed. That is the grim reality of Tory Britain for the people I represent.

In the 5 May local government elections the people of Liverpool ditched the Liberal-Tory ruling alliance and elected a Labour-controlled Liverpool

city council to fight to reverse the decline of our once great city.

On 9 June the people of Liverpool elected five Labour members out of a total of six. They campaigned uncompromisingly on socialist policies, which the electorate of Liverpool have accepted as the only hope for the majority in society in the face of heartless Toryism.

Workers in Liverpool who have had to suffer longer and harder than workers in most areas from the excesses of capitalist exploitation have turned correctly to a political solution for their problems.

Socialism not defeated

At the start of the election campaign, the prime minister said she was giving the British people an opportunity to banish socialism and Marxism from the land. Others stronger than she have tried and failed. Labour may have been defeated at the election, but socialism and Marxism have not been, and will not be, defeated in the eyes and hearts of the working class.

My election victory in Broadgreen, which for decades was a marginal, refutes the prime minister's boast. The media, seeking to denigrate me and the socialism I stood for, made great play of the label 'militant'... I wear the badge of a militant with honour.

A militant is only a moderate who has got up off his knees. In time, the whole working class will arise from their knees, and you will not be laughing then.

Towards another Tory party

The Labour Party was transformed from a workers' party at base - albeit with a capitalist leadership - into an unalloyed party of big business that has left the working class without a political voice.

Under Neil Kinnock's leadership, the Labour Party executive expelled Terry Fields and Dave Nellist before the 1992 election.

Terry Fields had been jailed for refusing to pay the poll tax. But, instead of standing alongside the working class, Kinnock said: "The Labour Party does not and never will support breaking the law. Mr Fields has chosen to break the law and he must take the consequences. He is on his own."

It seems Kinnock thinks it's 'better to break the poor than break the law!' Terry Fields was expelled on the evidence that he had made a call for Labour to "nationalise the commanding heights of the economy"!

Dave Nellist was expelled for refusing to repudiate Militant.

The third Militant-supporting MP Pat Wall, elected in 1987, died in 1990.

The witch-hunt against Militant supporters, the Militant MPs and the left of the Labour party by the right wing were all steps towards pro-big business, anti-worker New Labour.



Needed: new social housing NOT unaffordable rents

Helen Pattison
East London Socialist Party

Newham council is currently housing 29 families outside the east London borough, including ten that have been shipped out to Birmingham.

A family involved in the No Bedroom Tax in Newham campaign is now threatened with being moved out of the area by the council to either Luton or Birmingham.

Speaking to the mother of four, it is obvious the move will hugely disrupt the children's education - two are studying their GCSEs - as well as having a big impact on her disabled brother who she also cares for.

Newham council admits it has a shortage of good-quality housing with around 24,000 people on its council house waiting list.

The all-Labour council has spent £30 million on B&Bs for homeless families in the last three years. There is an urgent need for affordable housing in Newham and across London.

No evictions!

The No Bedroom Tax in Newham campaign calls on the Labour council not to evict any families because of the bedroom tax; this will just make the problem worse. They need to start building affordable social housing now.

Last month the council held an event where those being affected by the bedroom tax could add their names to the council housing waiting list and apply to downsize. But the Labour councillors used the event to blame the Tory government for the bedroom tax.

Yet, other councils have said they will not evict because of bedroom tax arrears for one year. Three councils are reclassifying rooms as studies or boxrooms so the bedroom tax is not applied.

No Bedroom Tax in Newham and East London Socialist Party calls on all councillors to refuse to implement the bedroom tax, reallocate rooms and stand up for the community by building the houses we need.



photo Jim Halfpenny

Campaigning against the bedroom tax

Scotland

Over 2,000 people attended the anti-bedroom tax rally in Glasgow's George Square on 1 June, called by the Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation.

Cheryl Gedling from PCS Scotland stated that the trade union leadership had a responsibility to lead the fight against austerity, including a 24-hour general strike. The rally also heard speakers from the EIS and UCU trade unions.

Brian Smith, Socialist Party Scotland member and Glasgow City Unison secretary, made demands on Scottish National Party (SNP) and Labour politicians in the Scottish Parliament and local councils not to implement the bedroom tax. Luke Ivory, federation national secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member, explained that the SNP government and Labour councils could bin the bedroom tax tomorrow through borrowing powers and changing legislation, but are not willing to fight the Tories. Luke also raised the idea of standing anti-cuts election candidates.

Federation chair Tommy Sheridan appealed for everyone to become "organisers against the bedroom tax in your area".

"Can't pay, will stay" was the headline on the 163 copies of the Socialist (paper of Socialist Party Scotland) sold at the rally.

Matt Dobson

Warrington

Activists from Bootle, Halton and St Helens joined Warrington Against Cuts and Warrington Against the Bedroom Tax campaigners to leaflet the Fairfield and Howley ward of Warrington Council, in support of rebel councillor Kevin Bennett.

Several thousand leaflets were delivered. Headed, "I am still your councillor," the leaflet explained why he voted against cuts and calls for no evictions for bedroom tax, and also his subsequent suspension from the Labour group.

The other side of the leaflet gave practical advice on appeals and discretionary payments for bedroom tax, and called on the council to re-designate houses out of liability for bedroom tax and pledge no evictions.

Warrington Against the Bedroom Tax

Coventry

The Coventry Against the Bedroom Tax campaign is gathering pace. Over three consecutive days we held two excellent public meetings, followed by a lobby outside the board meeting of Whitefriars Housing.

28 people attended the meeting in Hillfields. In Stoke the next day, over 40 people came to a meeting. Former Labour MP and Socialist councillor Dave

Nellist spoke at both meetings. Tenants were given appeal forms to submit to the council.

One tenant explained that he'd been hit by the bedroom tax on his 'spare room' - despite the room being just 2.5 metres long and 1.3 metres wide! His landlord should stop him being affected by reclassifying the house as having one bedroom, not two.

Around 40 people came to the lobby of Whitefriars to demand that they don't evict tenants due to the bedroom tax. There are 13 members of the board, four are tenants and three are Labour councillors. If they argued for a non-eviction policy they would have a majority!

• Coventry City Council has been forced to apologise after a letter wrongly told people they could not appeal against the bedroom tax. As a result, many tenants may have missed the appeal deadline. The only solution is for the council to extend the appeals deadline for all tenants.

Dan Crowter

Bristol

Around 100 people gathered in College Green in Bristol to oppose the bedroom tax. The Bristol and District Anti-Cuts Alliance (BADACA) called the protest to keep up the pressure against this cruel and hated policy. People from estates across Bristol spoke to say how they were being

affected and how local groups formed to defend against eviction and debt collectors. BADACA will be lobbying the council meeting in a couple of weeks where the bedroom tax will be discussed. We have been pushing for this not to be a pious statement but a practical commitment to protect tenants.

Tom Baldwin

North Manchester

The fightback against the bedroom tax in Middleton, Heywood and Rochdale is well under way.

At least one person said that they had already been threatened with eviction. It was decided that an anti-cuts move-

ment for the area should be formed: Middleton, Heywood and Rochdale Against the Cuts (MHRAC).

This umbrella group staged a protest on Monday 3 June outside Rochdale council's meeting. A group of around 50 chanted slogans such as "axe the bedroom tax" and "can't pay, will stay".

Eventually the group were invited in to address members of council. Council leader Colin Lambert was 'sympathetic' but gave no commitment to a non-eviction policy.

So the campaign continues, the next meeting will be held in the Olde Boars Head Pub, Long Street, Middleton, M24 6UE on 13 June at 7pm.

Andrew Pollitt

- Scrap the bedroom tax
- Build local support for anyone who can't pay
- Demand no evictions of tenants who fall into arrears because of the bedroom tax or any austerity cuts. Build anti-eviction armies to protect our homes
- Stop all the cuts - tax bankers not bedrooms to pay for the crisis
- Trade unions to give a lead to the fight against austerity by calling a 24-hour general strike

Socialist Party national organisers' school

Ninety Socialist Party members from every region of England and Wales attended a weekend organiser's school in Staffordshire on 1-2 June. Siobhan Friel from Coventry reports.

There were a lot of sessions to choose from over the weekend. I went to a discussion about British Perspectives, one on the transitional programme for socialism, a workshop on how we can increase

sales of the Socialist and recruit new party members, and also sessions on Scotland and South Africa.

I found all of them very comprehensive and enjoyable. They were also helpful, both politically and more practically, in terms of helping me develop my understanding and ability to gain support for the party.

I found the recruitment and paper sessions particularly useful as they were set up in a way which meant everyone there spoke an almost equal amount. Nobody was given the option of not contributing - which is often tempting for shy members!

I greatly enjoyed the discussion on the transitional programme. I felt everyone there was challenged by different parts of the topic which meant we had a really involved discussion.

My favourite session of the weekend was probably Scotland and the referendum. It gave a clear description of our party's approach to the question of independence in general.

Between the sessions there was a great atmosphere, everyone seemed to have a lot of fun and to gain a lot from the sessions. All in all, a fantastic weekend.

Get involved

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Support the Fighting Fund collectathon!

Socialist Party members will be hitting the town centres and shopping arcades on Saturday 8 June for the launch of a fundraising collectathon fortnight.

Socialist Party branches will be organising extra campaign stalls, and spending more time at them, with the aim of boosting sales of the Socialist and ensuring we reach the fighting fund target for the April to June quarter.

Unlike the political parties who are bankrolled by big business and their lobbyists, the Socialist Party relies solely on the donations of ordinary working-class people.

We aim to help build a movement that can stop the Con-Dems austerity attacks in their tracks and a political alternative, through the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition, that doesn't rely on the "iron discipline" of New Labour's own programme of cuts but instead stands for resistance to all cuts.

Can you spare some time to help on a campaigning stall or with a fundraiser to bring in some extra fighting fund? Can you make a donation to help us reach our target of £25,000 by the end of the quarter on 28 June?

Ken Douglas

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	April-June 2013	Deadline 28 June 2013
Northern	600	680		
South West	1,400	1,494		
North West	1,200	849		
London	6,100	4,166		
Wales	2,300	1,561		
West Midlands	2,100	1,396		
East Midlands	1,600	1,009		
South East	750	410		
Yorkshire	2,900	1,337		
Southern	1,200	452		
Eastern	1,200	249		
England & Wales	3,650	1,517		
TOTAL	25,000	15,125		

Turkey: Mass movement challenges Erdogan's authoritarian government

For a one-day general strike as the next step in the struggle

Sosyalist Alternatif
(CWI, Turkey) reporters

KESK, Turkey's Confederation of Public Workers' Unions, announced a national strike against police violence for today (4 June) and on Wednesday. Hundreds of thousands are expected to come to the demonstrations despite the police using tear gas and batons to violently attack demonstrators.

The ongoing police brutality, beginning at the end of May in Gezi Park, on Taksim Square in Istanbul, shows again the arrogance and arbitrary police violence that the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government rests on. Hundreds were injured, some seriously. In the course of the mass movement, at least two demonstrators have been killed.

The government redevelopment of Gezi Park was the spark that triggered a political explosion. It is not only in Istanbul that protests are taking place. Hundreds of thousands are taking to the streets all over Turkey, in Ankara, Izmir and Bodrum and many other places. In total, it is reported that mass demonstrations have taken place in 67 cities.

There are some indications of divisions within the state apparatus, with military personnel distributing gas masks and even some police supporting the demonstrators. The potential exists to develop a movement that challenges the Turkish capitalist elite.

This is a turning point. The AKP has been confronted with a sharp fall in economic growth rates this year. It was able to present itself as a 'moderate' Islamic 'alternative' to the old establishment and pursued some populist social policies. But the events of the last days have shaken the rule of the AKP and prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The mass movement was initially dominated by people from the middle classes. They were quickly joined by youth from working class suburbs. Now there is an increasing involvement of the organised workers' movement (though this is still in its early stages). This may

be a harbinger of even greater mass struggles, moving towards a pre- or revolutionary situation. Splits at the top of the regime, within Erdogan's party, are also starting to emerge. The right-wing Turkish regime, a Nato ally with its own ambitions to become a regional power, is now challenged by an uprising of anger and opposition.

The nightmare of the increasingly sectarian civil war in Syria, which sees meddling by imperialist and local powers, and its dangerous spilling over into the whole region, had appeared to threaten all the achievements of the 'Arab Spring' - peoples' uprisings against dictators and for social change.

The Turkish regime cynically intervened in the Syrian conflict in its own interests. But now the start of a potential 'Turkish Summer' is offering new hope to revitalise the movements from below across the region, encouraging a potential renewal of mass struggle for democratic rights, as well as the need to bring about fundamental change in the interests of the working masses.

'Erdogan resign!'

It started on 27 May with protests by environmentalists against the cutting down of trees to allow developers, who are close to Erdogan, to build another shopping mall in the centre of Istanbul. Using police violence, developers tried to force this development through to bolster the profits of the few. In the eyes of millions, this summarised the programme of the neoliberal AKP government.

"Tayyip istifa" ("Erdogan resign"), became the unifying slogan of the movement. Sections of the CHP (Republican People's Party), the main pro-capitalist opposition, and even the fascist, MHP, have tried to exploit the movement. So far, the radical character of the mass movement has not allowed the CHP to dominate.

However, within the movement a debate on the way forward is essential. How can a mass political force be built to serve the interests of workers, young people and poor people, that is able to bring down



Protesters hurl back police tear gas canisters during the battles around Taksim Square

the Erdogan government and offer an alternative?

This movement cannot have anything in common with the old CHP elite. A new force is necessary. Therefore a political programme is needed that puts democratic rights and the struggle for jobs, decent housing, higher wages and social security to the fore; a socialist programme that does not shy away from challenging the interests of the capitalist elites and multinational companies.

Divide and rule

The wing of Turkish bosses and international corporations that are close to Erdogan have been allowed to enrich themselves for years. The politics of privatisations and neoliberal attacks and the repression of protests serve the enrichment of a few. In response, we need the united resistance of working people, the youth and the poor.

To be able to implement these policies, the AKP tries to present itself as defending Islamist values.

This is what is driving its divisive measures, such as further extending the areas where alcohol cannot be legally sold and sanctioning against people kissing in public.

With these measures and more, the AKP tries to organise support among more conservative parts of the population. This is a cynical attempt to cover the government's real policies and attacks.

Erdogan has made threats to mobilise conservative layers of the population onto the streets, to counter the protest movement. He points to his parliamentary majority and believes the AKP can draw on substantial support in society.

The mass movement needs to advocate policies that can win over the rural masses and urban poor, to cut across government attempts at divide and rule.

Tasks

The call by KESK for a national strike against police violence is the right decision. The other trade unions should follow this example and ex-

tend the strike. A one-day general strike across Turkey can be the next step to build the mass movement against Erdogan - putting the organised workers' movement to the centre of the protests.

Trade unions and Left parties and groups, like HDK (People's Democratic Congress - an umbrella party, including Kurdish parties and Left groups), Halk Evleri (People's Houses) and others, can contribute to turn this into a mass strike.

Committees based on mass assemblies in factories and neighbourhoods are necessary to defend them from the police, to organise solidarity for a successful strike, and to encourage political debates.

Bringing together elected representatives of these assemblies locally, in the cities and regions, as well as on a national level, can build the movement in a democratic way, with full accountability and the right to recall all representatives. This can be the basis for a government of workers and the poor.

Based on these steps, a movement is possible that not only brings down the Erdogan government, but can fight for an alternative in the interests of the working class, the youth and working people, in general. A mass party of the working class, with a socialist programme, is necessary.

The full version of this article can be read on www.socialistworld.net

Enough is enough! The government has long violated democratic rights, the rights of workers, trade unions and minorities. The violence in Gezi Park was only the tip of the iceberg. Around 8,000 trade union and Left activists, journalists and Kurdish politicians are imprisoned.

We call for:

- The immediate release of all people imprisoned during the protests and freedom for all political prisoners
- An independent working class commission, formed by unions and democratically elected representatives of the movement, to investigate the police repression and bring those responsible to justice
- Full democratic rights, including the right to demonstrate and to form trade unions and political parties
- Abolition of anti-terror laws and special courts and all the repressive and reactionary laws implemented by the AKP

- End repression of the Kurds

The government is also attacking public sector workers. It plans to end their job security, to cut jobs and to reduce wages.

The main public sector union, KESK, had already planned for strike action on these issues (with a date for action to be set) before the mass protests started.

At the same time, large-scale privatisations are being forced through by the Erdogan government. Corruption and cronyism, and the enrichment of a few, dominate society.

We say:

- No to any government plans to "develop" Taksim Square
- End privatisations - renationalise privatised public property!
- Increase the minimum wage!
- End attacks on public sector workers
- End policies that are in the interests of the big banks and companies



Turkish and socialist activists from Day-Mer and other groups organised rallies in London in support of the mass protests in Turkey. Among others Martin Powell-Davis, of the national executive of the National Union of Teachers for inner London and Socialist Party member, spoke in a personal capacity to condemn the brutality of the Turkish regime. A member of the CWI also addressed demonstrators gathered opposite Downing Street, sending messages of support from London to all rebellious cities in Turkey and arguing for a general strike in Turkey to confront the government with the organised force of the workers' movement

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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

One law for us

Google boss, Eric Schmidt was quoted in the Independent on Sunday 26 May saying that his company's approach to paying taxes was 'just capitalism'. I'm glad that Schmidt admits that capitalism involves the sustained and systematic theft from public funds. It's a useful argument for anti-capitalist campaigners.

Perhaps we can expect a similar liberal view on people who over-claim on their benefit by a few quid or perhaps work on the side while claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. Of course it's always been one law for the rich (ie no laws) and another (and usually draconian) law for the poor.

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

Choice cuts

Swansea council is planning to sell off school playing fields. When the previous Liberal Democrat-led coalition mooted plans to sell off playing fields, the Labour group quite rightly attacked the idea. Now we have a majority Labour administration planning to do the same thing.

They say there's a difference this time around and that it's 'fairer' in that they will 'incentivise' governors to sell off school land by allowing schools to use some of the money raised to pay for much-needed building improvements. They are forcing school governors and head teachers to choose between different needs of their pupils.

As a parent of two primary age boys, I don't want a choice of adequate buildings or decent playing fields for my kids; I want both. As a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Wales supporter, I think that any councillor supporting the sell-off of playing fields should consider their seat a potential target for a TUSC challenge in future.

Ronnie Job

Who is the leader?

In an email to a campaigner, Harlow councillor Mike Danvers said he disagreed with the 24% cut in council tax relief for jobless householders imposed by Harlow council in April, but was obliged by law to vote for it.

Councillor Danvers, who is Portfolio Holder for Resources, also said he did not support the council taking legal action against jobless householders who fail to pay council tax.

The councillor revealed that he would have to consider whether to stand for re-election to Harlow council next year

"if there is clear dissent by a sizeable number of people, as there was with the poll tax".

Our group knows that at least 1,700 Harlow householders affected by the council tax benefit changes failed to pay their council tax bill for April and we've no reason to think this figure will decrease in May.



We will continue with our campaign until Harlow council restores 100% council tax relief for jobless householders, including the restoration of the £16,000 savings limit.

Wat Tyler
Harlow council tax rebels

Childcare on the cheap

Some people may see an increase in the school day and the cutting of holidays as a positive step forward. It could be seen as a way of giving direction to disaffected youth.

However, such a move is likely to have the opposite effect. What the Tories are really trying to do is provide childcare on the cheap as opposed to any real commitment to providing good quality education.

In reality teachers, use a large portion of their holidays to get through the great mound of paperwork they don't have time to do when they are in the classroom - assessment, marking, tracking sheets, schemes of work, setting targets, lesson planning and creating innovative resources. If this 'holiday' time is taken away the quality of lessons and education will plummet significantly.

If the government was really committed to giving direction to youth in their spare time it would invest in out of school youth activity programmes rather than wielding the axe.

An agency contracted teacher

Legal aid cuts Justice in the balance



In April the Con-Dem Coalition cut legal aid in social welfare law, slashing help with social security advice, debt, some housing issues and private family law such as divorce and custody battles. Now the Ministry of Justice proposes yet more attacks on legal aid, more cuts and price-competitive tendering.

Paul Heron, executive committee member of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, shows the horrendous impact attacks on legal aid can have on some of the most vulnerable people, including children.

The new proposals will seriously undermine access to justice. Opportunities, through judicial review, to hold the government to account will be severely curbed.

The Con-Dem government has published proposals on reforming both criminal and civil legal aid. The consultation stage has now closed. Changes through secondary legislation can, if successful, be passed through parliament quickly.

Key proposals include restricting legal aid so it no longer covers advice on areas of prison law. This would severely affect serving prisoners' ability to obtain advice and assistance, for instance, about prison conditions. This is certainly something that the POA prison officers' union should take issue with.

Secondly, proposals include regulations to stop people having legal aid if they are not 'lawfully resident in the UK', which means physically being here, being lawfully here, and having had leave to be here for at least 12 months.

This will stop parents and migrant children not lawfully resident in the UK for 12 months seeking assistance under the Children's Act for temporary accommodation. It will also stop children trafficked to the UK

getting legal aid.

Cases highlighting torture and murder by the British state in Iraq would also not be brought. If these rules come through, stories in recent weeks of secret prisons in Afghanistan are unlikely to be brought without legal aid. How do we then expose these abuses?

Judicial review

Thirdly, there will be difficulties bringing judicial review actions against local councils or national government when they break the law. Law firms will only be paid for their work if the court grants permission for such action.

Often cases are settled before they get to court, usually where the council backs down, but work will not be paid for if this happens. Permission is a stage in judicial review proceedings when the court decides if a claim still raises a current issue between the parties.

A rule which will prevent lawyers bringing test cases, which may be important and affect a lot of people, but in which the prospects are, by definition, uncertain, would not be restricted by the court. But with the prospects

of lawyers not being paid for the work, their use will be limited.

Finally, price-competitive tendering will be introduced in criminal law. Big corporations such as Tesco and G4S have already shown an interest in taking the contracts.

It has been pointed out that if G4S get a contract to deliver criminal defence, they can represent a person in court, then take the defendant to prison in a van after it! They might even be paid to run the prison too!

Think back to historic miscarriages of justice that were overturned, assisted by committed lawyers. Without them we would not know the truth about the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six or the Cardiff Three. This government doesn't want this kind of analysis challenging their system and these changes will drive many committed lawyers out of business.

These attacks on legal aid go to the heart of the justice system. Now, the targets are immigrants, prisoners and criminal lawyers - perfect stooges for the Daily Mail and the Tory right. But if these attacks aren't defeated another wave of legal aid cuts could leave the fourth pillar of the welfare state a shadow of what it was.

Save the Independent Living Fund

Stuart Bracking

On 10 June, disabled people who use the Independent Living Fund (ILF) and their supporters are holding a 'party' in central London to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ILF and publicise the campaign led by Disabled People Against Cuts and Inclusion London to save it.

This follows April's disappointing judgement in a high court challenge to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 2012 consultation on the Fund's future, and the Tory/Liberal coalition's final decision to close the ILF by April 2015 which found them to be lawful.

The ILF was set-up at a time under the Thatcher government when politicians of all shades accepted the continued institutionalisation of severely disabled people was wrong. An extra level of support was clearly needed on top of exist-

ing benefits and local social services to facilitate independent living through professional care workers and personal assistants.

DWP propaganda says the Fund was only ever expected to support 300 people. But before the ILF was set up, the then Minister for Disabled People Nicholas Scott admitted the Disablement Income Group (DIG) expected thousands to apply. By the end of 1992, 22,000 had done so successfully.

In the same way that Disability Rights UK have colluded with the Con-Dems on the disgraceful closure of Remploy factories, DIG worked with Scott to establish the ILF as a discretionary trust in opposition to the disabled people's movement.

It later supported excluding older disabled people and disabled children from applying to the Fund. Despite changes to community care laws in the early 1990s, the ILF was kept, as local authorities have

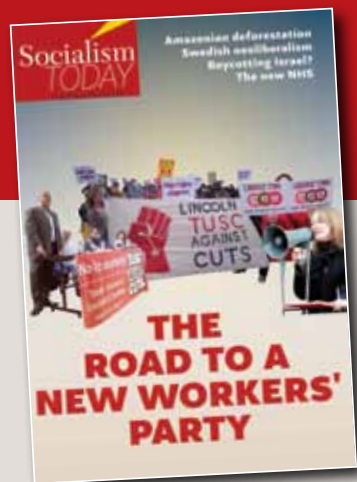
never been willing to exclusively fund the costly care packages needed by those with the most complex conditions.

The difference now is the ILF does not fit with the 'personalisation' policy and the introduction of new resource-led assessment processes at a local level which have little time for the individual assessment of need by social workers.

The ILF's closure is part of the transition from a taxation funded welfare state to a more limited one based on private insurance using the Care and Support Bill as a legislative juggernaut.

The Bill's cumulative impact over a generation will be greater than even last year's Welfare Reform Act. It must be fought.

For the 'birthday celebration' on 10 June meet between 1.30 pm and 2pm at Deans Yard, SW1P 3PA, which is at the back of Westminster Abbey



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NHS crisis: Turn anger into action

A former GP wrote to the Independent last week saying that the National Health Service (NHS) "is being intentionally destroyed in order that the sick and injured can be fully exploited for private profit. Doctors, nurses and even patients are being systematically demonised to facilitate the process and shift blame from government". "Wake up! Get angry!" he implored.

Such a view echoes what the Socialist has been saying for years; ie through 'efficiency savings', job cuts, A&E and ward closures, PFI privatisations, Foundation Trusts and, in England, the government's Health and Social Care Act, previous Labour governments and now the Con-Dems are systematically dismantling the NHS to benefit private profit vultures.

People are angry about this assault on a vital public service but they need to get organised. Health campaigners should get behind the call for health unions to build a massive national weekend demo and for trade unions to organise a 24-hour general strike to defeat this NHS-wrecking government.



Trade unionist health workers marching against the government's cuts photo Paul Mattsson

No cuts at Royal Glamorgan Hospital

United campaign against the South Wales Programme needed

Dave Reid

People in Rhondda Cynon Taff have reacted with anger and alarm at the threat from the Welsh government to close a fully functioning A&E at Royal Glamorgan hospital near Pontypridd.

The cuts at the Royal Glamorgan are part of the South Wales Programme recently proposed by the Welsh government to centralise core hospital services in South Wales in just five hospitals.

Rhondda Cynon Taff has one of the highest levels of health needs in the UK. People in the Rhondda have already lost a doctor-led service at Llwynypia hospital. Now they will be expected to travel long distances in emergencies. And the ambulance service cannot cope with the distances it already has to cover.

The South Wales Programme has been put out to public consultation ending on 19 July. Various other 'options' for centralising the services are offered as alternatives, but the downgrading of Royal Glamorgan is the preferred option. All options should be rejected because they all mean cuts.

The Welsh government has cut funding to the NHS by at least £300 million this year, close to a whopping £1 billion so far since the cuts began.

In reality the different options really come down to a choice between downgrading Royal Glamorgan or downgrading the Princess of Wales in Bridgend. The Welsh Labour government is cynically trying to play off hospital against hospital, borough against borough, working class against working class, in the hope that by dividing them they can force the programme through.

And the Labour Party representatives are more than happy to play that game. Labour Assembly Members (AMs) and MPs have trotted out in Pontypridd and the Rhondda to oppose the downgrading of Royal Glamorgan while supporting the South Wales Programme overall.

As the ITV interviewer put it to Mick Antoniw, AM for Pontypridd, "you are just Nimbys ('Not In My Back Yard') really aren't you?" It would be more accurate to describe

Antoniw and his partner in crime Leighton Andrews as 'Himbys' - they want a 'Hospital In My Back Yard' instead of someone else's. Incredibly, Leighton Andrew is a prominent member of the same cabinet that is putting forward the plan to close core services at Royal Glamorgan.

The danger is that hospital campaigners in Rhondda Cynon Taff and Bridgend will be drawn into a war against each other. The Royal Glamorgan would be likely to lose out because the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, is the Assembly Member for Bridgend.

And what will be the situation for the 'victorious' hospital? Thousands more patients from outside the area pouring into its A&E. All the A&Es are at breaking point with six hour waiting times common. There can be no winners in the war between hospitals - the NHS will be loser.

Campaign

The only way to save services at the Royal Glamorgan is to unite health campaigners across South Wales against the whole South Wales Programme. Unity really IS strength.

Unfortunately trade union leaders in Wales are so close to the Labour leadership that they prefer to bury their heads in the sand and pretend there are no significant cuts in Wales.

On the same day that the South Wales Programme was announced the Wales TUC conference dominated by trade union bureaucrats rejected a call by Swansea Trades Council to oppose the Programme. The convener of Unison Cymru, 'representing' the majority of the tens of thousands of health workers in Wales, opposed the motion, uttering the immortal words "if we pass this motion we will have to oppose all NHS cuts in Wales!"

But trade union members across South Wales will not support the campaign to downgrade any hospital. Welsh trade unionists were at the forefront of the struggle for the NHS and we will not surrender it easily.

Socialist Party members will be at the very forefront of this campaign: a united campaign to defend

Private vultures target pathology services

Lee Payne

A national directive is seeing pathology services, which include microbiology and haematology, undergo a radical transformation which has been driven by the Carter Report (2008). The report recommended the centralisation of services to both concentrate expertise and cut costs.

As a result most local district general hospitals already have or will have either a limited or no capacity to perform certain types of tests as they will become 'satellites'. Specimens will instead be transported many miles by road to the nearest super lab or 'Hub' site.

It is feared that this in itself may prove more costly, be prone to delays with the potential mix up or even loss of specimens.

Laboratory staff around the country have faced many months or even years of uncertainty surrounding the status of their laboratories and indeed their future employment prospects.

These dedicated professionals

will now have to face a selection process for the jobs which remain available to them; most of those who are successful in securing a position will face either a lengthy commute or a costly relocation. Those who are unsuccessful will be likely to face the spectre of compulsory redundancy.

Voluntary redundancy is unlikely to be offered for the fear of the more costly staff electing for this option! The lucky ones will be those who are in a position to take the option of early retirement.

By and large the new service provision will remain within the NHS and the civil service organisation Public Health England which replaces the Health Protection Agency.

However, there are grave concerns that under the government's preference of 'any qualified provider' it will not be long before the vultures such as Virgin Health and Serco swoop down and pick over the bones and carry away the most profitable services, which has already begun in some areas.

Transfer out of NHS or quit

Hundreds of NHS pathology staff at the Royal Free and University College London hospitals are being told to transfer to a new "joint venture" private health company - The Doctors Laboratory - or resign. It means that new staff cannot belong to the pension scheme nor receive childcare vouchers nor enjoy cycle schemes as at present in the NHS.

This private sector takeover is the result of previous Labour governments' decision to set up self-governing Foundation Trusts which are then able to tie in with private companies to bid for NHS work.

The Doctors Laboratory is owned by Sonic Healthcare, an Australian-based multinational company with an annual turnover of three billion Australian dollars.

In tackling outsourcing, health trade unions, such as Unison, say union reps should seek a commitment from the new employer guaranteeing no two-tier workforce. But what if the employer refuses? Clearly the unions need to build a campaign to take industrial action.

the NHS in Wales. But time is short. We must not let the Labour leaders set our communities against each other.

Needed: a strategy to stop the destruction of the NHS



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PAY CUTS, JOBS CUTS, PENSION CUTS, LOW PAY, HIGH RENTS, BEDROOM TAX...

UNITE TO FIGHT ALL THE CUTS

NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK CONFERENCE 29 JUNE

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has its seventh annual conference on 29 June. It will bring together trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners in an important forum to discuss and plan for anti-cuts action over the coming months. Crucially, activists campaigning against the bedroom tax will be joining fighting trade unionists in the debates and discussions.

Katrine Williams, president of Cardiff Trades Council and Wales chair for the PCS civil service union, and, Tommy Sheridan, Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation chair, explain why they will be at the NSSN conference:

"I have been involved in the NSSN since it was initiated by the RMT transport union seven years ago. It has proved an invaluable network over these years to get union reps together to discuss tactics on how to mobilise to defeat the cuts and attacks on our living standards.

In the PCS we are struggling to make ends meet. It is our seventh year in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) without an inflation-protected pay rise, yet big business thinks it is fine to avoid, evade and not pay £120 billion in tax every year.

But this is provoking mass anger.



Lobbying the TUC photo Dave Gorton

When a lead is given, workers show they are willing to fight. PCS joint action across DWP and HMRC is getting widespread support with our demand to close the tax gap so that we can fund a fair welfare system to meet the needs of all.

The NSSN is playing a key role in promoting the idea that those unions with strike mandates work together to coordinate our action. This would be the starting point for coor-

dination – cuts in pay, pensions and jobs, as well as privatisation mean every union has a potential trade dispute.

The NSSN campaigned and lobbied the TUC congress in 2012 to call a 24-hour general strike and the TUC voted overwhelmingly to consider the practicalities of such a strike.

The NSSN conference this year is at a key time when we can discuss

how we can build momentum for such action across the whole of the trade union movement in the public and private sectors.

Our members in PCS are keen to campaign and strike with other trade unions to maximise the effectiveness of our action.

The NSSN conference will be a great opportunity for union reps to discuss this and keep the pressure on to ensure that the trade union leadership moves on from just exploring the practicalities of organising a general strike and gets on with naming the day for a 24-hour general strike."

Bedroom tax

"The anti-bedroom tax campaign in Scotland is based in local communities. We are determined not only to oppose the tax but organise physical resistance to bedroom tax evictions.

Our Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation seeks to bring all the grassroots campaigns together, organised under one umbrella. It makes grassroots action easier to organise and coordinate.

Just like the NSSN, without local activists, groups and the promotion of grassroots activity we would be ineffective. That's what makes the NSSN so important."

The 7th annual conference of the NSSN will take place on 29 June, 11am - 5pm in the Camden Centre, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

The NSSN was initiated by the RMT transport union in 2006. Seven national unions – RMT, PCS, CWU, NUM, POA, NUJ, and BFAWU – are either affiliated to the NSSN or officially support it as well as many union branches, shop stewards' committees and trades councils. The conference will include main sessions on resisting the cuts but also workshops on defending the NHS, organising in the workplace, housing, organising the unorganised, fighting blacklisting etc. It's open to everyone in the trade unions and community campaigners.

Speakers include union general secretaries: Mark Serwotka, PCS, Billy Hayes, CWU and Steve Gillan, POA and Tommy Sheridan, Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation chair

For more information contact: info@shopstewards.net or send your fee of £6 per person to: PO Box 54498, London E10 9DE. www.shopstewards.net

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!