



Police dirty tricks - a threat to democratic rights



The revelations that an undercover police officer was asked to dig for 'dirt' that could discredit the family of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence has caused mass revulsion. The government rushed to express its shock and to offer their support to the Lawrence family and to promise "zero tolerance" of police wrongdoing.

However, police attempts to discredit the victims of the Hillsborough disaster show that this was no isolated incident. And for those who were campaigning against racism at the time, this revelation is unfortunately not a surprise.

As Stephen Lawrence's father Neville has described, the police at the time persistently asked the Lawrence family for a list of all the people visiting their house to offer support. The family courageously refused, unable to see what the names of anti-racist activists had to do with catching the racist murderer of their son. As a result they were told that they were hindering the police investigation.

Generations of workers and young people have gone through the experience of campaigning - peacefully demonstrating, protesting and striking - in defence of their rights and then being shocked to face police brutality, followed by lies being told about them being 'violent protesters'.

This was the experience under Tory governments of the miners in the mid-80s, of the millions who refused to pay the poll tax in the early 90s, and of the anti-capitalist protesters under a Labour administration at the start of the century.

It was also the experience of the many tens of thousands of young people who became active against racism in the early 1990s.

Peter Francis, the police spy asked to try to discredit the Lawrence family, has now turned whistle blower. He became disillusioned with the police because of his own experience as an 'anti-racist activist'. He says: "I had real sympathy for the 'black justice' campaigns. I also witnessed numerous acts of appalling police brutality on protesters. I

became genuinely anti-police." He was also impressed by the bravery of Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) activists in the face of police violence.

The government has promised a thorough investigation into what happened, but we've heard that before. A police investigation into the police will result in another cover up. Nor is a judge-led inquiry sufficient.

Peter Francis himself says he tried to report his role to the Macpherson Inquiry into police racism, and was ordered not to by his superiors. A number of court cases are currently underway relating to police infiltration of protest groups, but they are being heard in secret!

We demand a genuinely independent public inquiry made up of democratically elected representatives from the trade union movement and the anti-racist and environmental protest groups that have suffered infiltration.

Such an inquiry must not be limited to a supposed 'rogue unit' but should demand

access to all the information about where the orders came from, including the role of the government.

Nor should it just look at the past. The Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) - which Peter Francis was part of - disbanded in 2008, but has been replaced by the 'national public order intelligence unit' which still plays the same role. Under Tory and Labour governments police infiltration has continued unabated.

Today a new generation is becoming involved in campaigning against racism, and also against the government's austerity policies. New Peter Francises will be sent to infiltrate anti-racist campaigns and left-wing organisations to try to cut across protest. They will not succeed.

But questions about whose interests the police act in, alongside demands for them to be made democratically accountable, and for the closure of all units like the SDS, will be an important aspect of future campaigns.

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Spying exposé reveals capitalist state

Continued from page 1

Over the last month one news story about state surveillance has piled upon another. First was Edward Snowden's exposé of the collusion between giant corporations such as Google, Apple and Facebook with the US intelligence services to allow mass surveillance. Then the news that the British 'spooks' were tapping into fibre-optic cables to obtain vast amounts of data, and now the revelations of the ex-undercover policeman Peter Francis, who infiltrated YRE – a mass, democratic, anti-racist youth organisation led by Militant (now the Socialist Party) in the 1990s.

The governments of the US and Britain have defended their mass surveillance. As William Hague put it, law-abiding citizens "have nothing to fear". Mass surveillance, it is argued, is only used against terrorists and paedophiles. No one reading 'Undercover: the true story of Britain's secret police' by Rob Evans and Paul Lewis, which details the activities of various members of the SDS, could believe Hague's assurances.

The SDS was founded in 1968 in response to student radicalisation. Throughout its existence, and undoubtedly that of its successor organisation, its role was to infiltrate supposedly 'extremist' organisations, the vast majority of whom were on the left.

It was not a rogue unit. Peter Francis describes being given a bottle of whisky by then police commissioner Sir Paul Condon to thank him for his role in infiltrating the YRE, despite Condon's claims to know nothing. Nor were they alone. Peter Francis, for example, describes confronting MI5 because one of the spies they had sent to infiltrate Militant was, in his view, incompetent and endangering both their operations!

Nothing was gained by the state from infiltrating YRE or the Militant, other than, it seems, opening Peter Francis's eyes to the reality of police brutality, and particularly deaths in police custody, which he says appalled him. YRE and Militant were open, democratic organisations which did not hide their activities, as the Socialist Party is today. The police could have found out what we were doing by reading our leaflets or attending our public meetings. Nor

was it possible for police infiltrators to derail the movement against racism.

Peter Francis did, at least in part, attempt to do so, acting to some degree as an 'agent provocateur', encouraging YRE activists to take part in individual vigilante actions against the BNP, rather than the organised and democratic mass movement which YRE argued was necessary to defeat the BNP. He had no effect.

On the contrary, years of mass campaigning by YRE and other anti-racists succeeded in getting the British National Party (BNP) HQ closed down, following the four racist murders that took place within two miles of it – including of Stephen Lawrence. YRE also succeeded in building a movement across Europe, launched with a 50,000-strong European wide demonstration in Brussels.

Such was the scale of the anti-racist movement – organised by YRE, alongside others – under the slogan 'jobs and homes not racism' that the BNP were completely marginalised for a decade, before they reappeared, under an anti-working class Labour government, having replaced their skinheads with suits.

Whose interests?

However, the decision to infiltrate YRE raises an important question. In whose interests do the police and other forces of the state act? The police force claims to be neutral, acting in the interests of the majority. If the 'majority' were consulted, however, they would undoubtedly have opposed trying to smear the Lawrence family or infiltrate YRE, and would have argued for the resources to be put into trying to catch Stephen's murderers.

In reality the police play a dual role. When workers suffer crime they turn to the police. As Neville Lawrence put it, while not completely trusting the police because of racism his family had no choice but to rely on them to investigate their son's murder, no other possibility existed.

However, the police are also part of a state machine, which has the role, ultimately, of maintaining and defending the dominant interests of the capitalists. We live in a society where a tiny number of giant corporations – probably around 120 – dominate the economy. The state plays a vital role in defending the rule of this tiny

elite. This does not only apply to the police.

No one who has experienced Britain's vicious anti-democratic anti-trade union laws could doubt that the courts are used to try to prevent workers fighting in defence of their interests. Unelected high court judges are overwhelmingly drawn from the '1%' with over two thirds of them educated at public schools. Even the minority that come from other backgrounds are thoroughly inculcated with the attitudes of the capitalist class.

Today, even more than in the 1990s, the most thinking section of the capitalist class is terrified of the potential for mass growth in support for socialist ideas, including of the Socialist Party. No wonder. Their system is in its worst crisis since the 1930s. The gap between rich and poor is at its highest level since World War Two. The number of billionaires increased from 77 to 88 in the last year alone, while the average wage has fallen by over £3,000 a year in four years. Mass movements – like in Turkey and Brazil – will also erupt here.

No amount of police infiltration of left-wing organisations will prevent this – it will take place because of workers' and young peoples' own experience of austerity and the inability of capitalism to meet their aspirations. Such movements may start from anger at capitalism, rather than seeing the possibility of a socialist transformation of society, but on the basis of workers' experience there will be opportunities to win millions to a socialist programme.

In preparation for such movements the capitalist class is also preparing increased state repression. One recent sign of this was the brutal arrests of anti-G8 protesters in London days before the protests were due to take place. The surveillance revelations show that the state has, in reality, largely prepared the apparatus for a police state behind the scenes. This does not mean they can move in this direction at this stage. Even their ability to employ repressive methods depends on the balance of class forces in society. It is not a coincidence that the massive trade union demonstrations against austerity were not attacked by the police. A major reason for this is that to attack such popular demonstrations would have immediately led to an escalation in the anti-austerity movement.

Such is the overwhelming opposition to austerity in Britain that the rank and file of the po-

lice has been affected. Unlike the Thatcher government, who stuffed the police's mouths with gold, Cameron and Co have stupidly imposed the same austerity on police as on other public sector workers. It is very significant that a majority of the Police Federation voted for the right to strike. Socialists should encourage these nascent class splits in the police force, which will strengthen the hand of the workers' movement in the battles to come. We put forward a programme for democratic control of the police, including demands such as:

- For a genuinely independent public inquiry into the 'infiltration scandal' made up of democratically elected representatives from the trade union movement and the anti-racist and environmental protest groups that have suffered infiltration
- The abolition of the Territorial Support Group and other similar units
- The abolition of the Special Branch, including the national public order intelligence unit and the destruction of political files and computer records not connected with criminal investigations
- For repeal of all laws that trample over civil liberties, including the anti-trade union laws.
- For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities
- The right of the police to an independent, democratic trade union organisation with the right to strike

Such demands are a vital part of the struggle against austerity. This does not mean that it is possible to gradually democratise the state, so that it becomes a genuinely neutral tool of society as a whole.

A decisive break with capitalism is necessary, and the development of a democratic socialist plan of production that would rapidly be able to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority – that capitalism is increasingly unable to do – such as decent housing, a good job, a dignified retirement, free education. It is the capitalist class's fear of the ideas of socialism – of a society for the millions and not the millionaires – that ultimately drives police infiltration into the left. They are right to be afraid!

Teachers strike to defend education

Teachers' pay and pensions have come under sustained attack from the Con-Dems but now education secretary Michael Gove is launching further attacks on working conditions and workload. Martin Powell-Davies, a member of the national executive of the NUT teachers' union explains the strike in the North West on 27 June must be just the beginning of the action.

Members of the NUT and NASUWT teachers' union across 22 local authorities in the North West of England are being called upon to strike. Strike rallies will be taking place in Manchester, Preston, Chester and Liverpool.

Across the rest of England and Wales, teachers are being asked to show their solidarity with the North West action by wearing stickers, sending in messages and photos of support, and other actions. There was a regional march and rally in London on 25 June.

27 June has to be just the start of a bold calendar of action. At the very least, unions now need to boldly implement the existing plan for further joint NUT/NASUWT action next term. That would mean announcing the dates for the next regional strikes in September and October, as well as making plans to coordinate our proposed national strike in November with other unions looking to take action against government attacks, such as the PCS.

However, Gove already knows we've got that action planned and he's still going on the attack. To show this government - and our teaching colleagues - that we are serious, we now need to accelerate and escalate our action plans.

I believe that we should now be considering calling a one-day national strike early next term and then preparing for a two-day strike to defend teachers and education. This would be a step towards the 24-hour general strike necessary to fight all the government attacks.

- Don't let Gove destroy young people's education
- Don't let Gove wreck teachers' lives
- National strike action can beat back Gove!

Martin Powell-Davies is to stand for NUT national vice-president in an election in the autumn. NUT associations are being asked to nominate Martin for this position. For more details see: electmartin1.blogspot.com

"Pay, pensions, workload, holidays, Ofsted, surveillance... the attacks on teachers have never been as severe. In many schools this government has created an atmosphere of terror. Managers with no teaching responsibility roam schools armed with clipboards and Ofsted-inspired grids, pouncing on teachers. 'Drop-ins' that turn into capability procedures are in vogue. Education secretary Gove hopes to 'do a Maggie' and smash the teachers but this is a weak and divided Coalition which we can beat. Our 27 June strike must be just the first step in pressing back the government's offensive. We have to win. We have to escalate to win. We have to show the weak and divided coalition our iron determination. We will not be a sacrifice to Gove's ambition! Victory to the teachers!"

Peter Glover, Liverpool NUT and NUT national executive member for Merseyside and Cheshire



Teachers' pensions, pay, workload and holidays are all under attack photo Paul Mattsson

Come to National Shop Stewards Network conference, which will have the campaign for a 24-hour general strike at its heart

29 June, 11am - 5pm Camden Centre, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

Fee: £6 per person. For more information contact:

info@shopstewards.net, or see: www.shopstewards.net

Farage's tax scandal hypocrisy

Nancy Taaffe

"Frankly, the world has changed, things that we thought were absolutely fair practice ten years, 20 years ago, 30 years ago aren't any more." So said Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party (Ukip), when quizzed about his off-shore tax account in the Isle of Man. What Farage is really saying is, 'I got away with it because that's been the morality of the last 30 years and when in Rome...'

But what has been the morality of the last 30 years? It is a morality that acquiesced as MPs fiddled expenses while drawing salaries of £60,000 a year. One that allowed bankers to asset-strip companies, deprive whole towns of work and then award themselves huge bonuses.

A morality that allowed police officers to take payments from the likes of Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls and work hand in glove in smearing and criminalising people campaigning for justice. A morality that wags its finger at so-called 'scroungers' while companies at the top evade tax to the tune of £123 billion. This morality is one that the Socialist Party has campaigned and organised against for the last ten, 20, 30 years.

Same as all the rest

Tax expert Richard Murphy has said: "There are only two reasons to set up an Isle of Man trust - one is secrecy and the other is tax avoidance and the two normally go together."

Amazingly Farage has stood up in the European Parliament and criticised tax havens and specifically named the Isle of Man as an example of lax tax legislation!

The truth is this scandal shows



Nigel "no tax please, I'm rich" Farage

Farage is in the same category as all the other anti-working class politicians. Ukip is a party for the rich, and workers should have no truck with it.

Incredibly, after the TUC march of 2011 when a quarter of a million marched against cuts, Ukip members organised a march calling for more cuts! When Farage talks about the 16 million unemployed in the European Union or attacks bankers or bureaucrats, it is just rhetoric, just as his speeches about off-shore tax havens are.

The trade union leaders failed to build the movement after millions went on strike in defence of public sector pensions in November 2011, they have also been proved wrong in urging us all to sit on our hands and wait for a Labour government.

We must not allow Ukip to step into this void.

Represent yourself!

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is appealing for workers to come forward and represent themselves in 2014 and beyond. We are the ones who have consistently argued against deregulation of the city, casino speculation, privatisation, outsourcing and a general denigration of life for the majority of people both in Britain and in Europe.

Represent yourself! Don't leave it to a dodgy businessman in a pin-stripe suit who has been exposed as the fraud that we always knew he was.

www.tusc.org.uk

Labour council introduces zero-hour contracts

Ronnie Job

A Welsh Labour-led local authority has announced plans to put existing workers on zero-hours contracts. Officers in Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) want to apply these contracts, which reduce wages and take away security, for existing homecare workers.

In the article that breaks this story on Wales Online it says that three of the local authority trade unions, Unison, GMB and Unite, have written a strongly-worded letter, spelling out their opposition to this attempt to force casualisation on their members. Between them, these three unions give millions of pounds to the Labour Party each year.

The council claims that they have no choice because of cuts being made by the Con-Dem government in Westminster. As a Unison steward, I'm fed up of my union funding a Labour Party that passes on Con-Dem cuts and attacks our members' terms and conditions, while bleating they've got no choice.

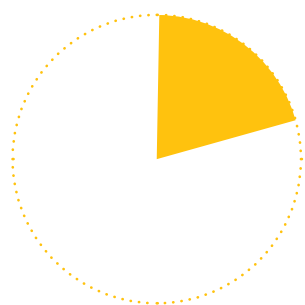
This is not the first time that this Labour council has been zealous at passing on Con-Dem cuts at the expense of local authority workers. RCT was an early pioneer of the tactic of issuing section 188 notices (essentially sacking the entire work-



Workers on zero-hour contracts earn an average of £9 an hour (gross) while people on more conventional contracts earn £15 an hour



37% of workers on zero-hour contracts are between 16 and 24



18% of workers on zero-hour contracts would like more work or are looking for another job (compared to 7% of other workers)

Source: Resolution Foundation report

force to then re-employ them on worse contracts) to drive through changes to terms and conditions.

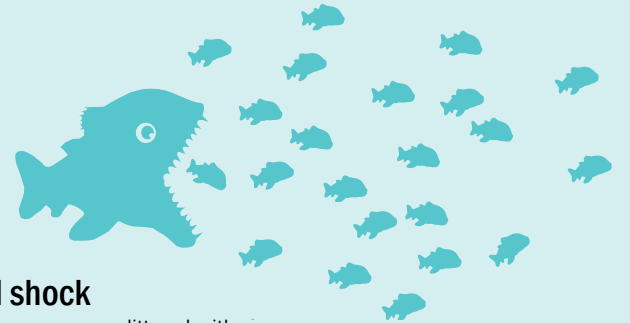
Once more the myth that public sector workers in Wales are protected by a Welsh Labour Government is exposed as a lie.

Carwyn Jones, the first minister, hails the Memorandum of Understanding, agreed between councils, local authority unions and the Welsh Government as a "break-

through moment in partnership working" and is looking to bring in something similar for the entire public sector in Wales. It looks more like a charter for Welsh Labour councils to attack our members' terms and conditions.

Fight all cuts! Break the link with Labour and support anti-cuts candidates to stand against Labour councillors who carry through Con-Dem cuts.

Them...



Tax paid shock

On 23 June papers were littered with headlines revealing the news that Starbucks had paid UK corporation tax for the first time since 2009. £5 million was handed over - half of this year's tax bill for the coffee giant. It says a lot that it's considered newsworthy that a company that makes sales of £400 million a year in the UK has paid tax. The joyful stories on each of us paying our council tax should follow shortly.

Luxury goods

More expendable income, increased confidence to spend money, expensive shopping sprees pushing up prices. Sound familiar? No, didn't think so. But apparently this is the reality for the super-rich. While the rest of us are struggling to put up with rising prices of the basic necessities, those who can afford luxury goods such as expensive cars and the best restaurants are spending more money than for years. This is also accompanied by a 4.9% rise in price tags for these items in the twelve months to April.

Business class

The number of business class flights claimed on expenses by MPs has nearly doubled in a year. In three years £500,000 of public money has been spent on business class fares. Business class passengers enjoy extra leg

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class flights for MPs
in three years

The big squeeze

Despite yet more talk of green shoots in the economy, the majority of us are finding our finances more and more squeezed. Disposable income fell to £157 a week in May while inflation climbed to 2.7%. Rising costs of basics like utility bills and food are adding pressure to already stretched household budgets, particularly with wages pretty much stagnant.

How the other half are born

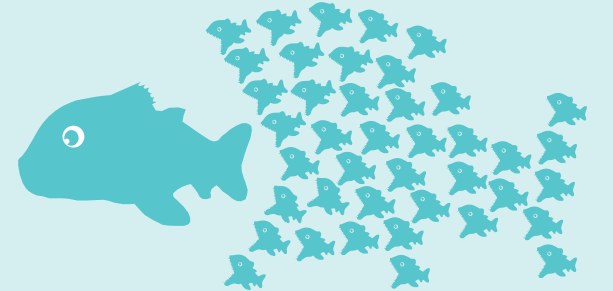
Last week's Them & Us reported on the crisis of maternity care, with shortages of beds and midwives leaving thousands of women having to travel further than planned as wards are closed. No such worries for Kate Middleton it seems. Rumour has it she'll be booking into the private delivery suite at St Mary's Hospital in London - costing £4,965 for an overnight stay and more than £12,000 for two nights and consultant's fees. No hospital food for the princess - she'll have access to an extensive menu, cooked by a hotel kitchen. And of course an extensive wine list is available to toast the baby after it's born.

room, higher quality food, and unlimited alcoholic drinks. Good to see those extra-stringent rules that were introduced to limit excesses on expenses working so well.

Coincidence?

Recent figures have shown there was a 64% jump in bankers' bonuses in April. Conveniently enough this was just at the time that the government cut the top rate of tax from 50p to 45p. Several companies even delayed payments that would usually have been made in March until after the change was introduced. The average weekly bonus in April was £143.

...& Us



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

What we heard

On the second day of the One Housing Group strike, three young guys who had been working over the road came to see what the protest was about. One proudly wore his new Unite membership card and was asking about the strike. His friends both took membership forms saying that they were apprentices and their colleague had been trying to get them to join Unite for weeks but that seeing the strike had been the last little push they needed to make them join. As well as this, no postal deliveries or collections were made for three days to the offices as everyone who saw the strike wanted to support it.

Helen Pattison



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Conference anger with Unison leadership, and Labour

There were definite signs at the recent Unison conference of a step change in delegates' views. This mood followed on from the local government conference that preceded it (see last week's Socialist, issue 770) where there was real anger at the leadership's role in scuppering a fight on pay.

Incredibly, the leadership offered their support for Scottish members, who have campaigned to secure a strike ballot. But this hypocrisy, plus the attempt to divert delegates' attention through a Service Group Executive motion calling for a fight over pay... in 2014(!) actually caused a reaction in the conference, with Socialist Party members getting a huge reception for exposing and opposing the leadership's role.

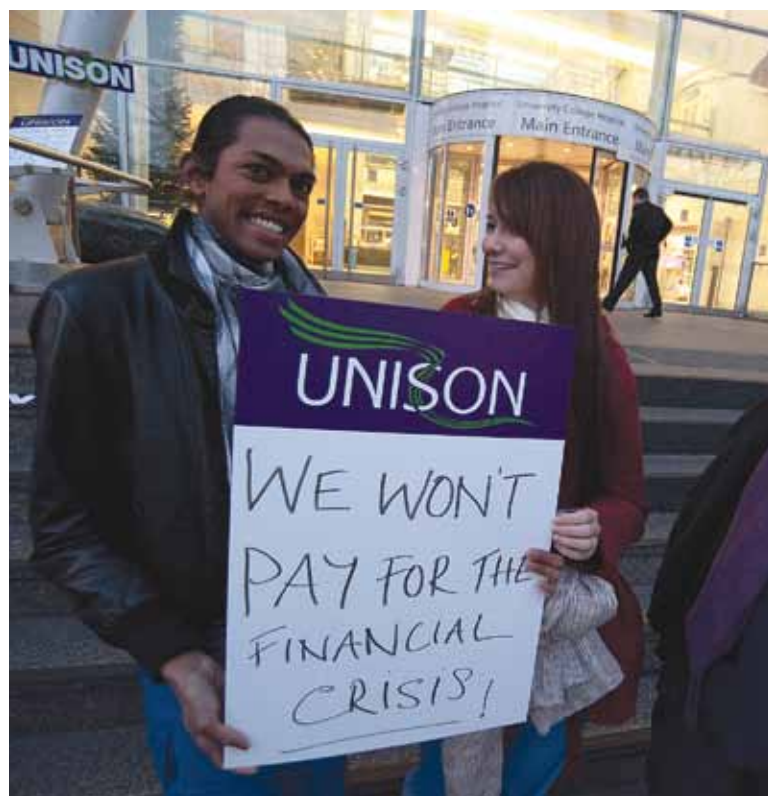
Anger at Labour

This mood, plus anger and frustration against Labour, transferred into the main conference. This was because of the role of Labour councillors passing on the brutal Con-Dem cuts and Miliband and Balls' confirmation that they will continue Cameron's austerity offensive.

In fact, one Scottish delegate announced from the rostrum that he was ripping up his membership card after being a Labour Party member for 25 years!

General secretary Dave Prentis was forced to acknowledge this mood in his conference address. He had to skirt over his role in the pay fiasco, well aware that he used last year's speech to advocate a pay struggle in order to strangle the pensions dispute.

But given the scale of the cuts, with over 400,000 council jobs lost and pay around 15% lower in real terms than in 2009, it was clearly more difficult to pull the wool over



Unison members are prepared to fight austerity photo Paul Mattsson

delegates' eyes.

Sensing the need to put on a radical sheen, he called on the TUC to declare the lobby of Tory Party conference in Manchester on 29 September a national demonstration to save the NHS. "If they won't do it, Unison and Unite will."

However, he was admonished by TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady the next day, who confirmed that the TUC had already called it.

This demonstration has the potential to be very big if the unions work to build it but Socialist Party delegates got a great response for saying that such a march shouldn't

be an end in itself but has to be the platform for mass coordinated strike action, up to and including a

24-hour general strike.


Over 50 delegates attended the Socialist Party conference meeting on this theme, at a venue some distance from the conference venue, with ten delegates signing up to join the Party over the week.

Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe and Kevin Bennett, Warrington Labour councillor suspended for his anti-cuts stance, spoke.

This year was also significant for the return to conference of Glenn Kelly and Brian Debus, from the 'Unison 4' witch-hunted Socialist Party members. Both had a great reception when they spoke, with Glenn getting a standing ovation when he tackled the leadership for their role on pay.

In what has become an annual event, Glenn and fellow Socialist Party member Adrian O'Malley from the Mid-Yorkshire NHS workers' strike were among the platform speakers in a Reclaim the Union meeting of over 90 delegates.

As a further show of support for the Socialist Party, around 220 copies of the Socialist paper were sold to delegates as well as 21 of the Southampton Socialist Party 'Don't vote for cuts - councillors have a choice' pamphlets.



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RMT: Fighting casualisation

The Annual General Meeting (National Conference) of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT) opened on 23 June in Brighton.

The first motions to be debated came from the different grades conferences and it is clear that casualisation will be a theme of the AGM. The use of agencies is growing, including Trainpeople, who provide low-paid agency staff across national rail and London Underground. But RMT is determined to resist this and maintain well-paid permanent jobs.

Speakers from sister transport unions in the USA and New Zealand offered support to transport workers in Britain. The same issues facing us on Northern Rail or the Bakerloo Line on the tube are being fought worldwide.

Steve Cotton from the International Transport Workers Federation spoke about the international scope of trade unionism and the federation's presence in Taksim Square during the recent Turkish protests.

The agenda for the week includes

important resolutions covering job security, working hours, grading and the inclusion of flat rate elements in pay claims to boost pay increases for the lowest paid. There are also many political items on the table, which reflect the radical character of the RMT.

Resolutions call for the continuation of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) project. Others endorse the position taken by general secretary Bob Crow, to call for a 24-hour general strike.

TUSC is holding a fringe meeting on 25 June, where Southampton City councillors, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas will speak. On 26 June there is a fringe meeting called by the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) to discuss making generalised strike action a reality.

There are resolutions on the agenda on the bedroom tax and many other political issues. Of particular interest will be a resolution re-stating the union's socialist clause and calling for a campaign throughout the branches to explain this part of RMT's rules to members.

PCS: members discuss next anti-cuts action

John McNally

National vice-president of the PCS civil service union, personal capacity

PCS members have been involved in action every single week over the course of the last three months. We are seeing cuts and privatisation continuing and we're seeing a massive drop in living standards, as are working people generally. So as far as our union is concerned it's not that we want to fight, we don't see any alternative to fighting.

We know that Chancellor George Osborne will announce more massive cuts in the public sector in his spending review this week. So we're organising a day of protest on 27 June. There will be rallies and other events throughout the country.

We know our action is having a real disruptive impact but ministers are refusing to talk to us because they are trying to make deals at departmental or group level without talking to the union nationally. They want to stop effective collective bargaining.

Over the next few weeks we will be discussing with PCS members and activists about the best ways of escalating the action. One of the reasons PCS is able to deliver action

consistently is that we've always consulted with members and activists, so that the action will be effective and sustainable.

We'll also try to build as many alliances as possible with other unions. Members are asking themselves why, while every part of the public sector is under attack, PCS seems to be the only union taking action. We think that's a legitimate question. So it's really good that the teachers are on strike this week in the North West (see page 2).

Every single union in our country has a grievance or a trade dispute of some sort, so it's nonsense that organising action together is too difficult.

We're approaching the fourth year of this coalition government. It's no longer good enough for union leaders to stand up at their conferences and give militant speeches and then do nothing.

Our policy is absolutely clear that all forms of protest are valid but the best way of tackling this millionaire cabinet is mass coordinated industrial action across the public and private sector. The best way forward is to build mass coordinated action, including a 24-hour general strike in order to defeat austerity.

• Follow John McNally on twitter: @JohnMcNallypcs

In brief

Chesterfield college

Lecturers at Chesterfield College have taken two more days of strike action against 70 compulsory redundancies. About 50 pickets gathered each morning at the different college gates, before joining a rally outside the main entrance. UCU members were joined by NASUWT colleagues, who also voted to strike. Non-academic staff in Unison have not been balloted, although several joined the pickets. The announcement that the well-used college nursery is to close, with the loss of ten jobs, shows Unison should be joining this fight to save jobs.

The nursery closure also shows that students will suffer if these job losses go through. Many, especially young women, will be unable to continue their courses. The quality and range of education on offer to young people not going to university will be hit.

Lecturers are angry after the college was forced to admit that it was planning to launch an academy for 14-19 year olds. Why are senior management making their staff redundant if this is the case? It can only be that they plan to hire staff on worse pay and conditions for their new venture.

Chesterfield staff were cheered by news that Kirklees lecturers were striking the same day and that Liverpool University have also voted to strike. Although the academic year is ending, plans should now be drawn up for a national strike at the start of the next term if redundancies at these colleges and universities are not withdrawn.

Jon Dale

Kirklees

On 20 June, almost 50 pickets mounted a noisy and very lively protest outside Kirklees College in Huddersfield. Their one-day strike was against the threat of compulsory redundancies and pay cuts of £12,000 a year for some. The initial target of 50 redundancies has been whittled down to around 12, but the threat of downgrading and job cuts is still live.

The college claim they need staff to make these sacrifices because the college is in debt. One picket told us: "If they get away with this, the management will do even more. They have already decimated support staff and they want to now take on the lecturers. We haven't had a local dispute for years and they have been shocked by the strength of feeling among us all. We hope today's action will force them back to the negotiating table."

Pickets are looking to coordinate action with their Unison colleagues and possibly the other teaching unions, who have their own days of action looming, to ensure they have maximum impact.

Messages of support to David Paine, branch secretary UCU: dpaine@kirkleescollege.ac.uk.

Mike Forster

One Housing

The highly successful strike by Unite members in One Housing in London has forced the management to negotiate. Unite membership has grown from 30 to 180 and is still growing in this fight against pay cuts of up to £8,000 a year in some cases.

Website

For more workplace and trade union reports see: www.socialistparty.org.uk



NSSN conference: 29 June, 11am - 5pm in the Camden Centre, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE. Entrance fee £6. www.shopstewards.net

Jack Straw forced to retract lies about Militant

In the 1980s, Jack Straw, MP for Blackburn, played a prominent part in witch-hunting socialists and purging radical policies from the Labour Party. Together with Neil Kinnock and later Tony Blair, they swung the party to the right and turned it into an out-and-out pro-capitalist party. Straw was the driving force behind expulsions in Blackburn, based on a whole bundle of false allegations and trumped-up charges. Now Straw has been forced to admit publicly that some of those allegations were totally untrue. Peter Harris, one of those expelled in Blackburn, exposes some of the dirty tricks.

Peter Harris

In his book *Last Man Standing*, Jack Straw, Labour MP and home secretary in Blair's government, claims to have a "very retentive memory" and that every effort has been made to ensure the factual accuracy of the book. But in a recent statement to the *Lancashire Telegraph*, he is forced to acknowledge a number of falsehoods written in the book.

We believe that 30 years ago, six members of Blackburn Labour Party were expelled in a political witch-hunt for supporting the ideas of the Marxist newspaper, *Militant* (forerunner to the *Socialist*), not for any alleged infringements against the constitution, but because of our socialist ideas and growing support in Blackburn.

Three key figures were involved in those expulsions. Michael Gregory, author of a report used as a basis to expel the six; Eric Smith, Blackburn Labour Party chairman and local MP Jack Straw.

Conscious lies?

Straw claims in his book that Michael Gregory approached him in 1982 and stated that he had concerns that *Militant* was "siphoning off money intended for good causes such as the miners." Now that Straw has admitted that this ludicrous and vile allegation was untrue, the question arises, were Michael Gregory or Jack Straw consciously telling lies?

Why also did Jack Straw allege in his book that Tony Mulhearn, a leading Liverpool councillor and *Militant* supporter, "stood on top of a phone box ranting into a bullhorn" at a protest at one of our disciplinary hearings, when Tony Mulhearn was not even in Blackburn on that day?

In 1983 Straw claimed that he had gone to great efforts to corroborate Gregory's report. Without ever speaking to any of the six to be expelled, Straw stated that he believed the content of Gregory's reports to be true - we believe this prejudiced the outcome of our disciplinary hearings.

Straw's history

This didn't come as a surprise! In November 1981 Straw called for a tough line on left groups in general and *Militant* in particular. And in June 1982 Straw warned that local *Militant* supporters in Blackburn would have to choose between the Labour Party and *Militant*.

Not one penny of money was ever "diverted" or "siphoned off" by us to the *Militant*. Every donation was clearly recorded and every person donating money knew exactly where that money was going.

In the two years that I was Blackburn Labour Party youth officer only one donation by the Young Socialists of a few pounds was made to the *Militant*. It was recorded in the minutes and was approved by both local and regional Labour Party officers to be totally a legitimate and



Militant supporters campaigning for solidarity during the miners' strike photo the Socialist

constitutional donation.

Another lie in Straw's book refers to an incident where I was threatened with an axe by Eric Smith. I went to Smith's house to give him a copy of our reply to Gregory's allegations.

Gregory's report had already been circulated by the Labour Party officers to every management committee member prior to our disciplinary hearings and I wanted Eric Smith to take and circulate our response. He refused to take the report and it was then that I asked for the management committee delegates' addresses so that we could circulate our reply at our own cost.

Smith told me that he would not give me those names. It was then that he called to his son to bring an axe and threatened that he would

attack me with it if I did not leave. At no time did I use threatening language or behaviour, as Straw alleges.

Growing support

It is very difficult not to conclude that the Blackburn Labour Party officers and Jack Straw in particular wanted to get rid of the Labour Party members who supported the ideas of *Militant*, who, in Straw's own words "were growing stronger by the month". *Militant* supporters had already represented the party at the last two annual conferences and held key political officer positions.

I believe that the move to the right by the Labour Party nationally, their involvement, including that of Jack Straw personally, in such atrocities as the invasion of Iraq and Hills-

borough cover-up, and the way that *Militant* supporters and other left-wing activists have been expelled or marginalised, has had disastrous repercussions for the organised and unorganised labour movement.

I believe that the Labour Party now is unable to lead the fight to defend the working class, the unemployed, young and old, and protect key public services in such areas as education and the NHS, pension rights, housing and welfare benefits.

I am forced to conclude therefore that an alternative party needs to be created. This workers' party has to be built on the basis of the socialist ideas the old Labour Party had enshrined in its constitution before the campaign for its removal by the likes of Tony Blair and Jack Straw.

Action needed to stop Royal Mail sell-off

A postal worker, Royal Mail

Workers in Royal Mail have finally had a say on privatisation, after years of listening to MPs tell us what's best for us and the services we deliver. 96% said "no!" to privatisation in a consultative ballot run by our union, CWU.

99% support the union's pay claim for an above-inflation rise for at least two years, backdated to April 2013. 92% support non-cooperation with the employer over unmanageable workloads and unachievable budgets. 92% support a boycott of competitor's mail, in an effort to highlight the unfair nature of competition, which will ultimately erode the Universal Service Obligation. 96% oppose privatisation.

The near unanimous opposition of workers to privatisation, and on a 74% turnout, shows that CWU members are up for a real fight to protect our jobs, conditions and the services we deliver.

The union leadership shouldn't waste this mandate or allow workers' anger and opposition to dissipate. We are angry, with ever increasing workloads, bullying and harassment. We want action now to stop attacks on our jobs, which will of course only get worse under privatisation.

The starting gun on the latest at-

tempt to privatise Royal Mail was fired by Labour, ten years ago. They allowed private companies to come in, cherry pick our most profitable work and dump the mail onto us for delivery.

Today 45% of all the mail we deliver is competitors' mail, although since the passage of the Postal Services Act (which paves the way for privatisation), we can now charge a 'market' rate, bringing in £80 million last year.

The boycott of such mail (termed Downstream Access or DSA mail) which 92% of us supported in the ballot, is being challenged in court by Royal Mail, with an injunction being sought on 28 June.

Following on from Labour's disastrous introduction of 'competition', Labour minister Lord Mandelson said in 2008 that 50% of Royal Mail would be sold, citing the Hooper Report, which identified the historic pension fund deficit as a problem for the company. But this arose because of the 'payment holiday' RM took for 13 years, while workers continued to pay in.

This resulted in the closure of our final salary pensions scheme in 2010, when we were shunted to an inferior defined benefit scheme. There remains a lot of anger among workers that we as a union allowed this to happen without a fight.

Our supposedly safe pensions



96% of CWU members voted 'no' to privatisation

are under threat again. A 60-day consultation period over changes to the latest scheme has just been opened by the company.

The CWU has rejected the proposals and instructed lawyers to look into the legality of them, while yet another round of lobbying MPs will begin. We will be encouraged to send yet more postcards to MPs telling them that 'they are not selling Royal Mail in our name'.

It's my opinion, and that of many people I work with, that the union's continued engagement in political lobbying of MPs is ineffectual. All the

three main parties are in favour of privatisation, in some form or another.

It's only through industrial action that we can force this government to do yet another U-turn. The government wants a sale done by the end of the year. We need to move now.

We need to link up with other public sector unions like PCS, who are in dispute, and coordinate strike action against austerity and privatisation.

Time is short but the mood is good. We need action now. Before it's too late.

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BRAZIL: A VICTORY FOR THE MASS STRUGGLE

Transport fare increases reversed but the struggle for lasting social change must continue

An estimated two million people in 100 cities took to the streets of Brazil in a gigantic protest movement on 20 June. This was preceded and followed by other huge demos. In the face of such unrest the authorities quickly rescinded an increase in transport fares which had initially triggered the protests. But appetite comes with eating and the movement has continued, despite President Dilma Rousseff's vague promise of social reform.

Many protesters are demanding immediate action from the 'Workers Party' (PT) government on growing inequality, the rising cost of living, poor public services, government corruption and more; instead of the government lavishing millions of reales on the forthcoming football World Cup and Olympics.

Andre Ferrari of Liberdade Socialismo e Revolução (LSR, CWI Brazil), which has been participating in the protests from the outset, reports on the developing struggles and explains what socialist programme is needed to take the movement forward.

Following the tsunami of mass struggles in recent days, the state government of Sao Paulo, the prefects of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the two largest cities in Brazil, along with dozens of state capitals and cities throughout the country, have decided to reduce transport fares.

The reduction in fares in so many cities represents the most significant victory for the mass struggle after suffering almost 20 years of a neoliberal offensive by the ruling class against the workers and the people.

Intransigent, authoritarian and repressive state governments have been compelled to do an about-turn in the face of weeks of intense mass mobilisations, which have swept through the entire country.

On 17 June more than 300,000 people took to the streets in various cities. Almost 200,000 marched in Sao Paulo and Rio. In Brasilia, the Congress was occupied, as was the city hall in Sao Paulo.

In Sao Paulo protests paralysed the main highways and marched to Ponte Estaiada, a monument to rich property speculators. Following brutal police repression the preceding week, which triggered even bigger protests, on 17 June the state governor decided

against further repression.

In Rio de Janeiro, however, there was strong repression and numerous arrests. Among them was a member of LSR. The comrade was charged with being a 'member of an organised criminal gang' and only released on payment of a fine.

In Belo Horizonte (in the state of Minas Gerais), where a football match for the Copa das Confederações was taking place in a new modern stadium, more people protested outside the venue than watched the game inside.

A further demonstration in Sao Paulo called the following day, on 18 June, was attended by 80,000 people, which completely took over Praca da Sé Square in the city centre.

At the same time, protests took place in Avenida Paulista, where disorganised attempts were made to take over the city hall and also the office of the city Prefect. In Rio de Janeiro, on the previous day, the offices of the state Legislative Assembly were taken over for hours by protesters in such a way that it was clearly a genuine popular rebellion.

Throughout the following day, on 19 June, radicalised mass protests took place. Motorways were blocked and closed, bus stations were blockaded

and large street marches were held by the MSTs (Movement of Workers Without Roofs), with the active participation of comrades from the LSR, in the outskirts of Sao Paulo. There were indications that the struggle was radicalising and beginning to explode in the poor areas around the city, involving workers, which put added pressure on the government.

Following the calling of new unified protests, on a national level, for 20 June, the governing authorities in Sao Paulo and Rio decided to announce a reduction in fares.

Divisions

The scale of the protests caused major debates and divisions in the governing parties. An emergency meeting was organised involving Lula (Brazil's ex-President, who has no official position), President Dilma Rousseff and the PT Prefect of Sao Paulo, Fernando Haddad. During this meeting, the Prefectura was surrounded by protesters.

The following morning, Haddad declared that a reduction in transport tariffs would be a 'populist' position to adopt.

His argument however did not last long. At a football match between

With the transformation of the Workers Party into a capitalist party and as the CUT trade union confederation has become a transmission belt for the federal government, there is a strong anti-party sentiment among wide layers of protesters

Mexico and Brazil, in Fortaleza, where the stadium was surrounded by protesters, a press conference



A huge demonstration snakes its way through the city of Belo Horizonte on 22 June



Brazilians demanding public spending on services rather than money being lavished on the World Cup



A protester is unconvinced by president Dilma Rousseff's promise of social reforms

was organised by Haddad and the governor of Sao Paulo, Alkmin, (a member of the right-wing PSDB which is in opposition to the federal government). Haddad and Alkmin announced that a reduction in fares would be implemented.

With the transformation of the PT (Workers Party) into a capitalist party and as the trade union confederation, CUT, has become a transmission belt for the federal government, there is a strong anti-party sentiment among wide layers of the protest movement.

In this situation, sections of the organised right-wing have whipped up a strong anti-party mood directed against the left-wing political parties present on the protests.

The anti-party mood has sometimes translated into physical attacks against those who carried left-wing party banners and flags. This has often arisen following the actions of right-wing provocateurs, including police infiltrators.

Given the dimension of this mass movement, all political forces in the country, including the federal government representatives and representatives of the employers, have tried, cynically, to take up the idealism of youth on these mobilisations.

In reality, the Brazilian capitalist class has entered the struggle and is challenging for the leadership of the movement, reflected in some of the demands of the movement.

In this situation, the left parties (PSOL and its internal currents, the PSTU and PCB); the social movements with a working class orientation, like the MTST and Terra Livre (which the LSR actively collaborates with); various trade union fronts, such as CSP-Conlutas and Intersindical, and others, including anarchist groupings, are now beginning to join the protest movement. This is to defend the right of the left parties to raise their banners on the protests and is aimed at preventing the right-wing gaining an influence in the movement.

Assemblies

Despite the contradictory elements in the political consciousness of those in this movement, it has been able to score a victory and force a reduction in the transport charges. The question of the movement continuing is posed. But there is not agreement between the combative social movements and the Left on this question.

The LSR is calling for organised assemblies and forums of the movement to work out demands and a programme to deepen the gains already won in relation to public transport costs. The governments that have announced a reduction in transport costs are also announcing further cuts in social programmes.

The movement should demand that the money is taken from the accounts of the private companies that operate the transport system and not from other social programmes.

Even with a reduction in transport costs the high cost of travel is a heavy burden for workers and students. The demand for free transport was an old demand of the PT which the party abandoned as it swung to the right. This demand should be taken

up again. It should also be linked with the demand for the municipalisation and nationalisation of the transport system.

The resources to guarantee this system and improve its quality should be taken from suspending the payment of debts by the state and local councils to the federal government, which are currently used to make easy profits by the banks and speculators.

Movement

To take up the struggle for a public transport system that is free and good quality, the movement needs to link up with other struggles that have arisen and the demands of workers, the youth and the people to the cities. Struggles such as the campaign against the crimes of the prepara-

Millions of reales are being spent on building new stadiums and other infrastructure projects for the World Cup, yet education and hospitals are inadequate and precarious

tions around next year's football World Cup, which include the driving of thousands of families from their homes.

Millions of reales are being spent on building new stadiums and other infrastructure projects for the World Cup, yet education and hospitals are inadequate and precarious.

There is also the need to take up the demand to defend democratic rights, for free expression and for the right to demonstrate. The World Cup means, in reality, the declaration of a state of emergency. In practice, it means criminalising poverty and social protest movements.

Also, it is necessary to deepen mass actions to draw directly into this movement the working class and to take up the methods of struggle of the working class in these mobilisations. This is the most effective way to prevent the right wing getting an influence in this movement.

The Brazilian ruling class is now preparing the conditions for a general strike. The question of a 24-hour general strike is to be posed sooner or later if the movement is to be maintained and strengthened.

There is an urgent need to build a united front of the social and left political movements in the short term. Linked to this we need to fight for a national assembly of workers, youth and the communities, to discuss a programme for the continuation of the struggle and the action needed to fight for it.

A new page has opened of the class struggle in Brazil. After a long time we have come out of the desert years of neoliberalism and downturn in social struggle. We must not lose this opportunity.

The 'good times' are over as Brazil's economy falters

Brazil is experiencing signs of a capitalist crisis and the resurgence of struggles by workers and youth. 2012 had the highest number of strikes for 16 years. Public sector workers are resisting cuts and withdrawal of rights. Also, private sector workers are demanding their share in the vaunted economic growth.

The political effects of these struggles were limited by the fragmentation of the movement and the character of the ruling bureaucratic union leaders, as well as the weaknesses of the left opposition to the government of Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party (PT).

However, 2013 has shown continued erosion in political support for the government, and the emergence of a new consciousness among broad layers of youth and workers.

The image of Brazil as a country moving towards the 'first world' is heavily undermined by a situation of very low growth (less than 1% in 2012) along with high inflation, which mainly affects the poor.

Brazil has been known as one of the 'BRICS' ('emerging countries' Brazil, Russia, India, China). And it is true that during the recent economic boom there were real gains made by workers in Brazil. For the first time, the poorest section of Brazil could buy computers and people generally saw a real rise in their living standards. Unlike in Greece and Spain, workers could not say that they were worse off than their parents. Yet this was only one side of the story of Brazil's 'economic miracle'.

There was a massive export boom of commodities to China and cheap credit had helped fuel growth in consumption. However, these policies have proved to be fundamentally reckless.

During these years, Brazil's industrial base was undermined because of cheap imports from China. The commodities boom had, in reality, reinforced Brazil's traditional neocolonial status. Many families had gone into massive debt because of the cheap availability of credit.

Brazil was the sixth largest economy in the world but the 12th most unequal. The boom heightened this contradiction.

This was shown by the recent development of infrastructure projects where you had a process of 'Chinification' as far as workers' rights and conditions were concerned. These conditions have resulted in a whole series of struggles breaking out throughout the country.

As the world economic crisis is becoming more acute and China's economy is slowing down the government is implementing adjustment programmes. Dilma Rousseff's government is making major cuts in public spending. Throughout Brazil there have been demonstrations and occupations among public transport, construction and office workers and strikes among public sector workers in 2012 and continuing now.

There is a real challenge to overcome the fragmentation of these struggles. This is why the CWI is participating within Conlutas, the radical trade union federation and the Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL). PSOL is a broad-based left party inside which different political tendencies are organised. Like other new left formations its future is very much open as some of the tendencies are politically moving to the right while others are moving to the left.

The corruption cup and games

The football World Cup in 2014 and Olympics in Rio 2016 are serving as a pretext for counter-reforms in the big cities. The construction projects related to the World Cup are causing the removal of thousands of families from their homes to make way for real estate speculation.

Instead of serving the people, cities are increasingly shaped to serve capital. The space of the city is for sale and any obstacle in the way of profit must be eliminated. All this is under a façade of 'modernisation' and 'social peace'.

Stadiums are privatised, corruption runs rampant in the construction projects of the Cup; super-exploitation of construction workers has caused accidents and deaths; contractors in collusion with state governments are profiting exorbitantly, while the rights of residents of big cities are trampled on.

However, on 14 June a national campaign began of popular movements for housing, the Urban Resistance Front, along with the World Cup Popular Committees, to denounce the World Cup 'crimes'.

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

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



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

www.socialistworld.net



Police brutality has fuelled anger in the protests

How mental health service users and carers took on Salford council

Steve Cullen

United Service Users Committee

United Service Users Committee (USUC) is a group of mental health service users and carers in Salford, Greater Manchester.

For almost 12 months we have been fighting against the removal of staff from our drop-in sessions, and against sessions being closed down or moved to totally unsuitable venues. But now these attacks have been pushed back a very long way indeed!

We are continuing to demand the service is retained in full, and are now also fighting against the council privatising the service, which we knew was always the agenda behind their "reorganisation".

Salford council and Greater Manchester West Mental Health Foundation Trust wanted to move the drop-ins from community mental health buildings into community shared buildings. Many service users have stated that they cannot go into this type of building because of their needs.

USUC has worked closely with Salford City Unison branch, which represents care workers. We've held numerous public meetings, lobbies and protests in Salford, Manchester, Liverpool and nationwide. We have gained publicity in all the local newspapers, and on radio and TV.

In November we took over the council chamber, delaying the full council meeting for an hour. We

We took over the council chamber, delaying the council meeting for an hour. We only left when mayor, Ian Stewart, agreed to meet us

only left when Salford's elected mayor, Ian Stewart, agreed to have a meeting with us.

At the meeting in January Stewart said, if we found a suitable building, the council would fund it and support it with community care workers.

He also arranged for me to address the January full council meeting.

Ignored

But then our requests for meetings with Stewart, his assistant mayor, and with the full council, were ignored for months on end.

We also had a meeting with Labour leader Ed Miliband, where he agreed to talk to Stewart.

In February we again protested in the council chamber with whistles, shouting and hanging our banner over the balcony, but all the councillors left the chamber and phoned the police! Even the police agreed with us, but politely asked us to leave.



In the council chamber photo USUC

A protest outside the Trust headquarters was covered by the BBC.

One of the drop-in sessions, at Cromwell House, closed on 25 October 2012. Since then many service users have been admitted to hospital or sectioned, and tragically we

also know of one suicide.

We even found an alternative building and put together a business proposal, only to be told that it could not be considered, because it was not council-owned.

But in June, Cromwell House

was reopened until the end of July. And with the help of a care worker, we have secured another building that we have sole use of, Gladstone Community Centre, which will remain open on Tuesdays and Thursdays indefinitely.

Campaigners pressure Bristol mayor and council into 'no evictions' policy

Mike Luff

Bristol Socialist Party

'No eviction' for bedroom tax victims is now the official policy of Bristol City Council.

All four parties - Labour, Greens, Tories and Lib Dems - and the mayor gave full support to a 'no eviction' resolution at Bristol council's full meeting on Tuesday 18 June.

All the councillors also called on mayor Ferguson to review the definition of a bedroom, reclassify box rooms, downstairs rooms and small bedrooms - which he agreed.

We have had two demonstrations and local meetings across the city, building opposition to the bedroom tax.

There will now be a working group of councillors who will look at the details of the new policy, so our campaign will continue.

Tom Baldwin (mayoral candidate last year for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) spoke at the council meeting on behalf of

the Bristol and District Anti Cuts Alliance.

His call to stop all council and social housing evictions and for a home building programme was supported by the full public gallery.

The mayor and councillors also supported the resolution calling for the building of social and affordable homes.

But while the councillors are keen to promote 'localism', there was no mention of building a city-wide mass campaign to fight for more housing and against the cuts.

They also seemed to be suffering from mass amnesia, forgetting that it is their parties' policies which introduced and maintained these financial restrictions that have decimated council housing.

We can't trust councillors who have shown no opposition to a 9% budget cut, including over 300 local authority job losses and the eviction of old people from their residential homes.

There is the prospect of similar cuts for the coming year. We will be

vigilant, hold them to their promise (especially after the government said it will ignore room reclassifications and still cut funding), organise to prevent evictions if they happen, and we will keep up the fight against all cuts.

Taunton Socialist Party launched

On Wednesday 15 June, Taunton Socialist Party held its launch meeting with an introduction on "what we stand for" by Jim Thomson.

This followed a successful Taunton Saturday campaign stall, where people we met showed their anger over many issues, spanning youth unemployment, to the bedroom tax, to the privatisation of the NHS. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 3 July.

Find out about Socialist Party events near you:
socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Lessons for today from an anti-poll tax bailiff buster

Elaine Brunskill

Newcastle Socialist Party

During the mighty anti-poll tax campaign I was a Bailiff Buster. In Gateshead most of us were feisty women who were determined not to let any bailiff get past us - and they never did!

At one house I vividly recall standing shoulder to shoulder with a group of Bailiff Busters to defend a woman's belongings.

The burly looking bailiff had the tables turned on him, he was now the one being intimidated.

Some women were holding baseball bats, though I'm sure these were for playing on the field with their children later in the day!

Children from the estate also upset the bailiff by shoving pebbles into the exhaust of his car.

The bailiff implored us to stop the children, but unfortunately we couldn't remember who the children were.

The following day the bailiff re-

turned unannounced at the woman's door.

He just wanted her to know that he had handed in his notice, he couldn't take the hassle of being confronted by Bailiff Busters.

He also pleaded with the householder if she would let everyone from the estate know he was no longer a bailiff!

Bedroom tax

Now, over 20 years later, people from working class communities are again facing a vicious government. Just like the poll tax, the bedroom tax is a blatant attempt to transfer wealth from the poorest to the richest in society, and just like the poll tax this iniquitous bedroom tax can be defeated.

As part of the campaign to beat the bedroom tax, we need to set up anti-eviction armies in every community where councils or housing associations are threatening to carry out evictions. Don't just get angry, get organised!

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Yorkshire	2,900	1,729								
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England & Wales	3,650	3,105								
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2012 London bus strike victory showed potential for militant union fightback

A London bus driver

A year ago - on Friday 22 June 2012 - London bus workers held a successful one-day strike across the capital. Big, lively, noisy picket lines started across London in the early hours, with Unite flags, banners, whistles, vuvuzelas and guest appearances from the union's giant inflatable rat!

Unite the union's strike demanded a £500 bonus for all London bus workers for the extra stress and workload expected from July to September during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The union first raised this claim in September 2011 but the big bus companies, Transport for London (TfL) and the Tory London mayor Boris Johnson had all failed to reply.

Among bus workers, there was the feeling of a lack of fairness. Other public transport workers in London seemed to be getting their bonuses. But I also found a persistent scepticism among workmates. Even after strike dates were announced, some workers still anticipated a shoddy last minute union compromise with the bosses. Many garage reps and company convenors had a reputation for being in the pockets of management.

Clearly this was the thinking behind the bosses' refusal to talk to Unite too.

But gradual changes in Unite's officialdom, with new general secretary Len McCluskey, and within the London and Eastern region, helped ensure workers were really mobilised for a fight.

Decisive 'yes' vote

The vote for action was a decisive 94% in favour. Boris Johnson complained the turnout was low, but it was the same 38% that returned him as mayor that May!

Peter Kavanagh, Unite's regional secretary, said: "Bus workers are on the frontline of London's transport system dealing with millions of passengers yet all TfL has done so far is insult them."

"TfL's Leon Daniels, who earns £234,000, accused bus workers of being 'reprehensible' even though he himself is in line for a £80,000 bo-

nus tied to the Olympics."

As the strike loomed Boris Johnson blinked. Maybe he sensed the public sympathy for bus workers. It probably dawned on him the effect a disrupted Olympics could have on his political ambitions.

Two days before the strike Johnson suddenly produced, like a rabbit out of a hat, £8.3 million towards a settlement and called on bus operating companies to make up the difference - another £5.7 million according to Unite.

Fortunately Unite's leaders did not rush for compromise. The big contractors, including Arriva, Go-Ahead, First and Stagecoach, milk hundreds of millions of pounds in public subsidies from TfL every year. But the mayor's offer did not provoke concessions.

First they understood that a collective defeat over the bonus could set a dangerous precedent. Second, based on past experience, they were still not sure the strike would come together.

Bosses try...

Copies of a letter from my firm's boss were put around my garage two days before strike day. It was supposed to be a heartfelt plea to workers to come into work because, despite his sympathies, he just didn't have any money to spare!

Three of the 20 firms - Metroline, London General and Arriva - obtained court injunctions to temporarily halt the strike.

At a few depots, management tried desperately to get buses on the road by bullying new drivers still on probation, or by using roadside controllers and supervisors. But very few buses went out from the striking garages.

Of London's 29,000 bus workers, a big majority were on strike. Unite membership, at around 24,000, increased by hundreds on that day alone.

Unite's organising department valuably showed a new generation of activists how to build strong, effective picket lines. Two further strike day strikes, 5 and 24 July, were named.

But no more strikes were necessary. Within days the bosses were humbled. We didn't get everything



Bus drivers on the West Ham depot picket photo Paul Mattsson

we demanded but full-time drivers saw at least £500 extra before tax. The 71% ballot to settle shows a sizeable minority were prepared to fight for more. Yet we must state clearly - this strike won an important victory.

Unite has plans to build on this success. After a successful all-London claim, we need to move towards all-London pay scales for all workers, although this will not be easy.

Equally important is building an active union in every bus garage. Again this is difficult. Every driver has their own peculiar rota line of late, middle and early shifts. Many work loads of rest days (overtime). But we'll find a way to build our union.

Unite have produced a commemorative badge for the strike and I'm proud to wear mine. But we shouldn't see this historic victory as a one-off episode. It's got to be the start of much more.

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The Socialist Party's magazine
June 2013 issue includes:

The road to a new mass workers' party
Clive Heemskerck looks at the development of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

Israel
Are boycotts an effective protest?
Q & A with Judy Beishon

Health care
Ongoing privatisation

Having a fine time? Not if you're a courier driver

A South West Socialist Party member

Van drivers fined for late deliveries, unable to take holidays for fear of being fined - this is the reality of working life for a workforce in Cardiff.

My cousin Ryan gets up at 5am six days a week and if he's lucky he's back home by 6.30pm.

He works for Yodel, formerly Home Delivery Network before it became part of the Barclay Brothers' empire, along with the Ritz Hotel and the Daily Telegraph. The new regime offered redundancy or new terms and conditions to the drivers.

That was in 2011. Life was hard enough before, but under Yodel the screw was turned ever tighter. Drivers had to buy or lease their vans and pay for their own fuel. Yodel

introduced timed deliveries with a premium price for pre-midday deliveries from such outfits as Littlewoods and Tesco.

The downside of that was a penalty clause for deliveries after midday. Yodel's answer? Shift the risk onto the drivers.

Ryan explained: "One driver was pushed to breaking point by the timed delivery policy. We're expected to travel to every corner of our round to perform our pre-midday deliveries and if we fail, we're fined £10 per parcel."

"This driver missed eight parcels for a Tesco store by a few minutes. Instead of showing him compassion, the depot manager fined him the full £80. He hit the manager and was instantly dismissed."

Yodel's contract stipulates that they must find someone else to cover their round if they have the

temerity to want a day off.

Ryan said: "Who can we expect to cover our round except other drivers? But they're usually too stretched to take on extra work and if the round is uncovered Yodel fine drivers between £90 and £250 a day. They say that's to cover the cost of a replacement vehicle, fuel and driver."

Happy Christmas

"The time a colleague was fined £250 was in the busy pre-Christmas period. Management decided it would take two drivers in two vans with two loads of fuel to complete the round. Funny they expected one man to do that work normally!"

Ryan copped a £105 fine when he took a day off but, because he's taken just three days off in the last 18 months, he's been allowed to keep

the wage he earns. A workmate has had just one day in that time.

All van drivers have to earn about £250 each week to cover fuel, insurance and van-lease. Earnings vary according to the load and at busy times drivers can earn up to £1,000 a week (minus overheads). Other weeks it can be as little as £400.

So with holidays a thing of the past and a constant threat of fines you would think drivers would be leaving in their droves. One driver found another job but Yodel threatened to fine him for every day his round was not covered during his 90-day notice period.

As Ryan said: "This intimidation should not be tolerated, but management have imposed an environment where the workers are too scared to challenge them."

Ryan speaks to drivers in other delivery companies and fines are

"One driver was pushed to breaking point. We're expected to travel to every corner of our round for pre-midday deliveries and if we fail, we're fined £10 per parcel"

not unique to Yodel. One competitor fines its drivers if they are early - as well as for being late - £25 for each transgression. If a driver is ahead of schedule they have no option but to pull over for a few minutes!

Deadly long distance weapons of war

Geoff Jones reviews *Drone Warfare* by Medea Benjamin (Verso Books, 2013)

The super-villain in a secret hideout, while his invulnerable robots pick off his enemies, is a science fiction standard. But in the world of drone wars, the 'villain' is Barack Obama and his 'hideout' an airforce base in Nevada.

In 'Drone Warfare', American anti-war activist Medea Benjamin has written a guide to how murder is committed by remote control, something all too familiar in Pakistan and other parts of the world. These drones are a scaled-up (and deadly) version of the radio-controlled small aircraft sold in high street toy and model shops.

The Predator (the name says it all), has a 48 foot wingspan, a range of 600 miles and is armed by two Hellfire missiles with high explosive warheads. Its high resolution video system enables its operators to watch individuals on the ground

from a mile high. Launched from 60 US bases around the world, they are 'piloted' at a distance from Creech Airforce Base, Nevada.

Drone manufacture is a multi-million dollar business. One firm, General Atomics of San Diego, had

It's a 'clean' form of warfare - with the nice collateral gain of big profits for companies

revenues of \$662 million in 2010, mostly from selling to the Pentagon. But the murder business has been privatised with the dirty work carried out by the mercenary firm Blackwater (now renamed the more 'fluffy' Academi) and others.

Drones are also exported to many countries and are manufactured in Britain. And the next generation of drones, such as the British Taranis, will be able to attack targets at long

range without even the control of a human operator.

Most US drones have targeted Afghanistan and Pakistan, aimed at 'beheading' Taliban and Al-Qaeda groups. But despite US denials, most of those killed have been innocent civilians, women and children. It is estimated that between 2,600 and 3,400 Pakistani people have been murdered in this way since 2004.

Leaving aside this terrible statistic, it is shocking that the 'liberal' Obama has publicly stated his belief that the US has the right to use drones anywhere in the world to assassinate any 'enemy' of the US, with no requirement for evidence or legal process.

Benjamin gives many examples of people utterly unconnected with any 'militants' murdered in this way. US ally Israel, which also considers itself exempt from international law, uses the same argument to murder women and children in Gaza.

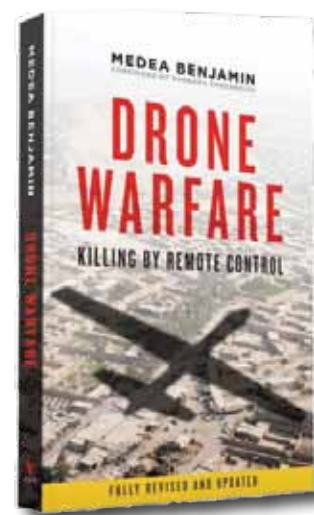
The advantage of this form of warfare is clear. The killing happens far from international observers or me-

dia. No US troops are in harm's way. It's a 'clean' form of warfare - with the nice collateral gain of big profits for companies closely linked to government agencies.

But on the ground in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Gaza, Yemen and more, things are very different. Living under the threat of invulnerable drones must surely kindle in people an abiding hatred of those preaching about 'democratic values' while reserving the right to wipe out whole families without warning.

There is no way that the strategy pursued by the US and their client governments can ensure peace, let alone growth and development in those areas. The way to defeat reactionary forces in these countries will come from the people themselves like Asif Iqbal, a schoolteacher who had defied the Taliban to keep his school open in Waziristan, killed by a drone strike in 2010 and Malala Yousafzai, shot by the Taliban for demanding an education.

So the next time Obama proudly announces the death of an Al-



Qa'ida 'leader', ask, was he actually a leader or just a mistake by a bored operator in Nevada? Who gave the US government the right to kill him without trial? And how many of his family, children or neighbours' children were killed with him?

To get more detail of the drone attacks on Pakistan go to: <http://drones.pitchinteractive.com/>

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.

Idle capital, idle bosses

Last week some providers of the slave labour 'Work Programme' said that the needs of the 'hardest to help' jobseekers cannot be met. This is no surprise. These profiteers treat unemployed people, especially the ill and disabled, as an inconvenience - a hindrance to them making vast sums out of misery and desperation.

Not a word is said about discriminating employers, or companies that don't make reasonable adjustments so they can hire longer-term unemployed people.

The £850 billion 'idle capital', which big business won't invest because it sees no profit, should be taxed at 50%. This could be invested to start to give anyone without a job the chance of a decent future and standard of living.

Plenty urgently needs to be done, such as the building of high-quality affordable housing, schools and hospitals, plus associated jobs. This would remove the need for exploitative schemes like the Work Programme which mainly add to the wealth of big business and drive down pay and conditions for us all.

Karen Seymour, Mansfield

Strike against bullying

I agree with Linda Taaffe that PCS civil service union members cannot be asked to strike against welfare reforms. However an issue hitting PCS members and claimants where members could take action is over bullying and targets.

A friend with mental health issues on Employment Support Allowance recently got a letter from DWP saying she'd been overpaid £6,000 with a schedule for paying it back. She had not been overpaid, she was told the overpayment occurred eight years ago when she had been working! Completely untrue but enough to set her health back.

I had my Tax Credit cut by 15% without explanation. An advice centre worker said a claimant was sanctioned for missing the post code off an employer's address. A refugee neighbour speaking little English was told to provide a CV including a heading: "What is your mission statement?" He was terrified of

losing benefits if he couldn't provide it. Are these incidents the result of a culture of bullying through expenditure targets to get people off benefits? All bullying and evidence of targeting should be reported to the union and all necessary action, including if needed strike action, taken to stop it. If this happens an issue potentially dividing DWP employees and claimants, can in fact unite them.

Katy Fields

Care quality questions

A healthcare commissioners' inspection into a mental health rehabilitation unit run by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust found that, after the Francis Report into failings at Stafford Hospital,



photo Paul Mattsson

basic standards of care may not have been met closer to home.

Inspectors were unhappy about standards of cleanliness and hygiene particularly in the food preparation area. Filthy mattresses were found piled up in a room a patient was sleeping in. Confidential information about patients was found close to an open window, where anyone could have accessed it.

It is perhaps not surprising, in an organisation where a limited number of staff receive health and safety training, that this problem has occurred. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the public body tasked with maintaining standards in our hospitals. But recent allegations

on cover-ups of poor standards, designed to protect the CQC and not the patients it serves, mean that Trust staff are losing confidence in reporting problems to them.

Staff do not always feel Sussex Partnership's incident-reporting procedure is fair or effective, or that their line manager will be supportive if a concern is raised. These factors add up to a perfect storm of ineptitude and fear, with patients again bearing the brunt.

Staff report they would not recommend their own workplace as a good place for a friend or family member to receive care. This is a damning indictment of the service from its own employees' mouths. Service users deserve better than having to try to recover from major mental illnesses in squalid conditions. I will contact the Trust to ask how they will deal with the situation and look forward to their reply.

Sharon Mitchell, Brighton

Turkey and Brazil

Massive anti-government protest movements recently erupted in Turkey and Brazil. The causes of these separate movements were different, but the economic background is very similar. Both countries seemingly bucked the world recessionary trend and experienced several years of economic growth.

Also common to both movements is that this temporary economic upswing only benefitted a tiny segment of society - namely the crony capitalists - while most of the working and middle classes still suffer hardship and poor services. A third similarity is these protests' non-political party mood. This represents a previous failure of the established left parties to provide a clear alternative to these corrupt governments and the capitalist system they represent. But spontaneity and 'non-political' protests cannot seriously challenge the rotten capitalist system. What is required is the construction of democratic working class parties equipped with a clear socialist programme.

Simon Carter, east London

Austerity doesn't work

You are right to say "No" to austerity in the name of ordinary working people everywhere (13 -19 June). Austerity kills as researchers David Stuckler and Sanjay Basu found when they looked at the impact of austerity on people's health and well-being.

Governments that protected the welfare state (like Iceland) were able to defend the good health of citizens. Countries that cut back health and welfare in the name of reducing deficits, created real health problems. The rise of HIV infections in Greece is a good example.

Stuckler and Basu also found that countries who did not cut back so harshly also tended to recover better in economic terms. Austerity is lousy economics. Their book 'The Body Economic: Why Austerity Kills' lays out the clear facts.

Graeme Kemp, Telford

A 'No Gove' area?

Martin Powell-Davies' excellent article (Socialist 770) outlines Michael Gove's antediluvian view of education. The idea that a student's progress should



photo Senan

be tested in a few hours of desperate regurgitation of 'facts' mugged up the previous night at the end of the summer term, (without regard for example to people who suffer from hay fever) is stupid. Govean education will turn out people capable of passing such examinations, but little else.

But Martin didn't mention that these 'reforms' will only hit students in England. In Wales, education minister Leighton Andrews, pledged to keep the present system which, although not perfect, is streets better than Gove's proposals. But Welsh Tories are already putting on pressure, claiming that Welsh qualifications will not be 'recognised'. That's nonsense, but we must fight to make sure

that Andrews doesn't weaken, and for an even better system.

**Geoff Jones
Llanelli and West Wales
Socialist Party**

Quality work not wanted

A strike ballot is pending among BT engineers in east Kent over the sacking of a worker who is generally regarded as being one of the best engineers on the job; quality work, conscientious, etc.

This means he doesn't reach Openreach's (the BT owned company that employs field engineers) new productivity standards which prioritises quantity over quality. Members see defending him as a way of fighting the oppressive performance management regime where the company 'manage' out of a job those that don't work quickly enough or aren't 'reliable company people'. Significantly the strike ballot was the initiative of rank and file members not the union branch

Clive Walder, Birmingham

Bankers

A friend sent me a text today saying: "The bank charged me £35 for an unplanned overdraft when I haven't even gone overdrawn. I ***** hate them, costing the taxpayers hundreds of billions in bailouts and then charging me for going overdrawn. I don't spend money I don't have unlike them!"

Ben Mayor, York

People's Assembly

The People's Assembly on 22 June had high hopes of overturning the government's austerity policies. But none of the political elite are remotely interested in fighting - Labour councils (and one Green council) are pushing through Tory cuts and Ed Balls says there will be no change if Labour is elected.

Significantly Owen Jones ended his keynote speech by evoking the memory of the anti-poll tax movement. It will take something as inspirational and well-organised as that movement to confront this government.

The anti-poll tax movement was viciously opposed by the Labour leadership, yet it succeeded in humiliating Margaret Thatcher and led to the iron lady's meltdown.

If the People's Assembly could get the TUC to organise that general strike they keep promising it would be excellent. If they support anti-cuts candidates against what are popularly called the Labour traitors that would be even better.

Derek McMillan

People's Assembly: Thousands oppose cuts...

But leaders sidestep strategy for victory

Judy Beishon

Socialist Party executive committee

Comedian and actress Francesca Martinez summed up the mood of the 22 June People's Assembly (PA) in London when she told the closing rally: "We don't have a coalition between the Tories and Liberal Democrats, we have a coalition between the politicians and big business ... We have got to demand better".

It was reported that over 4,000 people had registered for it: a spectrum of the left across the country, including former Labour activists, disenchanted present Labour members, trade unionists, community campaigners and left organisations. The closing plenary filled the 2,160-seat Westminster Central Hall and over-flow space was used.

Anti-austerity

The message from the top tables was strongly anti-austerity, with plenty of examples given of the suffering and poverty being caused by the government's cuts, and calls for a redistribution of wealth.

There have been much larger anti-cuts events - including the half a million strong demonstration on 26 March 2011, the two million workers on strike on 30 November 2011 and the tens of thousands-strong local demonstrations against NHS cuts in Stafford and in Lewisham this year - nevertheless this was substantial in size for an indoor event and a further indication of the widespread anger that exists against the cuts onslaught.

The organisers want to build a mass, broad movement against austerity, with assemblies in every town and city. But for this to succeed in defeating the cuts, gathering large numbers for meetings, days of action, etc, is not enough; the PA would also need to arm the movement with a strategy for defeating the cuts. Unfortunately the 22 June event wasn't a forum for democratic debate on the programme needed against the cuts, nor did it answer the central question of what needs to be done.

Labour Party member Owen Jones in the opening rally raised the anti-poll tax movement as an example of the mass resistance that is needed. That movement defeated the poll tax, so has valuable lessons

for today. Among those lessons is that its organisers - led by Militant (now the Socialist Party) - didn't only call for the building of anti-poll tax groups in every town and city but we spearheaded a structure for the movement that enabled democratic debate and decision making locally, regionally and nationally.

Crucially, the leadership put forward a strategy that could concretely defeat the poll tax - in particular mass non-payment and the mechanics of building it. The task now of defeating austerity, against not just one attack but a storm of them, is a much greater one.

But just as vital - more so given the devastation being inflicted - is arming the anti-cuts movement with a strategy that can succeed. The key, over-riding next step in this battle needs to be the full mobilisation of the seven million workers in the trade unions, uniting in a 24-hour general strike to force the government to back down.

Wanting to emphasise this, Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, wasn't even called into the PA session titled "Tactics for the anti-austerity movement", despite requesting to contribute both before the event and during the session.

He was later allowed a one-minute contribution in a session on the NHS, where his call for the trade union leaders to organise a 24-hour general strike was met by applause and cheers, as did other calls made during the day for coordinated trade union action.

General strike

In the closing rally, Len McCluskey - leader of the largest trade union in the country, Unite, stressed that one year's earnings of the world's top 2,000 billionaires could wipe out extreme poverty on the planet.

When he went on to say that local PAs need to be built, some cries of "strike!" broke out across the hall. "I'm coming to that" he replied, and went on to receive applause for saying that we have to "work together to create the right climate for yes, mass industrial action". A few people then shouted "name the date!"

However, rather than promising to make it his business to help convene discussion between the left union leaders on preparation for coordinated action and the naming of a date, Len unfortunately just quipped that he would leave it to PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka - also on the platform - to name the date.

Mark Serwotka rightly drew attention to the excellent example that his union has set in taking national industrial action in 2011-12 and this year and said that every union should have been involved. He recognised: "the potential if the marches and occupations were supported by millions of trade unionists withdrawing their labour". Like Len, he too can help fulfil this potential, by doing everything he can to draw the left union leaders together to discuss concrete preparation.

The PA organisers though, while "supporting" strike action when it occurs, are unwilling to add the PA's voice to the call for a 24-hour general strike. They are either against promoting it themselves or wanting to keep on board trade union sponsors who oppose it. This call should have been emblazoned on a giant banner in Central Hall, but it wasn't



Thousands attended the London assembly on 22 June photo J Beishon

even part of the written proposals for the assembly and these couldn't be amended at the event.

Former leading SWP member John Rees, speaking for the PA organising committee went so far as to argue in the closing rally that it's "ridiculous" for anyone (seemingly aimed at the Socialist Party) to elevate any particular form of action over others: "we need all forms - demonstrations, direct actions, occupations, as well as strikes" he declared.

This is deliberately downplaying the most powerful and unifying weapon that the anti-cuts movement has at its disposal - a clear lead and action by the trade unions, which could draw into the struggle all those affected by austerity.

Other limitations of the PA leadership include that it tries to keep on board 'anti-cuts' Labour and Green councillors, MPs, etc, who vote for or defend cuts budgets, without urging them to oppose all cuts in deeds as well as words.

Also in the name of a broad church, it avoids supporting the idea of a new workers' party being necessary, despite the recent pledges of the Labour leaders to continue with Tory spending cuts if Labour wins the next general election - which were condemned at the PA.

The PA leaders prefer to promote politicians like former Labour MP and London mayor Ken Livingstone, who spoke at the PA to advocate in vain that a Labour government should adopt some radical pro-working class measures.

New party

Mark Serwotka, however, emphatically attacked the Labour leadership for being pro-cuts and privatisation and Ken Loach raised the need for a new party when he spoke in a subsidiary session (he wasn't on a plenary session platform).

After Labour began its rightward shift, the Socialist Party was the first left organisation in Britain to recognise the need for a new party to provide political representation for workers.

We are presently involved in building the electoral alliance TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) that is developing an anti-cuts challenge at the polling stations to all the cuts-making parties.

I chaired one of the sessions at the People's Assembly - At the Sharp End - about the cuts in benefits. There were some good sessions - in the session on organising in the unions, left lawyer John Hendy mentioned that in 1979 82% of workers in Britain were covered by collective bargaining agreements but in 2013 it's only 26%. That's an indication of the neo-liberal assault.

PCS will support the PA - but it cannot just be a safety valve for the anger that is out there. What people wanted to hear was a strategy to protect our class; this has to be through mass coordinated industrial action, which is the best form of civil disobedience.

John McNally, PCS vice-president

We will argue in the PAs the urgency of developing this challenge, but have to point out that the PAs have an inbuilt obstacle to this path because of the stance of their leaders.

A new mass workers' party, when it's formed, may well have a membership with a similar diversity of views to the thousands who attended the 22 June PA - ranging from advocates of a redistribution of wealth under capitalism, to those who have drawn the conclusion that capitalism can no longer deliver decent living standards for the majority in society and so must be removed.

Such a party will be a great step

forward if it promotes workers' interests and has a structure that allows democratic debate and decision-making. The election of delegates to committees at each level of the party would be vital to enable the necessary decisions to be made - and those who make them would need to be fully held to account by the membership.

It will also need to be rooted in the trade union movement, as the key vehicle of struggle for the millions of workers in Britain. It is they who have the power to lead the way in bringing the ruling class to its knees and to challenge the system that exists in its interests.



Mark Serwotka photo Paul Mattsson

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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 organisations including the Socialist Party.

www.tusc.org.uk

Cuts until 2020? We need councils that fight for us!

Dave Nellist
Trade Unionist and Socialist
Coalition national chair

As the Socialist went to press, Tory Chancellor George Osborne was due to announce more deep cuts to public services.

An estimated £11 billion in cuts will average about 8% in the departments affected on top of over 20% since the coalition came to power in 2010. In local government, for example, cuts mean annual spending in 2015/16 is due to be one third less than 2010/11.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Institute for Government say public spending cuts are set to last until 2020. The Resolution Foundation has predicted, under the Coalition's current plans, there will have to be a further £26 billion cut from spending by 2018. This will be unbearable.

Councils can choose not to make these misery-enforcing cuts. They could take the side of the people who elected them and put up a stand against austerity. By using their reserves and borrowing powers to avoid making cuts, councils could gain time to link up with trade unions and anti-cuts groups to build a mass movement in their support. But all three parties have shown they won't.

Tories and the Lib Dems are happy to see state spending reduced and a growing role for the private sector!

Labour leader, Ed Miliband, has promised to be "ruthless". Unfortunately, that's not ruthless with the

"This government is proving that 'if you give them an inch, they'll take a mile'! The refusal of councillors across the country to make a stand against the Con-Dems' funding cuts has simply given them the green light to make even bigger cuts. Councillors must now recognise that their appeasement hasn't worked, but that there is still time to organise a united campaign of resistance by local authorities which would stop this government in its tracks."
Keith Morrell

"It is vital we have people putting themselves forward to become councillors who would reveal an alternative to the 'we have no choice but to cut' nonsense, and put an end to Labour councillors collaborating with the Con-Dems in the dismantling of our public services."
Don Thomas

Southampton councillors Keith and Don were both expelled from the Labour Party for voting against cuts

bankers who triggered the economic crisis six years ago - he means us, its victims.

Miliband told his party's National Policy Forum in Birmingham on 22 June: "our starting point for 2015/16 is that we won't be able to reverse the cuts." He is seeking to reassure big business that Labour can be 'trusted' to carry on cutting.

Shadow(y) benefits minister, Liam Byrne, has said Labour will not promise to repeal the government's hated bedroom tax. Labour has already boasted that state benefits would rise by less than inflation each year under its watch. Shadow chancellor Ed Balls has promised not to reverse cuts to child benefit.

Such austerity isn't necessary. Britain is still an extremely wealthy country, with top companies holding an estimated £850 billion in accumulated profits which they are refusing to invest. The only 'balancing of the books' that's needed is to transfer such wealth to meet the needs of ordinary people.

Labour councils are at the front line of delivering the services Osborne threatens. With a few honourable, and individual, exceptions among Labour councillors, the councils themselves have meekly voted for cuts, closing youth centres, libraries, community centres and axing hundreds of thousands of jobs.

That's why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set up in 2010, to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to mount an electoral challenge to all pro-austerity parties (see page 11).

Next May will see elections in all major towns and cities for over 4,000 councillors. TUSC is campaigning for the biggest anti-austerity electoral challenge ever seen, to elect real fighting councillors who will use their position in the council chamber to appeal to those outside to take real action against austerity.

Why not come on board? If we don't fight to change things, nothing will change.



Fight all cuts
Come to the NSSN conference
Saturday 29 June, London
See page 2 for details

photo S Beishon

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, pay, 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!