



MILIBAND DANCES TO TORY TUNE

- Break the union link with Labour
- Build a new mass party for the working class

Dave Nellist, the chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Labour MP 1983-92, and Socialist Party councillor 1998-2012, looks at Labour leader Ed Miliband's attack on Unite the Union.

The press roared their approval - "Labour takes on the unions" was typical - as Ed Miliband announced a fundamental review in the party's relationship with its affiliated trade unions. And first out of the box, describing the change as "transformational", was warmonger Tony Blair!

Further reducing the role of the trade unions in the party they founded reinforces the 'transformation' from being a party, at least at its base, of and for, the organised working class - to a party loyal in policies and outlook to big business.

Miliband's aim is to reduce what little influence the unions have left over candidate selection and wider policy-making - further preparing the ground for a possible Lab-Lib coalition in 2015!

The same newspapers that object to elected union leaders speaking financially and politically on behalf of their organisations will

not be satisfied with the Miliband proposals.

They - reflecting the interests of big business - want to eliminate any vestige of organised working class involvement in the Labour Party and to portray Labour as divided, and its leader as weak, to make sure their first choice as government, the Tories, wins in 2015. And we've been here before.

In April 1990, Labour was 24 points ahead in the opinion polls (substantially further ahead than now). Instead of attacking the Tories in government it attacked the leaders of the anti-poll tax campaign and the socialists who supported the Militant newspaper (the Socialist's forerunner).

Socialists expelled

Labour expelled many socialists, including myself, but the Tory press wasn't satisfied. They came back for more, with papers such as the Evening Standard demanding that dozens of left supporting MPs face a similar end. Miliband attacking Unite over Falkirk will have a comparable result. And Labour lost the 1992 election!

In Falkirk, and elsewhere, Unite has tried to encourage its members to join, and then to try and

transform, the Labour Party. But instead of the tens of thousands of new members that strategy would require, only hundreds have been persuaded.

Each successive announcement by New Labour that it accepts George Osborne's spending plans, and that it won't oppose, never mind reverse, attacks on working people's living standards, makes the likelihood of persuading Unite members, or other active trade unionists, to join Labour ever more remote.

New Labour cannot be transformed, it has to be opposed. Unite's policies on full employment, decent wages, reversal of welfare and benefit cuts, opposition to privatisation and for public ownership are never going to be promoted by New Labour.

That's why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was established - to give working people a voice of their own. It already has the backing of the RMT transport union and other trade unionists at the fore of fighting austerity.

Labour clearly doesn't want the unions. Affiliated unions such as Unite should now disaffiliate and build a political party of their own.

See also pages 6&7



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Egypt: Morsi removed - polarisation grows

For independent action by workers and poor

Robert Bechert

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

The stormy and bloody developments since the removal and arrest of President Morsi by the military mark a new, challenging and dangerous stage in the unfolding Egyptian revolution.

Despite the huge, unprecedented mass mobilisation against Morsi the absence of an independent, socialist based movement of the working class has opened the doors to the dangers of sectarianism, different varieties of counter-revolution and the possible ultimate defeat of the revolution.

Morsi's end came quickly against a background of a rapid mobilisation involving a movement of up to 17 million (about 20% of Egypt's population) in mass protests (see the Socialist issue 772).

The scale, power and speed of this movement were stunning. It was an illustration of something frequently seen in revolutions; after the initial period of euphoria and hope, there are often renewed mass movements of those disappointed with what appears to be the revolution's meagre results.

Increasingly Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood government faced opposition from many sources. The failure of the revolution so far to deliver concrete economic and social improvements and the growing economic crisis fuelled increasing strikes and protests.

Morsi's November 2012 failed 'constitutional coup' attempt to give himself extra powers was for many a key event in building opposition to what was seen as a Muslim Brotherhood power grab. At the same time members of the old elite, including the military tops, who are estimated to control 8%-30% of economic output (Der Spiegel, 5 July), felt threatened by policies favouring pro-Muslim Brotherhood businessmen.

What was widely seen as the Muslim Brotherhood's attempt at domination also produced increasing opposition from more secular and Christian elements and also their Islamic religious rivals like the, Sunni fundamentalist, Nour party, which joined the protests at the end of June. This provided the foundation for the rapid response to the call by newly founded movement Tamarod

(Rebel/Resistance) for a mass petition to demand Morsi's resignation.

In a way, we have seen two separate struggles against Morsi. On the one hand, there is a mass, popular movement and, on the other hand, the remnants of Mubarak's 'deep state', especially the military tops who have their own economic and political interests, who are trying to exploit the mass opposition for their own advantage.

These two elements illustrate both the potential and dangers facing the Egyptian revolution.

Subjective factor

In the absence of the development of an independent workers' movement able to fight for a socialist alternative, the military tops, assisted by a selection of pro-capitalist politicians, have been able to seize advantage of the situation.

Clearly the generals both wanted to neuter or remove Morsi while, at the same time, feared that the situation could, from their class point of view, get "out of hand". There are reports of workers starting to go on strike on 3 July and that more planned to launch anti-Morsi strikes on 4 July; something that could have led to the working class taking the initiative through mass, even general, strike action. Clearly the generals moved to attempt to seize the initiative and prevent a popular uprising removing Morsi.

The military leaders have acted to defend both their own personal interests and those of a section of the Egyptian ruling class. At the same time, they enjoy the tacit support of the main imperialist powers and also the Israeli ruling class. There has only been very soft criticism by Obama, Hague and other imperialist leaders of the generals' coup.

This de facto military coup has allowed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood to pose as a defender of democracy. No doubt elements of the old Mubarak regime were involved in the movement against Morsi. But the huge size of the protests and their mass base stemmed from popular opposition to and disappointment with the Muslim Brotherhood's rule.

At the same time the size and determination of the pro-Morsi counter-protests are not simply religious based. Undoubtedly sections of those presently supporting Morsi are doing so because of their oppo-



An injured Morsi supporter following the shootings by the Republican Guard

sition to the military.

The developing clashes represent a real danger to the revolution, especially because it currently appears to be a battle led on the one side by the reactionary, conservative Muslim Brotherhood and other sectarian leaders and, on the other side, by the military tops.

In this situation it is absolutely essential that efforts are redoubled to build an independent workers' movement, not just trade unions, which can offer a real alternative and appeal to those workers and poor backing Morsi because of their own opposition to the military and the old elite. This is the only way the workers' movement can try to limit the ability of reactionary fundamentalist religious groupings presenting themselves as the main opponents to military rule.

The importance of this is shown in the continuing danger of sectarian divisions deepening between Sunni, Christian, Shia and more secular elements.

No to coup

There can be no support by socialists for this coup. The growing working class movement needs to keep its independence from both the military and Morsi. The involvement of so-called 'liberal' or 'left' opposition forces, like the Tamarod grouping, with the military will backfire on them.

Unfortunately many on the Egyptian left are now backing the military. This may seem like 'practical politics' but they are politically disarming the working class. Last year some left groups called for a second round vote for Morsi and now they support the unreformed military removing him. Some of these same left groups, like the Revolutionary Socialists (RS, co-thinkers of the Socialist Workers Party) in their 6 July statement, make no direct criticism of the military take-over. So, in one year, the RS has swung from supporting Morsi against his military election rival, Shafiq, to supporting

Shafiq's former colleagues removing Morsi.

Other groupings like Tamarod (to which the RS is affiliated) called for ElBaradei, an out and out pro-capitalist politician, to be prime minister and "condemned... the presidency's 'back-tracking'" when the salafist Al Nour party opposed ElBaradei. In a similar way, the RS do not consistently and concretely argue for a workers' and poor people's solution to Egypt's crisis. The RS does not link its call for the "reformation of revolutionary committees" with the question of who should form the government, other than the vague idea that "whoever is the next prime minister must be from the ranks of the January (2011) revolution".

Workers' leaders should have nothing to do with either military backed or pro-capitalist governments.

Already the military are showing how they want to run things. First they set up the power structures, dominated by pro-capitalist elements, and then, initially, said they would allow the people to vote sometime in the future after a committee revised the Constitution, while the Supreme Court would pass a draft law on parliamentary election and prepare for parliamentary and presidential polls.

Now, facing mass Muslim Brotherhood protests and retreating after the 8 July massacre, they have been forced to promise elections within months, but whether these take place is not at all certain.

Inevitably, in this crisis, a new government will come under pressure from the IMF and others to begin so-called 'economic reforms' which will probably include cuts to subsidies and other austerity measures. This will lay the basis for class struggles when the military and its government attempt to go onto the offensive, possibly using increasing authoritarian and brutal measures to try to impose their will.

This military takeover cannot in any way be described as a "progressive" one along the lines of the 1974

Portuguese revolution. But while that coup overthrew a decades-old dictatorship the failure to build an independent workers' movement capable of taking power itself meant that, after a period of time, the Portuguese ruling class and capitalism were able to re-assert their rule.

This is why it is so important that the popular movement, led by the working people and youth, organises itself to fight for its own demands and against the installation of a military backed regime.

Working class alternative

Two and a half years ago, on the day when Mubarak resigned, the CWI circulated a leaflet in Cairo arguing for "No trust in the military chiefs! For a government of the representatives of workers, small farmers and the poor!" Its demands are still valid today.

Since then there has been a tremendous development of the Egyptian workers' movement in terms of trade unions, committees and the experience of action. This provides a basis for creating the kind of mass movement that is needed.

In February 2011 we wrote that the Egyptian revolution can be "a huge example to workers and the oppressed around the world that determined mass action can defeat governments and rulers no matter how strong they appear to be."

This is as true today. The renewed mass movement in Egypt can inspire those who see revolutions not resulting in real change, as in Tunisia, the descent into a largely sectarian civil war in Syria, and the continuing repression in Saudi Arabia, UAE, etc.

But while the recent days in Egypt have shown the potential power of mass action, they also show again the need for the workers' movement to have a clear socialist programme and plan of action to answer Egypt's economic, social and political crisis, otherwise other forces can try to divert, and ultimately defeat, the revolution.



Morsi, last year, flanked with former army chief Tantawi (right)

Privileged perks for Kate and Wills... Maternity cuts for us!

Suzanne Beishon
Expectant mother

The Finland government has generously sent Kate and Wills one of the maternity 'boxes' given to all expectant mothers in Finland since the 1930s.

Many attribute one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world to these boxes. A box currently includes clothes, a sleeping bag, eco-nappies, outdoor gear, bathing products for the baby, bedding and a small mattress. All designed to aid children's start in life no matter what background they are from. To receive a box, mothers visit prenatal clinics and doctors from the fourth month of pregnancy.

But while Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge benefit from what has become such a vital and celebrated part of Finland's welfare state, pregnant women in Britain face ever increasing cuts and insecurity.

On top of huge attacks to the welfare state and in particular the NHS, including the closures of maternity units and massive midwifery shortages, expectant mothers have seen an increasing number of attacks to rights and benefits that lucky Kate will never have to worry about.

Maternity payments

The below inflation 1% rise in statutory maternity payments, meaning a cut in real terms, comes coupled with cuts to maternity and child benefits. The Health in Pregnancy Grant was scrapped in 2011. This was a universal £190 payment made in the later stages of pregnancy.

The £500 Sure Start Maternity Grant for parents on low incomes to assist with the cost of a new baby was restricted from 2011.

Child Benefit was frozen from 2011 and has been cut where one parent earns between £50,000 and £60,000 (if a parent earns above

£60,000 they get nothing). Following cuts to the childcare element of tax credits, from 80% to 70% of childcare costs, almost a quarter of mothers have had to give up work.

A study from 2005 showed that 30,000 women lost their jobs each year as a result of pregnancy discrimination. But now new charges for employment tribunals mean that unlawfully dismissed expectant mothers face paying £1,200 to make a pregnancy discrimination claim.

So while Kate is able to put her feet up and reap the benefits from Finland, have their 'flat' refurbished by the state for £1 million, receive gifts of organic baby food, have three parking spaces outside their private hospital suite (£5,500 for the first 24-hours and £1,000 for every extra day, not including doctor fees) suspended for the whole of July and many other perks of marrying into the parasitic royal family, most expectant mothers face a very different reality.



While royals enjoy the benefits of welfare in Finland, the British government cuts child provision

Stop Gove's school profits plans

Martin Powell-Davies
NUT teachers' union national executive

The Independent has reported on leaked plans that only confirm what we already knew - that Tory Education Secretary Michael Gove wants to allow big business to make a profit out of running schools.

The report confirms that he wants all 30,000 state schools to become academies.

To encourage sponsors to take schools off his hands, he wants to let academies sell off land and declare a profit to shareholders.

This 'leak' is no surprise. Gove's agenda has always been to privatise and turn schools, like other public services, into just another source of profit for the government's big business friends.

As in Sweden, allowing schools-for-profit will have a disastrous effect on education - but Gove's main concern, along with his Cabinet colleagues, is to deregulate and privatise public services.

This includes attacking teachers' pay and conditions, to drive down the cost of education so big business can more easily make profits.

Term free-for-all

Gove is seemingly introducing a 'Deregulation Bill' letting schools set their own term dates. Combined with the proposed deregulation of teachers' contracts, this is a recipe for a chaotic school calendar free-for-all where parents find their children are attending different schools with different holiday dates and overall holidays are made even shorter. English schools already

have one of the shortest summer holidays in Europe.

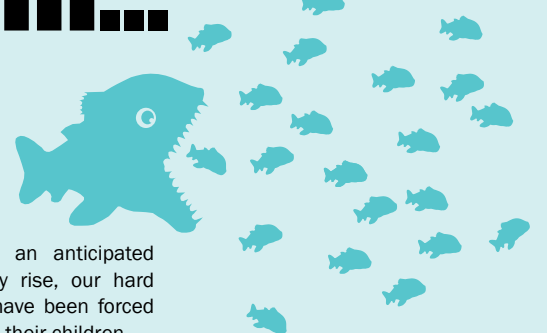
Labour's shadow education secretary, Stephen Twigg responded: "I'm glad Michael Gove has finally done something sensible". Clearly opposition to this disastrous deregulation isn't going to come from Labour!

Attacks from all the main political parties mean teachers need to take determined strike action. The 27 June strike action in North West England was a good start but, as Gove and Twigg deregulate, we will have to escalate.

The NUT and NASUWT teachers' unions should name the strike dates for next term as quickly as possible and, above all, move towards national strike days that bring everyone together and make sure the politicians and media start to take notice.

electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk

Them...



Child benefit

Before MPs collect an anticipated £10,000 a year pay rise, our hard pressed politicians have been forced to claim expenses on their children.

It seems that there is no benefit cap or cut for those who park their bums on Westminster's green leather benches. After lobbying the expenses regulator, MPs can now claim travel and accommodation expenses for their offspring.

Media reports reckon that some of the 150 MPs involved have made up to £10,000 from these welfare arrangements.

reau, 90% of benefit claimants are unprepared for the government's welfare counter-reform changes and are expected to lose out when it is introduced nationally in October. All claims are supposed to be made online yet many claimants, typically being the poorest, have not got computer access to the internet.

Housing slump

Nearly one million new affordable homes are required, according to the homelessness charity Centrepoint.

A survey commissioned by the charity says that 934,388 more properties at below market rents, in England alone, are immediately needed. The biggest shortfalls will be in London, with 186,333 affordable homes needed, the East Midlands with 132,587 and Yorkshire and Humber with 128,478. Despite this pressing social need the government is set to preside over the worst housing slump since the 1930s and instead continues to subsidise high rent private landlords and the sell-off of more council housing.

More repeats

Ageing rockers the Rolling Stones returned to play Hyde Park for the first time since their 1969 concert attended by 500,000 people.

However, while fans back then enjoyed the show for free, this time punters had to shell out between £134 and £2,000 a ticket; (particularly galling given that guitarist Keith Richard fluffed the chords to the opening song, Start Me Up).

As the FT quipped: "As Karl Marx almost said, history is tragedy repeated as commerce."

Runaway train

The deadly freight train derailment which flattened Lac-Mégantic in Canada was an accident waiting to happen. A surge in environmentally unfriendly Canadian oil production, combined with a deficient pipeline infrastructure, has led to oil companies transporting more crude oil by rail.

One estimate reckons that 140,000 carloads of crude oil will be shipped on Canada's tracks this year - up from 500 carloads in 2009. The Lac-Mégantic disaster is the fourth freight train accident in Canada under investigation involving crude oil shipments since the beginning of the year.

Universally damned

Government minister Iain - 'I can live on £53 a week' - Duncan Smith, the architect of the hated bedroom tax, is intent on further bashing welfare claimants with his unworkable universal credit later this year.

According to the Citizens Advice Bu-

Paying the piper

The Conservative Party have always had a dislike of the trade unionists interfering in the concerns of their betters.

This dislike has now been taken up with enthusiasm by Miliband. It is not permitted for trade unionists to have a view on political matters. Politics is a rather dirty game for gentlemen and the working classes should know their place and keep out of it.

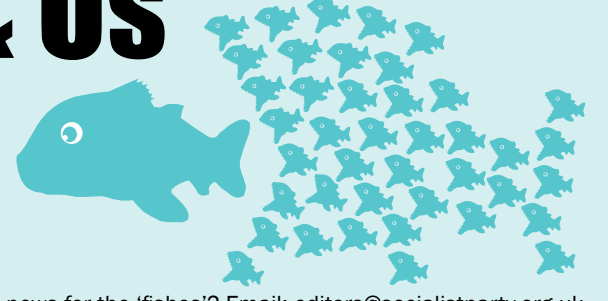
Of course the payments of large sums of money by private companies - ie companies which make a lot of money out of the public - that is quite OK.

Can I assume that next time I reach the checkout at Sainsbury's I will be asked to opt in or opt out of the hundreds of thousands they give to the Conservative Party? Mmm thought not.

However if the Labour Party wants to distance itself from the trade unions, the unions could do worse than stand anti-cuts candidates against New Labour in the next election. Labour offers us nothing, it deserves nothing.

Derek McMillan

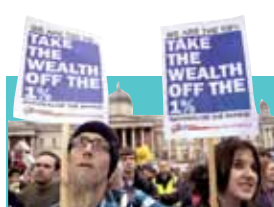
...& Us



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



Youth against Racism in Europe (YRE) supporters protest outside Scotland Yard in demand of a genuinely independent public inquiry into the 'infiltration scandal' when police spies tried to 'dig dirt' on the Lawrence family and YRE instead of investigating the murder of Steven Lawrence (see issue 771 of the Socialist for more).



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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Strong support for fighting socialist alternative in CWU

Gary Clark, CWU assistant branch secretary, Scotland No.2 branch, recently stood for election as Scottish regional secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU). He received a tremendous result: 816 against the incumbent's

The existing regional secretary, John Brown, has been in the job for the last ten years. He has been unchallenged over this period. But he is clearly viewed as pro-New Labour and someone who would not wish to challenge the union's affiliation to Labour, no matter what was happening to our members and no matter what policies the Labour Party took up. Against this background my branch, Scotland No.2, took the decision to stand myself as a clear socialist and a fighter on behalf of the membership against him.

We wanted to put forward a programme to defeat Royal Mail privatisation and defend our members' terms and conditions.

From the very start of the election it was clear that the right wing was going to do anything to stop me getting elected.

We even got a leak that some within the CWU national office were trying to block my nomination because I was not a Labour Party member.

Almost every branch in Scotland,

except two small postal branches, put forward recommendations for John Brown, so we knew this was always going to be a difficult election for us.

But we were confident that our message of fighting back would get an echo among our members.

For the first time the election was based on one member, one vote. Previously it was on a branch ballot, where a branch would cast a block vote on behalf of its members.

I took a week's leave to do a speaking tour around the offices in my branch area. (CWU rules state you can only canvass within your own branch).

And my election statement went out to all members.

Just before the end of the election we got word that the right wing had put complaints to the CWU national office about my campaign. That gave me confidence that they were on the back foot.

The result is a warning shot that our members are looking for a change.

That will not stop now the election is over.

We wanted to put forward a programme to defeat Royal Mail privatisation and defend our members' terms and conditions

981, which is a 45% vote for a fighting socialist leadership. Gary, a member of the Socialist Party Scotland, the Socialist Party's sister party, explains the campaign and the reasons for his excellent result.



CWU members need a fighting leadership photo Paul Mattsson

Lobby the TUC for 24-hour strike!

Terry Pearce

Chair, Bracknell Unite, personal capacity.

At a well-attended July branch meeting, Bracknell Unite supported the National Shop Stewards Network's (NSSN) call for a lobby of the TUC at Bournemouth on 8 September. The lobby is called in support of the call for the TUC to name the date for a general strike as agreed at last year's TUC.

Bracknell Unite has consistently supported the NSSN and sent four delegates to this year's annual conference. We have been long-time supporters of the 24-hour general strike demand.

Our branch has a long history of struggle. We were an important part of the two-year struggle to save Heatherwood Hospital in Bracknell as well as being involved with local anti-cuts group Defend Our Community Services. Therefore we understand the need to fight austerity and the policies of this anti-working class Coalition.

We support both pensioners and youth by affiliating to Youth Fight for Jobs and the National Pensioners Convention - we must build unity in all sections of the working class. We hope to send a

contingent to Bournemouth on 8 September and urge all Unite branches to follow suit.

We will be circulating details of the lobby to all 500 members of our branch. Day after day we see this government attacking our members, we are now saying enough is enough, we call on the TUC to name the date for a 24-hour general strike.

- Lobby TUC conference in Bournemouth.

NSSN rally on 8 September followed by a lobby of Congress.

Speakers confirmed so far: RMT general secretary Bob Crow and POA general secretary Steve Gillan 12.30-3pm Hardy Suite, Hermitage Hotel, Exeter Rd, Bournemouth (opposite Bournemouth International Centre - TUC conference venue) - book a seat on transport from your area: email info@shopstewards.net

For more information and a model resolution on the lobby see: www.shopstewards.net

Build the TUC national demonstration outside Tory Party conference in Manchester on 29 September. March behind the NSSN banner: 24-hour general strike to stop the Tory cuts

Peterborough postal workers walk out

The dispute at Werrington Royal Mail (Peterborough North) was still ongoing on Saturday, 6 July, with enthusiastic support from a crowd of around 100 strikers on the green just down the road from the depot entrance.

Andy Beeby, Communication Workers Union (CWU) branch chair, explained that the dispute revolved around disciplinary action taken against one of their members the previous morning.

The CWU considered this to be outside the normal agreed disciplinary procedures.

This had led to an immediate

walkout by the CWU membership.

There had been many hours of talks the previous day, including with CWU divisional representatives, but no settlement.

Talks were expected to be resumed on Monday 8 July and the CWU was remaining firm.

Cheers came from the membership as a large lorry entered the depot (at the end of a narrow cul-de-sac) solely to turn round.

It then left the depot without stopping to load or unload.

- Messages of support to: branch.chair@cwue5.org

Steve Cawley

PCS Young Members Network forum



Lobbying the TUC for a 24-hour general strike photo Paul Mattsson

Ian Pattison

I was lucky enough to represent Youth Fight for Jobs by speaking at the civil service union PCS Young Members Network (YMN) annual forum. The PCS YMN is an inspiration to other trade union youth networks.

The PCS has been at the forefront of the battle against Con-Dem austerity. It has been key to building united industrial action, and it has organised countless strikes. The PCS identified mass coordinated strike action as a way to build for a 24-hour general strike when it was discussed at the TUC. And Tory Cabinet Minister Francis Maude has singled out PCS in his attacks on trade unions.

I was joined in the youth debate

by Martin Mulligan from the RMT Young Members Network. Socialist Party members Lizi Gray (Newcastle Slutwalk) and Lee Vernon also joined me on the panel.

Lee was elected chair of the PCS YMN for the next year, alongside another Left Unity (PCS's broad left) member, who was elected vice-chair. Fifteen people came to the Left Unity fringe meeting, many at their first YMN and Left Unity meeting, including trade unionists from outside of PCS who promised to develop a network like Left Unity within their own trade unions.

There was a lot of enthusiasm for the new Youth Fight for Jobs initiative 'Sick Of Your Boss?', especially how it can be used in PCS-organised workplaces to reach new young (and angry) workers.

In brief

Equinox

The chief executive of the salary-slashing firm Equinox Care, Bill Puddicombe, verbally abused Unite members leafleting a conference in Lewisham, south London on 2 July. He also snatched Unite placards from NSSN chair Rob Williams and ripped them up. Rob pointed out he was destroying Unite property but this was to no avail. Many people attending the event showed sympathy with Equinox staff. Unite members were leafleting a care conference to publicise savage cuts in salaries - as much as 25% - being imposed on support workers. Workers were told to sign up for new contracts or be sacked. They were told that their signatures would not be accepted if they added 'signed under duress'. Now Puddicombe says he won't talk to reps about the pay cuts and refuses Unite's repeated offer to take the matter to ACAS the independent arbitrator. Equinox workers are angry and taking strike action again on 11-12 July.

Support Cains workers

On 10 May this year 38 workers at RC Brewery in Liverpool (formerly Cains) were made redundant. They were told they had to claim from the government if they wanted back pay and redundancy payments.

But a chain of pubs and a redevelopment project, the "Brewery Village" are still going strong. The workers are angry that the company seems to be avoiding its creditors, including the workers, by going into administration.

Support the workers on: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/52302>

School strike

Teachers at John Gulson school in Coventry are taking their twelfth to fourteenth days of strike action this week as teachers at the school re-affirm their commitment to fighting the new unfair and unjust teacher appraisal policy which the school's management has attempted to bulldoze in without any negotiation.

The NUT and NASUWT have attempted, over many months, to negotiate with the management of the school to resolve the issue and find a fair policy for teaching staff, but since January management has refused talks.

Remploy

The government is closing the five remaining Remploy factories in Scotland - Leven, Cowdenbeath, Stirling, Dundee and Clydebank. It also claims it has had no 'viable bids' for the factories in Norwich, Portsmouth, Burnley and Sunderland. This means over 230 disabled people facing redundancy. The vast majority of the workers sacked as a result of other Remploy closures have not been able to find work, underlining the importance that the Remploy factories have played in many disabled workers' lives.

Les Woodward, GMB convenor at Remploy said: "This is just another nail in the coffin for disabled workers who regardless of government lies and duplicitous figures do not get work. They are disadvantaged and ignored and there is no government policy to change that in the future."

Website

See: www.socialistparty.org.uk

Lifting the lid on the bedroom tax horror

John Cosgrove
Socialist Party Liverpool

Welfare Minister Iain Duncan Smith recently declared the bedroom tax had proven to be “a great success” and was “finally shining a light on the failure of the last government to sort out the mess in social housing”.

However a recent report from the National Housing Federation (NHF) has lifted the lid on the devastating effect that the bedroom tax is having on those affected on Merseyside. In the 100 days since the implementation of the bedroom tax 14,000 households on Merseyside have been unable to pay their rent. Furthermore, of the 26,500 households that are affected, more than half now find themselves in other forms of debt.

Included in the report are some figures released by the Department for Work and Pensions which say that, of the 660,000 affected nationally, 540,000 or 81% are taxed for one room. The other 120,000 or 19% ‘under-occupy’ by two or more bedrooms. This of course leads to an increased likelihood of debt or arrears for the tenant.

The problem on Merseyside however is even worse. 11% more people than the national average have two ‘spare’ bedrooms and are therefore having their housing benefit cut by 25%. This means their chances of falling into arrears and debt are vastly increased.

Landlords

The bedroom tax is not only affecting the tenants - it is also affecting the social landlords who have taken massive financial hits since the beginning of the bedroom tax.

In Liverpool two of the biggest



Campaning against the bedroom tax in Hull photo Lash

housing associations, Cobalt and Riverside, have seen it affect them in different ways. Cobalt housing, which is the primary landlord on one of Europe’s biggest housing estates in Norris Green, has already run out of money put aside for securing its houses once tenants leave. This is because of the rising number of abandonments due to the bedroom tax.

On the Norris Green estate, which has 1,007 affected properties, more than 80% are three-bedroomed. This makes downsizing almost impossible, a situation which is much the same across Merseyside.

Riverside has taken a massive hit as more than 50% of those affected by the bedroom tax haven’t been

able to pay anything towards it. It is estimated that this financial year, housing associations on Merseyside will collectively lose in excess of £22 million. This is money which could be used to build affordable social housing!

So for Iain Duncan Smith a “success” includes the suicide of grandmother Stephanie Bottrill and countless other people living in despair because of this hated tax?

Bedroom tax facts on Merseyside: Of the 26,500 households needing to downsize, only 155 have successfully done so, 14,197 are in arrears for the first time. Almost two-thirds of those affected on Merseyside are disabled.

Inside the banking system

Wendy Thomas

I work for a bank. Well not a bank, a building society. Actually I don’t work for them. I’m a contractor in an admin production line, and technically employed by a resourcing company. In other words, I have no rights. No sick pay, no holiday pay, and every month I must pay £65 to an umbrella company for the privilege of being paid my wages.

There’s no job security when even a six-month contract isn’t worth the paper it’s written on. There’s no barrier to instant dismissal if you don’t hit the targets, especially when there’s an unending queue of graduates desperate for a job. I’ve seen 17 people humiliatingly escorted from the premises since I began a year ago.

Before this I was working three part-time jobs – in a bar until 5am, admin temping and as a teaching assistant in special needs schools – so you can imagine my relief at finding a nine to five job.

Except it’s not. I pay a further £100 a month for a daily four hour bus journey but I have little choice - there are simply no jobs where I live.

At my desk, every aspect of my work is under constant scrutiny. Spread-sheet after spread-sheet detail my quality, productivity and efficiency in traffic-light colours.



Marching for decent jobs photo SP Wales

Hitting the targets is difficult, and many work obscene hours to achieve it. Now we are being monitored for amount produced in relation to time worked, so even those working gruelling hours to complete an unrealistic goal are punished. The culture of contracting is used to undercut and pressurise permanent staff, causing an atmosphere of hostility between workers.

At work, I speak to customers, often in dire financial situations, who are trying to claim back insurance they couldn’t afford but were bullied into taking. I know I am prevented from helping them. The worse their circumstances the more they’re told they needed in-

surance in the first place. It is essentially a charge for being poor.

I am often asked if I am not a hypocrite for being a socialist and working in the financial sector, but under capitalism only the rich can afford to turn down a job.

I’m a bank worker not a banker, and I see directly how impossible a financial system run for profit really is.

What we need is the nationalisation of all financial institutions under democratic control and to call for this using a one-day general strike to involve all workers – across public and private sectors, whether full-time, part-time or contracted. And when it’s called, I may not be getting paid but I damn well won’t be working!

The Socialist will be carrying regular articles on the bedroom tax. Subscribe via website. Send us your stories to: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Get in touch for campaign resources including leaflets and posters: info@socialistparty.org.uk 020 8988 8777

We demand:

- **Scrap the bedroom tax and write-off all the debt**
- **Defend all those who cannot or will not pay**
- **No evictions for rent arrears due to the tax or austerity cuts. Build an anti-eviction army**
- **End all cuts - tax the bankers and the billionaires not bedrooms**
- **For a programme of new council house building to meet social need**
- **Build a mass movement against austerity starting with a 24-hour general strike organised by the trade unions**

Birmingham Labour councillors’ promises

Mark Caudery
Birmingham

On 3 July Erdington Anti-Bedroom Tax campaign held its second meeting. Labour councillors Penny Holbrook, Josh Jones and Mick Finnegan fielded questions from the 25-strong audience.

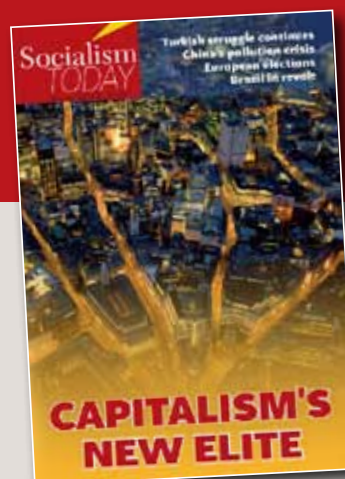
The councillors declared they would physically assist constituents facing bailiffs on the doorstep! They said that although the city council had so far failed to make a stand against the Con-Dems’ austerity policies, there remains an “unofficial” policy that the council, “had no intention of evicting anyone over the bedroom tax”.

But when national government

begins putting pressure on councils to begin evictions, can Birmingham city council be relied on to protect the interests of the most vulnerable in the city? If their track record of vicious cuts is anything to go by, this is doubtful.

The councillors were on the defensive through much of the meeting, claiming opposition to the bedroom tax but failing to show any intention to take the fight to the council chamber. It also appeared they didn’t know how angry people are about the bedroom tax.

If our councillors don’t deliver on their promises, then Erdington Anti-Bedroom Tax Campaign have stated that they are prepared to stand their own candidates. Watch this space!



£2.50 including postage:
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PO Box 24697,
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Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party’s magazine July-August 2013 issue includes:

Plutocrats

Ultra-free market capitalism has produced a new breed of super-rich

Turkey

Mass movement against Erdogan is just the beginning

Europe

The need for a workers’ alternative in the Euro-elections

Unite meets roadblock in New Labour

Time to discuss disaffiliation

Rather than opposing Con-Dem austerity, the Labour leadership has committed itself to being a Tory Party Mark II and maintaining the hated cuts. Attempting to prove itself a safe pair of hands for big business and for capitalism, Labour is also attacking its historic link to the trade unions.

After three Labour governments of war, privatisation and upholding Thatcher's anti-union legislation, and the experience of Labour-led councils carrying out Con-Dem attacks to the letter, trade union members have been asking why the unions continue to feed the hand that bites it.

Kevin Parslow, a Unite the Union branch secretary and convenor of the group of Unite members in the Socialist Party, looks at Labour's attack on Unite and argues that the membership must be allowed to debate its response, including disaffiliation.

The attack on Unite, the biggest trade union in the country, following New Labour's suspension of the election candidate selection process in Falkirk, is a decisive moment in the relationship between the unions and the Labour Party.

Unite's preferred candidate, Karie Murphy, and constituency chairperson Stephen Deans, have been suspended from party positions.

Tom Watson, New Labour's general election strategist, has resigned his position following these moves.

New Labour has scrapped the scheme, originally backed by party leader Ed Miliband, which allowed unions to pay the first year of membership subscriptions from their political funds and which Unite used in Falkirk to sign up over 100 of its members to the party.

Outrageously, Miliband is handing over Labour's secret report on the inquiry into the Falkirk selection process, not shown to Unite, to the police! Unite members will be indignant at these scandalous moves.

They have echoes of Labour alleging 'corruption' against the Liverpool city councillors and Militant who fought against cuts in the 1980s. All sorts of scurrilous stories are now circulating in the press and blogosphere about key figures in the current attack. If Unite does not fight now, the union will be seriously damaged.

Not independent

Any pretence that Ed Miliband was independent of the right wing has been blown away by this confrontation as he has become a prisoner of the Blairites faithful. Unite general secretary Len McCluskey was prophetic when interviewed in the journal *New Statesman* on 24 April this year:

"He fears, though, that Miliband could still fall under the sway of those he pejoratively refers to as 'Blairites'. He singles out the shadow foreign secretary, Douglas Alexander and the shadow defence secretary, Jim Murphy, for criticism.

"Ed Miliband must spend most of his waking hours grappling with what lies before him. If he is brave enough to go for something radical, he'll be the next prime minister.

"If he gets seduced by the Jim Murphys and the Douglas Alexanders, then the truth is that he'll be defeated and he'll be cast into the dustbin of history."

Murphy has been prominent in this crisis with scathing attacks on Unite and Len. One unnamed Blairite has called Unite an 'organised conspiracy!' Furthermore, these attacks have been egged on by Cameron, the Tories

and the capitalist press. Lynton Crosby, Cameron's Australian strategist, is said to be behind the Tories' strategy to egg on Miliband to act against the unions.

They are all in favour of a tame, pro-capitalist Labour Party. Unite must come out fighting to rebut this onslaught at every opportunity. It is concerning that, faced with the continued and sustained attack, Len McCluskey has said in the *Guardian* that he believes "Miliband is rebuilding that stock of shared values. A row over selections is not going to undo that. Only a return to New Labour could split the movement apart."

But far from 'mending' the Labour-link Ed Miliband is ending hopes that he is anything other than a servant of the Blairites in the Labour Party. 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."

And the *Evening Standard* quotes a London Labour "activist" accusing Unite of creating an "autocratic monopoly" indicating that attempts to fight for trade union-backed candidates beyond Falkirk will be met by opposition inside New Labour.

Transformation of Labour

But this is not just an organisational attack on the trade unions and the left that remain in New Labour.

As the Socialist Party has consistently

explained, this is part of the political transformation of Labour from a party based on workers, that had socialist aspirations, albeit with a pro-capitalist leadership, into a pro-big business party with similarities to the Democrats in the US.

Even from the first attacks on our predecessor, Militant, we predicted there would be further attacks on the left and left unions.

With reference to the process against the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist) Editorial Board, which led to five expulsions, we wrote: "The purge will not stop at Militant. It will grow to other left groups within the party" (Militant 628, 26 November 1982, quoted in 'Rise of Militant').

Unite is now considered part of the 'left' within New Labour and has been compared to Militant by the press. To this end, the Blairites have decided the union must be humiliated. They want to rid the party of union influence and expel unions whose predecessors helped to form the Labour Representation Committee in 1900!

Miliband will propose changes to

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

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

www.tusc.org.uk

RMT transport union general secretary Bob Crow, a member of the TUSC steering committee, said: "With this latest assault by Labour on the unions the time is right to start building an alternative political party that speaks for the working people and the working class communities that find themselves under the most brutal attack from cuts and austerity in a generation. Clinging to the wreckage of a Labour Party that didn't lift a finger to repeal the anti-union laws despite 13 years in power is a complete waste of time."



Rebel councillor faces further suspension

Hugh Caffrey
Socialist Party north-west regional organiser

'Rebel' anti-cuts Labour councillor Kevin Bennett in Warrington has been suspended from the Labour group for a further six months.

Kevin was suspended three months ago after voting against Warrington Labour council's cuts budget this spring.

Years of harassment and bullying of Kevin by the Labour councillors group culminated in them refusing to even listen to Kevin's carefully costed proposals for avoiding cuts in Warrington this year through a combination of sensible borrowing and using reserves. Instead the council voted through the cuts and suspended Kevin shortly afterwards. The original suspension was "indefinite", but with the right to re-apply to re-join the Labour group after six months.

On appeal last week, Kevin was in effect handed an extra three months of suspension, as the appeal panel ruled Kevin is suspended for six months from the date of the appeal.

Rule-breaking seems rife in Warrington Labour. For instance news of Kevin's impending suspension was shared with a Tory councillor before it had even happened! Kevin is backed by his union, Unite, and it seems possible that Kevin is being punished for the current row between Unite and New Labour.

Kevin remains a councillor, though suspended from membership of the Labour group. He is determined to continue serving the people of his ward as a councillor, to help organise Warrington Against Cuts, and to vote against cuts in the council chamber.

Warrington Against Cuts and Warrington Socialist Party campaign stalls - Sunday 14 July, 12-2pm, at the fountain outside Golden Square shopping centre, Warrington town centre.

North Cheshire Socialist Party meeting - Wednesday 17 July, 7pm, The Rendezvous, 125 Church Street, St Helens WA10 1AJ

plans. In other words, cuts planned by the Tories will be implemented by a New Labour government, if the party wins the next election.

This will mean confrontation with the working class and the unions. The idea of a 24-hour general strike against austerity cannot be postponed in the hope of 'better times' under Miliband. If not fought for and called now, the demand will still be urgent under New Labour.

Unite's strategy

The political strategy of Unite, to recruit its members to Labour in order to get more working class election candidates selected, has come up against a major roadblock.

The Socialist Party has explained on many occasions that the Labour Party cannot be reformed. New Labour has closed all the democratic avenues for real change that once existed.

But given Unite's agreed strategy, we said the only chance it had of being successful would be for Unite to go in with its full programme against all cuts, the scrapping of the anti-trade union laws, and nationalisation, win over the ranks of Labour and get rid of the Blairites.

Even then, we said it would be unlikely to succeed given the obstacles in Unite's path.

But the union's strategy was first challenged when a handful of Labour councillors who voted against cuts, some of them Unite members, were suspended or expelled from Labour groups and the party.

The two brave Southampton councillors who opposed austerity had drawn the correct conclusions and become part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC, see above).

Warrington councillor Kevin Ben-

net has recently had his suspension from the Labour group extended for a further six months.

Now the focus has switched onto the parliamentary selection stage. New Labour does not want representatives who would fight for the working class.

Unite now has three possible ways forward. The first would be to capitulate to New Labour. This would be disastrous, not just for its political strategy but for its industrial one too. There would be growing anger and indignation in the rank and file, and doubts would be raised over the union's commitment to fight for its policy. This would cause serious problems for Len and the left leadership of the union and jeopardise their position.

The second would be to continue with the current strategy. This would mean the likelihood of further collisions with the Labour bureaucracy, in which Len has already admitted he 'can place no trust'. This would not prevent Unite having to make a decision later on the continued scandal of providing funds to New Labour, to the tune of £9 million since Miliband was elected Labour leader in 2010, with the support of the unions! Immediately, Unite would also face the decision of supporting anti-cuts councillors.

The third path is to take the bold step of the union disaffiliating from New Labour. The Socialist Party believes this is the correct road to take. The working class has waited too long for its own party since New Labour accepted the free market and dropped its famous Clause 4, Part IV, which envisaged nationalisation and socialism.



Waltham Forest Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Giving the working class a voice

Nancy Taaffe

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Tea and sandwiches, pizza and specially baked fairy cakes with the letters "TUSC" iced on them were offered to people as they arrived for the Waltham Forest Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition 2014 local election campaign press launch.

There were 40 people in attendance, many that had come straight from work, reflecting the many campaigns and concerns that are bubbling away in our area. The meeting gave a platform to something that establishment politicians would prefer not to be heard - the voice of the working class in the east London borough.

The launch heard from catering workers who, after being threatened with the sack by the Labour council in 2012 and having new inferior contracts imposed on them, now face more pay cuts.

It heard of agency workers at the local hospital forced to stand in line on their zero-hour contracts who learn each day if they have work and if not, are told to go home; scenes reminiscent of the humiliation endured by workers in the 1930s.

A tube worker spoke about the cuts being imposed on London Underground workers who face intimidation and bullying from managers and transport bosses.

Waltham Forest TUSC pledged to give a platform to all those people who want to highlight their own issues in 2014 under the umbrella of TUSC. Over 20 there indicated they would like to be considered as pro-

All our candidates would vote against cuts in the council chamber



This photo of prospective candidates will be used on literature appealing for more workers and campaigners to join the candidate list photo Senan

spective candidates. All our candidates would vote against cuts in the council chamber.

Afterwards we showed the inspirational film, "Don't Mention the 47", a documentary about the Liverpool city council struggle of 1983-87. This film shows what a socialist council looks and sounds like, it showed the houses, the parks and the jobs that were created in so-called "hard times" like ours. In this film we hear the voice of workers who struggled and won.

Waltham Forest TUSC has made a start. We intend to campaign for as big a list as we can possibly get to challenge the idea that we, the working class should pay for a crisis that we didn't cause, and to stand against all the councillors who voted for cuts.

Tulse Hill byelection

Anti-poll tax campaigner Steve Nally is standing for TUSC in Tulse Hill, Lambeth, South London, on 25 July. The old traditions of struggle are once again coming to the fore in Lambeth, which stood with Liverpool against Thatcher's cuts to local government.

Revisiting old supporters to get nominations to stand, Steve was rebuffed by just one, only to receive a call the following day to say that, angry with Labour's choice of candidate, he wanted to nominate Steve after all. In January, as TUSC candidate in the neighbouring Brixton Hill byelection, Steve defeated the Ukip bandwagon. This time we're unmasking Ukip leader Nigel Farage as a millionaire tax

evader. Unite union members looking for a candidate who supports trade union rights are welcome to join us.

David Maples

Appeal broadsheet

A new A3 folded TUSC broadsheet is now available appealing for candidates to stand in next May's local elections (see picture inset above). Elections are being held next year in 160 local councils in England, with nearly half of the councils affected under Labour control. The recent TUSC national steering committee agreed to plan for our widest-ever challenge in these contests.

The new broadsheet includes the

TUSC 'core policy platform' for council elections and a brief introduction to what TUSC is - ideal for distributing to trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners looking for a chance to fight back.

Why not order some to circulate, perhaps with a covering letter advertising a local planning meeting for the elections?

Prices include £3 for 80 copies, £5 for 150 copies and £9 for 300 copies.

Cheques should be made payable to Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and sent to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London E1 4JP.

See www.tusc.org.uk for more information

Fund the fight for a socialist alternative to capitalist austerity

Naomi Byron

The Socialist Party (SP) is asking all its members to consider increasing their membership subs. We need more resources to step up our campaigning work to defeat this vicious government, including the fight for a political voice for working class people.

By contrast, New Labour has suspended or expelled the few honourable Labour councillors who voted against cuts.

Now when Unite, a union with 1.5 million members which has donated £9 million to Labour since 2010,

attempts to influence the selection of the Labour Party candidate in Falkirk, leader Ed Miliband has called the police on them!

So far many of the biggest subs increases have been from people who have joined in the last year or two. Being active in their Socialist Party branch and seeing the campaigns we are part of has helped convince them to increase the sacrifice they make to fund the party.

A member of the Exeter branch of the SP, Luke Pilling, has tripled his subs from £10 to £30 a month: "I decided to increase my subs after a weekend national school organised by the Socialist Party. This allowed

me to see and meet many individuals who give so much of their time, and I felt I could contribute more to the effort of raising people's consciousness and promoting a socialist world.

"I have a renewed motivation to be active, and plan to help where possible." Luke is a PhD student and on a low income but said "that's only £1 a day".

Many other members have made substantial increases. For example, a shop worker in London has pledged an extra £70 a month.

Three members in the South East are doubling their subs. A young worker in the North East is planning

to join the '100 club' - people who pay £100 or more a month in subs - over the summer.

Every penny helps!

Many members have also made smaller increases - from 50p a month upwards, according to their financial circumstances - because they know how crucial every extra penny is in the fight for socialism.

So far these increases, from 50p to £5 a month, have brought in £150 extra; if everybody who can afford even 50p or £1 extra donate this to the SP, we could have hundreds of pounds more to fight for the social-

ist alternative.

We understand that some members are struggling financially and may not be in a position to increase.

But even if you can't increase your subs at the moment you can still help to increase our finances by recruiting new members and raising fighting fund.

Many of the people who've joined this year have agreed a very good sub right from the beginning, including several at £100 a month.

To discuss increasing your subs or to make a donation call 020 8988 8777. You can also email naomibyron@socialistparty.org.uk or use the slip below

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Portugal's government on the ropes again

For mass action to end rotten coalition and install a workers' alternative

Danny Byrne

In recent weeks Portugal has been plunged into possibly the deepest and most desperate episode of political turmoil since the onset of the economic crisis and intervention of the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Union) over two years ago.

For the last week, the country has been virtually without a government, with the ruling class only now seemingly able to patch together a 'solution'. But this 'solution', as with all the others before it, will be both temporary and incapable of establishing a stable and functioning government.

It is impossible for any government, tasked to do the bidding of the Troika and capitalist elite in waging an unending offensive on workers and the poor, to enjoy any significant period of stability, given the social misery and explosions which this course implies.

It is up to the working class and the youth, mobilised and organised around the fight for an alternative, to deal this government the final blow and prevent any new 'solution' based on austerity and impoverishment.

General strike

On 27 June a powerful general strike took place, paralysing the economy for the fifth time in less than three years. It was the fourth general strike called against the two year old coalition government, composed of the PSD (party of the traditional right wing) and CDS (smaller right-wing Christian Democrat party).

The strike came as the culmination of a renewed wave of militant struggle. The weeks and months leading up to it saw a strike movement, encompassing dockers, postal workers, teachers and health staff, etc.

One of the biggest mass mobilisations since the 1974 Portuguese revolution took place on 2 March, with tens of thousands again taking to the streets on 25 May.

It was the first of these general strikes to have been explicitly anti-government. From the point of view of the CGTP (the majority trade union federation), the strike was linked to the demand for the fall of the government and new elections.

These struggles and mobilisations are increasingly characterised by a crushing consensus that the target of the working class' counter-offensive

must go beyond any single attack on a particular sector or industry.

Portuguese workers and youth in struggle have their sights firmly set on doing away with the austerity regime as a whole, personified in the government which is subordinate to the Troika. This reflects a growing realisation that the battle against austerity and social decay is a political one; a question of government.

Thus, the anti-government character of the general strike, especially the CGTP's stated goal of the bringing down of the government, is of some importance. A massive general strike, openly called to do

On 27 June a powerful general strike took place, paralysing the economy for the fifth time in less than three years

away with a capitalist government is something unforeseen in the European context since the onset of the crisis, and represents the arrival in Europe of an element of the revolutionary fervour which has characterised the 'Arab Spring'.

However, much work remains to be done in order for the abstract stand of the CGTP in favour of the toppling of the government and Troika, to be reflected in a movement and concrete strategy capable of doing so.

Minsiters' resignations

The role of such a general strike in provoking and accelerating the government's crisis is obvious. Less than 48 hours later, Victor Gaspar, the hated minister of finance, seen as having directly implemented the government's worst austerity packages, handed in his long-anticipated resignation, stating that he simply saw "no conditions" for the implementation of the measures demanded of the government.

Clearly, some of these absent "conditions" are economic ones - evidenced by the continuing strangulation of the economy under the impact of austerity - but this does not tell the full story.

The conditions which make the stable rule of the likes of Gaspar (finance) and Passos Coelho (prime minister) impossible are the fun-



Massive workers' general strikes and demonstrations have shaken the government's confidence

damental conditions that characterise capitalist society: ultimately they cannot please the ruling class without attacking the working class majority, upon which they technically depend to get elected to parliament/government.

For this simple reason, governments which become almost universally hated and slowly approach electoral annihilation are increasingly wracked by divisions, desertions and splits.

This feature, common to Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland and all countries at the epicentre of the crisis and resistance, fundamentally reflects the fear of those rulers before the inevitable rebellion from below. What better to hammer home this

The key to the situation lies in the potential of the mass parties of the Left, the Left Bloc and Communist Party, who consistently enjoy over 20% in the polls

fear and accelerate this process than a general strike, of over 80% of the workforce? Such was the context of Gaspar's resignation.

Then the floodgates opened. Paolo Portas, foreign minister and leader of the CDS presented his own resignation, following a lengthy, cynical attempt to present himself as opposing "from within" the scale of the government's attacks on pensioners and the unemployed.

This appeared to blow the coalition apart, and the two other CDS ministers in the cabinet announced their intention to resign along with Portas. International banks were emitting communiqués to investors predicting the fall of the government within 48 hours!

However, in the absence of a final

blow from the workers' movement, the government has been allowed to re-stabilise itself, with Portas and the CDS re-entering government in exchange for more weight in the cabinet (Portas himself will be promoted to vice-prime minister).

Fight to the finish!

A determined trade union leadership could have mobilised to successfully bring down the government by little more than 'lifting a finger'.

However, in the absence of a fighting leadership - calling an immediate general strike, occupations and mass demonstrations - the situation has begun to develop along a similar pattern to that which is familiar to many activists in Portugal.

Repeated and earth-shattering displays of anger and power by workers and youth - the five general strikes and unprecedented mass mobilisations on 12 March and 12 September 2012, etc - have almost invariably caused the government to wobble. But without continuity and escalation, the final push never comes and things are gradually allowed to re-stabilise.

The following up of the 27 June general strike with a 48-hour strike, accompanied by mass mobilisations (as Socialismo Revolucionario - CWI in Portugal - suggested) would have represented the next step in a fight to the finish against this government, and in all likelihood would have led to its downfall.

The CGTP leadership proposed

and mobilised only for a small rally (which would undoubtedly have been much bigger were it not for the heatwave) outside the Presidential Palace, when the government had already all but patched together a new agreement. The fight for an alternative, combative strategy must now be stepped up throughout the workers' and social movements.

However, it is also crucial to take the debate beyond the demand to bring down the government. The 'Socialist Party' which currently leads in the polls is the party which signed the Troika's 'memorandum' in the first place, and pledged to respect its commitments. A so-called 'palace solution' based on an intervention by the president to set up a government of "national unity" would not represent a favourable alternative either.

The key to the situation lies in the potential of the mass parties of the Left, the Left Bloc and Communist Party, who consistently enjoy over 20% in the polls. A united front of these parties, in unity with the unions and social movements, could pose the question of fighting to do away with capitalist governments altogether and raise the horizon of a workers' government capable of turning the situation around in the interests of the majority.

For this to happen, the left must embrace revolutionary socialist policies as the only way to break from the death spiral of economic depression and deepening misery, which the rule of the Troika represents.



A disconsolate looking Prime Minister Passos Coelho (right)

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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

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

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



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

www.socialistworld.net

the Socialist postbag

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.

Jobcentre interrogation

Today after visiting my local Jobcentre to attend a regular interview I was made to feel like I'd broken the rules. After I told the interviewer I am actively involved with the Socialist Party, the conversation turned from friendly chit chat to an interrogation.

I was told that anything I do with the Socialist Party, setting up stalls, attending meetings, campaigning, would all have to be declared as unpaid work. I had to hold in my uncontrollable urge to laugh until I got out of there. Would the conversation have taken a different route if I was a Conservative or, dare I say it, Labour member?

I felt annoyed, as this was absolutely nothing to do with the Jobcentre, nor with me finding work. This proves how lost our failed system has become. Before the interview ended I had to sign documentation detailing the nature of the interview and everything that was said.

I was told I am OK being involved with the Socialists, as long as it did not affect me looking for work. Now since I don't spend every waking moment glued to a screen looking for jobs, I thought it was irrelevant and nothing to do with them anyway!

So from now on I am contractually obliged, "by law" to inform the Jobcentre of my activities with the Socialists, or my "benefits may be affected", ie stopped!

How far do they want to dig their capitalist claws in? There has to be a line drawn somewhere. The government seems to keep pushing the boundaries on ordinary people - the 99%.

An unemployed Socialist Party member

Freud-ian slip

Lord Freud, who's probably never gone without anything in his life, suggests that the increase in people using foodbanks has little to do with benefit cuts,



poverty and austerity. He says people take free food from foodbanks because it's available, as if it were some sort of lifestyle choice. Tell that to the one in four parents in Wales who had to skip meals to feed their kids.

The students union at Swansea Metropolitan University set up a foodbank for hard-up students. Now three foodbanks operate in Swansea. Research suggests 24% of people in Wales are in food poverty.

As the school year is ending, it's feared that many children won't get the food they need because at least in term time there is help for hard-up parents in the form of breakfast clubs and free lunches in school. What does it say about the

system we live under?

Food production and distribution is organised to generate profit. Only a socialist plan of production could eliminate the need for food banks and provide all families and their children with the food and nutrition they desperately need.

Ronnie Job

NHS successes at risk

NHS Confederation has published statistics on the NHS in England comparing the NHS, which treats over a million patients every 36 hours, with health-



photo Paul Mattsson

care in six other developed countries. The NHS was found to be the best system overall in efficiency, effective care and cost-related problems. It was also ranked second for equity and safe care and was found to be the second most impressive system overall.

In 2011 95% of patients using outpatient services rated their care as excellent. In 2012 81% of patients rated their overall experience as excellent. In February 2013 92.18% of patients with admitted pathways were treated within 18 weeks of their referral, with an average waiting time of 9.2 weeks and just 0.88% of patients waiting for a diagnostic test had been waiting more than six weeks.

Despite these results politicians of all parties are relentlessly damaging the NHS by placing a price upon the healthcare of individuals in their pursuit of making a profit from lucrative business interests within the healthcare sector, which, in turn drives their desire to destroy the NHS as a key public service.

Lee Payne

Greek austerity

Last month Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, admitted that this capitalist financial institution screwed up in Greece as the imposed bailout austerity medicine plunged the economy into a 'death spiral'.

Yet one month later Lagarde was demanding that the right wing-led Greek coalition government continue to hammer the working class with more austerity. These measures include axing another 15,000 civil servant jobs, cutting wages of thousands of public sector workers before sacking them at a time when unemployment is officially 27%.

Greek workers should not pay the price for capitalist failure. Sustained general strike action linked to a left alternative government is the only cure for austerity.

Simon Carter, East London

Unite and Labour - it's time for a rethink!



Unite members need a socialist alternative to Labour

Andy Beadle

The leader of my union Unite, Len McCluskey, has spent years trying to save Labour for working people - to save it from irrelevance and political extinction. Len, the Labour party leaders' attack on Unite shows that it's time for a rethink!

I'm a bus driver and I've known Len since I was unfairly sacked from my previous job eight years ago for my activity as a T&G rep. He helped

get my job back.

Before he became general secretary, Len argued unions had never seriously tried to stop Labour's move away from socialist politics. He said he'd persuade Unite members to become active Labour members to change the party back.

Socialist Party members were sceptical - but at least he made a serious try. Unite had plans to recruit 5,000 to the Labour Party. Falkirk seems the only place these plans got

anywhere. But we oppose Unite giving support to Labour because it opposes our union's policies and our members' interests. We want a new mass workers' party and my workmates are angry when I say Unite is Labour's biggest donor.

I did join Labour in 1974 as a teenager. My family always supported Labour. Labour's members were council workers, factory workers and transport workers then. The clue was in the name. Apart from the MPs and bigwigs the most middle class members were mainly teachers! The party changed.

It wasn't so much expulsions that undermined Labour's mass membership - there were only a few hundred. It was more the policies, really starting with Kinnock, that drove out working class activists. These policies gradually changed Labour so it became like the other parties. That's why we set up the Socialist Party.

Len always said if his aim to change the Labour Party failed, there'd come a point when we'd have to look elsewhere. We've reached that point.

Both the other major parties are in government, so why isn't Labour raking in supporters? Because it backs the same austerity cuts. Without union leaders' backing it would be nowhere. Unite should help build a genuine alternative.

See also pages 6&7

Review - The Pitmen Painters

Class struggle, humour and more

The Pitmen Painters written by the creator of Billy Elliot, Lee Hall, is showing at five venues - Darlington, Harrogate, Oxford, Outer London and Swansea between July and August.

After a long day's strike action I went to see the Pitmen Painters, a play whose action takes place in Ashington, Northumberland between 1934 and 1947. It reveals a true story of how a group of miners discovered their artistic talents at an evening class.

The miners, eager for education, signed up for a WEA economics class. But they were offered painting which began an incredible journey where they exhibited work in top London galleries, rubbing shoulders with the creative elite. The meeting of these two very different worlds make the themes of politics, patronage, class struggle, humour and hope emerge strongly.

Most of these men had worked in Ashington Colliery from as young as ten years old. They knew they were exploited by capitalism but were very good at what they did and proud of it. These qualities are translated into their art. Painting is not a privilege of the wealthy or constrained by fashions, it is about human beings attempting to express, represent and create through the medium of paint.

Lee Hall, who read the book about the Pitmen Painters, captures the essence of the miners' story on stage. The play is touring the country so if you get the chance to see it, check it out.

Chris Fernandez



The play on stage

Fearless souls

"That was even better than 'The Spirit of 45', my partner commented as we left the theatre in Leicester.

The Pitmen Painters genuinely depicts working class life and humour. The group chose to make art central to their lives but removed from the 'economy' of the art world. They would not let their art become a commodity.

Discussions about the meaning of art and Marxism are woven into the script in lively exchanges between group members who debate passionately about art and life.

The play shows how ordinary working people possess latent talents that is rarely given the opportunity to blossom. The Pitmen Paint-

ers were fearless souls, but they are not unique people. As playwright Lee Hall says: "that the Group managed to achieve so much unaided and unabated should remind us that dumbing down is not a prerequisite of culture being more accessible. That is a lie perpetrated by those who want to sell us shit."

The play ends in 1945 when a magnificent Miners Banner is unfurled saying 'Forward to Socialism.' The play ends on an optimistic note. The task of socialists is to create a society that lets all of us reach our full potential without worrying where the next meal is coming from or how to pay the rent.

Heather Rawling

Piper Alpha

The price of profit - 167 workers' lives

Philip Stott
Socialist Party Scotland

Twenty five years ago, on 6 July 1988, the Piper Alpha North Sea oil platform was destroyed by a massive explosion and fire which killed 167 workers. Immediately following the catastrophe - the worst ever in the industry - oil workers and union activists inundated the press in Scotland with horror stories about the lack of safety.

The OILC trade union (Offshore Industry Liaison Committee) was set up as a direct result of Piper Alpha and the death of another worker a few weeks later on the Ocean Odyssey platform. The OILC is now part of the RMT trade union with around 2,500 members.

From the 226 men on board, only 61 survived. Two workers from one of the rescue vessels also died. The explosion was caused by a gas leak in an area where a valve had not been replaced.

The platform's firewalls around the explosion were destroyed, they were not designed to withstand the force of an explosion from gas because Piper Alpha had been an oil platform in the mid 1970s.

Fire engulfed the accommodation units, the galley and eventually the helideck and almost all of the platform.

Many workers died through smoke inhalation. A pipeline carrying gas ruptured, leading to another massive explosion. Incredibly two neighbouring platforms continued



Militant's cartoon at the time of the disaster cartoon Alan Hardman

to pump oil to Piper Alpha after the first explosion occurred. It was only after the second explosion that the order was given to stop.

The owners, Occidental, did not issue instructions to stop the flow of oil because of the costs involved. In a desperate attempt to survive, some men were forced to jump over 100 feet in to the sea below. The sea was burning as well. Not surprisingly 70% of the survivors have suffered or are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

In the years preceding Piper Alpha the number of incidents in the North Sea had escalated dramatically. As we wrote in the front page of the Militant (the predecessor of the Socialist) at the time of the explosion: "The number of serious incidents jumped from 44 in 1984 to 85 in 1985 and 72 in 1986". The Piper Alpha explosion had been the third in a week in the North Sea sector.

Occidental had turned down safety requests by workers following an explosion on the Piper in 1984. These included suggestions to relocate the accommodation units away from the most dangerous parts of the platform and to rebuild the units which were made from wood and fibreglass with steel and more resistant materials. Occidental was challenged over two high-pressure gas lines running from neighbouring platforms that were a potential danger.

The Occidental safety manager accepted that the accommodation units in no way met safety standards. Yet they refused to consider the proposals from workers. It would have meant shutting off production for six weeks costing millions of pounds in lost profits.

Moreover, the Thatcher-led Tory

government did not publish the safety report. The interests of British capitalism and their disregard for workers' safety meant the oil and gas must continue to flow without disruption.

From the
226 men on
board, only 61
survived

The Tory energy minister, Cecil Parkinson, claimed: "safety is the first priority for the government and the operators." But the Department of Energy, responsible for maximising production and therefore government revenue, was in charge of safety in the oil industry.

At that time the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had no role or jurisdiction in the North Sea. The oil companies were lobbying furiously for safety to be handled by the government.

Cutting costs

At the time of the explosion the industry was in a downturn. Companies were cutting back on costs as the price of oil fell. Old and dilapidated rigs were not being replaced.

The oil companies to this day discourage trade unions and are hostile to 'interference' with the production process.

The Cullen Inquiry set up to investigate the disaster found Occidental guilty of "inadequate main-

tenance and safety procedures". But no criminal charges were ever brought against the company or anyone for the deaths of 167 workers.

The HSE did become responsible for safety checks after the disaster, but it is under-resourced. The recent gas blowout at the Elgin Platform in March 2012 and the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the US all underline that safety is still a huge issue in the industry.

As Professor Woolfson, who led a study into safety after Deepwater Horizon, said like Piper Alpha there is evidence of "a lax regulatory regime, weak inspection and enforcement procedures and prioritising commercial considerations over the safety of people and the environment".

As the Militant wrote at the time: "There must be an immediate trade union safety inspection of every rig and those found wanting closed while alterations are carried out. Full trade union rights including the right to carry out safety inspections must be assured."

Profitable

The North Sea oil and gas industry is one of the most profitable in the world.

An estimated £300 billion in corporation tax revenue (at today's prices) has flowed to the UK government since oil and gas began to be extracted from the North Sea and surrounding areas in 1975. For the oil and gas multinationals who dominate the extraction process that figure is closer to £1 trillion.

Moreover, it is estimated that around as much again remains under the North Sea, West Shetland and the Atlantic waters.

North sea rigs, including the replacement for Piper Alpha, have been reported routinely leaking oil and other chemicals into the sea.

The entire industry should be taken into public ownership. It should be run and managed democratically by representatives of workers and the working class as a whole.

By taking these steps it would be possible to put safety and the environment first.

Under public ownership the resources from the oil and gas sector could be invested in jobs, public services, decent incomes and research into alternative energy sources, rather than lining the pockets of the big corporations.

• For more on the Socialist Party Scotland see: www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk/

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The costs of privatisation - to the workforce

A London bus driver

Buses were deregulated and privatised in 1986 across the UK apart from London and Northern Ireland. Thatcher and her ministers were concerned about London for two reasons. One was the potential strength and resistance of bus workers and their union - at that time known as the Transport and General Workers' Union. The other was the potential chaos that such a move could cause to the capital's public transport.

When London buses were eventually privatised in 1994-5, a regulator, Transport for London, was

brought in to oversee and control bus operations. The private firms were untroubled by this supervision as it was accompanied by a colossal subsidy.

Meanwhile the 'problem' of the strong union had been resolved, in some of the darkest days in union history.

Many London bus workers resisted privatisation heroically. But they were gradually undermined by some union leaders who personally benefitted from management favours and inducements to slacken their resistance. One full time union official ended up as a senior manager!

Before privatisation our pay was better than tube drivers. In the run up to privatisation pay rates were reduced by about a third in return for one-off payments. This made private ownership a much more attractive option.

Pay never recovered

Pay since privatisation varies across firms but it has never recovered. A few years ago the annual pay rounds clawed back a bit of what we'd lost but like most workers in recent times we've seen pay stagnate.

A Unite press release at the time

of the strike last year said: "The average salary of a London Bus driver is £28,600. A tube driver's average salary is £42,424."

Immediately after privatisation we faced further losses. Hardly anyone who started since then will have a final salary pension. London Transport had a whole network of sports clubs and societies to join. On the fringes of the capital were big recreational venues with acres of space such as Langley Park in Beckenham and Osterley. You could use the football or cricket pitches, play a round of golf or just go for a quiet drink. All that disappeared overnight.

The whole atmosphere has changed. Nowadays some garages don't even have a canteen. Where there are canteen staff, they work for a low-wage, outsourced cowboy company with no decent pension - not even a staff travel pass.

You will hardly find anyone in a bus depot - including managers and supervisors - who agrees that public services should be in the hands of profit-making private companies.

This is the weak point of Unite. It still gives money to Labour whose ultra capitalist policies only benefit the very rich. Let's dump Labour and help build a new mass workers' party that really represents us.

Are you sick of...

LOW PAY?

Zero-hour contracts?

JOB INSECURITY?

Bullying bosses?

JOIN THE PROTESTS!



Helen Pattison
London Youth Fight for Jobs

Young workers are fed up with poor working conditions, poverty pay, zero-hour contracts and the lack of security at work.

Nearly 30% of young workers need more hours to cover rising living costs. 90% of people who started claiming housing benefit in the last two years have a job. Real wages have dropped by 7.5% in five years.

Big business is making more and more money paying staff well below a living wage, these workers get messed around and bullied.

One of the worst offenders is Primark, which made £356 million in profits last year while paying shop workers little above minimum wage - that's when they're not using the Con-Dems' workfare schemes to pay them nothing at all!

But after Usdaw union members in Northern Ireland Primark branches voted to take strike action, they won a small but important pay increase - showing we don't have to just accept things, and a lot more can be won. Fast food workers in the US are organising and striking against poverty wages, bullying management and the lack of job security - with better pay and conditions won at a pizza chain.

The Sick Of Your Boss initiative, organised by Youth Fight for Jobs, informs people of their ex-

isting legal rights - often ignored by employers - and helps them to join trade unions to organise in their workplace and build the campaign against bullying and for decent pay.

Week of action

A Sick Of Your Boss week of action started on 6 July. Protests are planned for outside Primark branches across the county.

These protests highlight the treatment of staff in Britain, but will also be held in solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh who have taken strike action following the collapse of an unsafe garment factory that killed hundreds of workers.

Campaigners have spoken to young workers at shops, restaurants, pubs and call centres about how they can organise. In London we've been simply walking into shops and leafleting and speaking to staff while they are at work.

We've had a brilliant response. For example, we've spoken to an Usdaw shopworkers' union member about getting more new staff into the union, and a young woman who wanted to know how to join a trade union and how to organise in her workplace.

So join the protests and meetings in your area, show Primark enough is enough! We want decent wages and working conditions around the world. Get involved with Sick Of Your Boss, join a trade union and join the fightback!

Check out protests and meetings near you

Email youthfightforjobs@gmail.com

Text your name and postcode to 07749 379 010

www.youthfightforjobs.com #soyb @youthfight4jobs

**London Oxford Street
Primark protest**
Saturday 13 July
12 noon
Nearest tube station:
Marble Arch

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!