

MASS ACTION

CAN SAVE OUR

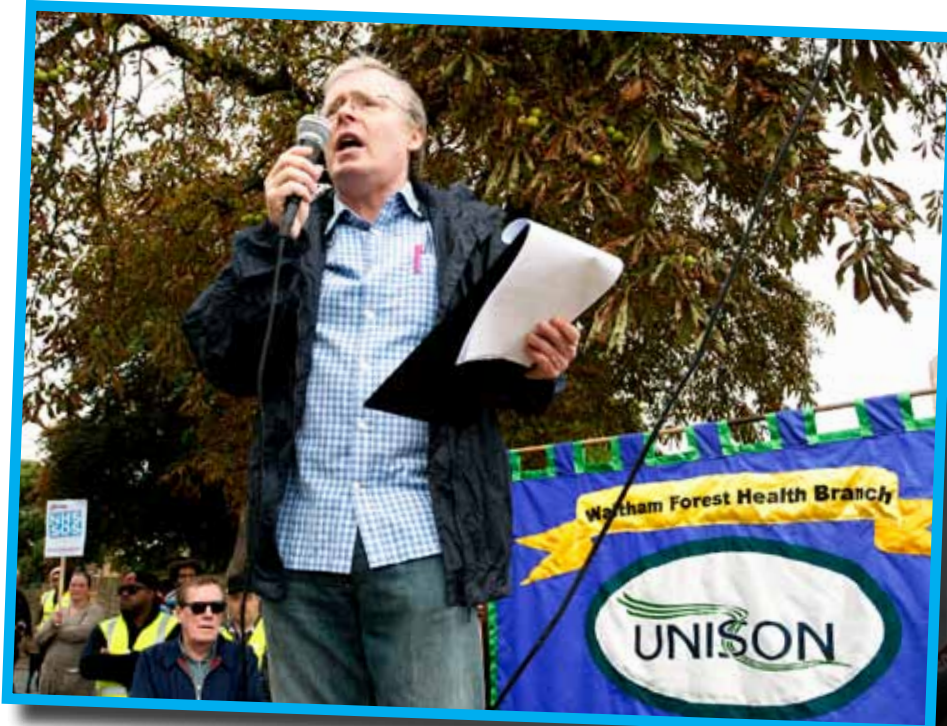
NHS

- No cuts to services
- No PFI
- No redundancies or downbandings
- We need a new mass workers' party to oppose NHS cuts

■ TUC name the day for a 24-hour general strike

Special TUC NHS demo edition: see inside for 4-page NHS campaign pull-out

FIGHT TO SAVE OUR NHS



On the march in Waltham Forest (see below and report inside) photos Paul Mattsson

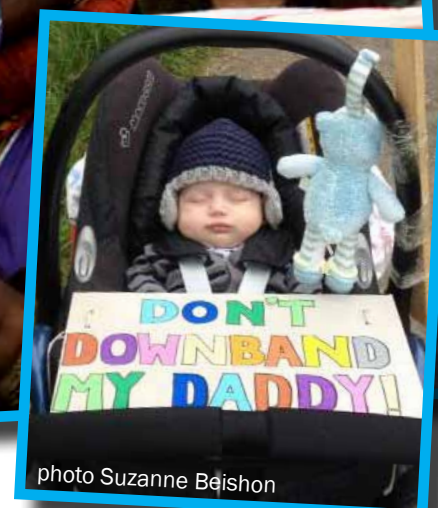


photo Suzanne Beishon

Paula Mitchell

The establishment of the NHS in 1948 utterly transformed the lives of working class people. Unsurprisingly the NHS holds a uniquely special place in the consciousness of working class people. But for over 30 years it has faced underinvestment and privatisation.

Now the Con-Dems' Health and Social Care Act (HSCA) aims to end the NHS as we know it, turning it over to multinational companies to make enormous profits. As well as private companies taking over services, NHS hospitals - with their publicly-funded facilities and staff - can now turn half their capacity to private provision. Gradually the principle of 'free at the point of use' will be eroded with creeping charges.

Attacks

Alongside this historic change, the NHS faces unprecedented cuts. The so-called 'ring-fencing' of NHS funding disguises a cut in real terms of £20 billion. Under the guise of reorganisation, establishing such things as 'centres of excellence' (and who could oppose excellence?), district general hospitals are hacked, A&Es and maternity units closed, or hospitals shut entirely. And all of this is on top of the scandal of PFI.

To try to break the deep allegiance of working class people to the NHS, a barrage of horror stories fills the press on an almost daily basis. Of course no one defends poor care, but years of cuts and damaging changes inevitably have their effects.

The best way to ensure good standards of care, with decent wages and conditions for the staff that provide it and protection for 'whistle-blowers', is strong trade union organisation. But even the semblance of democratic control in the form of health authorities and Community Health Councils were abolished by Tory and Labour governments.

People have not taken these attacks mildly. Massive community campaigns have sprung up and some have achieved temporary success, such as in Lewisham.

Unison is by far the biggest union in the NHS but unfortunately around the country many Unison health branches are under the control of the right wing in the union and do not put up a fight. In these circumstances community campaigns have been especially important.

However, this does not mean trade unionists are unimportant, and even where local leaderships refuse to fight, community campaigns should appeal directly to the workers to get active.

A new example is at Whipps Cross in East London, where there is one of the more militant union organisations in the NHS. Of course community campaigning will still be a vital part of the battle to save Whipps, bringing the community and users of the NHS together with the workforce.

But it is important here that the workers in the hospital have taken the lead. It is they who ultimately have the power to take decisive action, including strike action, which, with the community behind them, could beat these cuts back.

Even so, gains at a local level always run the risk of being overturned if they remain isolated cases. To defeat the government altogether will require a powerful mass movement.

The Socialist Party has called for a national trade union demo to defend the NHS - including at June's Unison health conference, where the right-wing leadership rebuffed the idea - and welcomes the TUC's demonstration at Tory party conference.

This demo should be a platform to call for national strike action. One and a half million people work in the NHS. If the power of workers in the health service was brought together with patients and communities, a movement would develop which could force the government into significant retreat.

When linked up with other workers in strike action against cuts, in the form of a 24-hour general strike, it could cause this government to collapse.

Working class

It was the power of the working class that won the NHS in the first place. After World War Two, mass movements of workers, determined not to go back to the deprivations of the 1930s, swept across Europe. The capitalists feared for their system. An election victory for the Labour Party allowed the introduction of the NHS.

Thus a crucial factor in winning the NHS originally was the formation of a political party by the trade unions which could fight for that demand, and when in power, implement it. The Labour Party has long since ceased to be that party. While Labour has opposed the HSCA, in power they were the architects of most of the PFI disasters and paved the way for the Tories' latest steps. It is important that the campaign to save the NHS includes the demand for a new mass workers' party. We appeal to health workers to stand as TUSC candidates in May 2014.

The Socialist Party stands for a fully funded, democratically controlled public national health service.

To start with, this means stopping the cuts and cancelling PFI contracts.

It would mean ending all other forms of privatisation, foundation hospitals, private polyclinics and GP consortiums, and ending 'payment by results'. It would mean ending the 'internal market', and bringing

back cleaning, catering and other vital ancillary services into public ownership, properly resourced and with workers on decent pay - no more zero-hour contracts or band one jobs!

All charges for healthcare, including dentistry, eye tests and prescriptions, should be abolished.

A socialist government would nationalise the pharmaceutical industry, immediately ending the vast waste on inflated profiteering prices, and the waste of competitive and secretive research. Compensation would be paid only on the basis of proven need.

This measure alone would release funds for rebuilding the NHS (the drugs industry was worth over \$400 billion worldwide in 2002). But a socialist society would also mean the nationalisation of the banking system and other major sections of the economy.

This way, the wealth in society could be democratically planned for the benefit of everyone. Investment in a public health programme and an end to the domination of the big multinationals in the food, drink and

tobacco industries, would enable people to live more healthily, with assistance to help people improve their health and fitness.

Democracy

A socialist government would also ensure decent pay and pensions, good quality housing, and shorter working hours. The impact of a decent standard of living for all cannot be overestimated. New figures show that London's rich live 18 more healthy years than the poor.

Real democratic controls could be introduced with elected committees of health workers, trade unions, community representatives, and representatives of local and national government. These would feed into a national plan, enabling better integration and a reorganisation that genuinely gives people the best possible service.

Around 5,000 nursing places have been axed since the coalition took power in 2010. There are plans for a further 4% cut between 2014 and 2016

Rich shareholders in Circle Health - the first private firm to take over an NHS hospital, at Hichingbrooke, Cambridgeshire - have donated £1.4 million to the Tories' coffers

Patients and staff support campaign to defend Whipps Cross hospital

I am in a bed in the Sage ward in Whipps Cross hospital. After watching a story on London BBC News describing the staff here as rude and inattentive I was wondering if they are talking about the same hospital.

Every single member of staff has been extremely polite, patient and super attentive! This is even though they are responsible for so many patients, have so many tasks and

are on such long shifts.

I've been here since 16 September when I spent my afternoon outside the hospital at the protest organised by Waltham Forest Unison health branch to defend the hospital's services and staff.

After leaving I was violently pushed to the ground by someone running away from the police. The officers called for an ambulance but an hour passed and none ever

came because of shortages. In the end I had to go to the hospital in a friend's car.

Sometimes there are only two nurses in the morning, when all the patients on this ward need help with going to the toilet and cleaning ourselves.

They are fed-up with the long shifts and the low pay - one told me she can no longer afford school meals for her child. All the staff

know about the two protests organised by the Unison branch. They are all pleased that I'm involved in the campaign.

Whipps Cross has a special place in the heart of our community. We must not, and we will not, let it go down in the name of anyone's filthy profits. Together, community and staff, we must defend our hospital.

Amalia Loizidou

This is not just about Whipps Cross - it's about the whole community coming together to fight for its survival. They're saying go to Whitechapel. We don't want that - we have a very good local hospital here. I work in the emergency department. They'll get band five nurses to take on the work we specialised workers do. We have to all be part of this fight against privatisation.

Roderick, Whipps Cross nurse

Lessons from the Mid Yorkshire NHS strike

Adrian O'Malley
Unison branch secretary Mid Yorkshire Health (personal capacity)

Last May Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust announced cuts in its staff budget of up to £8 million. Most of the 100 redundancies and 300 downbandings (pay cuts) were to fall on its admin and clerical staff. The Trust clearly thought this group of mainly female low-paid staff would not put up any resistance to their plans. How wrong they were!

Mass meetings of the staff who were facing pay cuts of up to £2,700 a year were organised at Dewsbury, Pinderfields and Pontefract hospitals which unanimously agreed to ballot for strike action. Despite the continuous management bullying and threats of dismissal over 90% voted for strike action which started with a one-day strike on 1 November 2012. It was a tremendous success with over 400 striking including many staff who were not facing pay cuts. Over 100 workers joined Unison.

A three-day strike took place 20-22 November followed by a five-day strike 28 January to 1 February 2013. 30 members of Unite also joined the action. Over 100 pickets were outside the hospitals on every day of the strike. They

were interviewed by the local TV and radio and newspapers and received fantastic support from the community and the trade union movement. Over £40,000 was raised for the strike fund.

In a ballot of Unison's 2,600 members across the Trust, 75% vote in favour of strike action. Unfortunately the turnout of just under 20% was not sufficient to take forward the strike action and the branch committee decided to enter into talks with the Trust.

The resulting agreement saw improved pay protection for three years and a commitment to jointly agree new job descriptions for all the downbanded staff with six months. There were also no compulsory redundancies within the admin group.

The first lesson of our dispute is that low-paid workers are prepared to fight if a lead is given. The second is that trade unions become more relevant to workers when they are seen to be fighting for their members - this was shown by our tremendous recruitment during the strike and the eight new stewards we now have. The third lesson is that working class people will support us when we are forced to take industrial action because they know we're fighting for the future of the NHS.

The fourth and most important lesson is that taking strike action gets results. Although we did not stop the downbandings, there were no compulsory redundancies, we increased the protection period and we live to fight another day for a return to the original pay bands.

The final lesson is relevant for every trade unionist in the public sector. Our members were involved in a bitter dispute for nearly a year. During that time they were threatened with redundancy and dismissal and bullied into signing new contracts.

The longer the dispute went on the more the strikers felt isolated and asked why other branches weren't striking with us. That isolation was the reason we failed to persuade the rest of our members to vote in the branch-wide ballot.

The task of every trade unionist in the NHS is to build the confidence of our members to fight the many attacks taking place. There are enough reasons for the trade unions to lodge individual disputes in every NHS Trust. This should be done immediately as part of the TUC decision to work towards a 24-hour general strike.

Mid Yorkshire showed we are prepared to fight for the NHS - and win.

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Hundreds march to defend Whipps Cross

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

"PFI, no way - not our debt, we won't pay!" was one of the favourite chants as 700 people marched through Waltham Forest on 21 September in defence of Whipps Cross hospital.

Hospital workers and local people raged against downbanding, privatisation, cuts to services and attacks on trade unions. We were protesting in defence of our local hospital, and the other five hospitals in Barts Health Trust, but also in defence of the NHS as a whole and against the Con-Dem government that threatens to destroy it.

£77.5 million of cuts are planned across Barts Trust because of a huge financial crisis, largely caused by a rip-off PFI deal on the new London Hospital building.

When introducing the rally, Len Hockey, branch secretary of the local Unison Health branch which called the demonstration, pointed out the importance of the fact that the hospital workforce have proven themselves willing to take action to defend their jobs and public services.

A recent meeting Len called was attended by 100 workers and voted unanimously for no confidence in Trust management and 98% in favour of industrial action if necessary.

Speaker after speaker at the demo put to rest the lie being repeated in the press over the last few weeks that

Whipps Cross is somehow a failing or substandard hospital. Trust bosses are trying to weaken public support for the hospital in anticipation of announcing details of where the planned cuts across Barts Trust is going to come from.

But the march, which was led by hundreds of nurses and other Whipps workers, and joined by many members of the public, showed that this is not going to be successful.

People want good local hospitals and know that cuts and privatisation aren't the way to get them.

There were speakers bringing support from several other local and national trade unions. A number of hospital workers, many who joined the march with their young families, spoke about the effect of cuts to their pay and conditions.

Nancy Taaffe, who spoke from Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union, got a huge cheer when she said that PFI debts should be written off. The rally also heard from Charlotte Monro, victimised chair of the Unison Health branch.

Reflecting support for the ideas of working class struggle, two people joined the Socialist Party and another 26 expressed an interest in joining. Over 100 copies of the Socialist were sold.

The next stage in the campaign, side by side with an indicative ballot of the workforce, is to build for a public meeting which the Unison branch has called on 23 October at 7pm in Leytonstone School, James Lane.

PFI - Pure Financial Idiocy



cartoon Phil Hackett

Dr John Lister
London Health Emergency

Peterborough's new £300 million City Hospital is to spend £2.5 million to find a 'partner' from the public or private sector to take over the top floor of the building, where offices could be stripped out and 100 beds opened up - they are even seeking a private company to take over the management of the hospital, which is running a massive £40 million a year deficit.

In South East London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) the first trust financial failure still threatens the future of neighbouring Lewisham Hospital.

Further east in London, Queen's Hospital in Romford, part of Barking, Havering & Redbridge Hospitals Trust, which has cumulative debts of over £150 million, is seeking to balance its books by closing most services at the trust's King George Hospital.

Storm clouds hang over dozens more hospital trusts. The common factor? The inflated costs of new hospitals built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Scheduled payments in 2012-13 totalled £1.6 billion; this averages out at less than 2% of NHS spending, but the impact on local trusts is much greater. Payments in Peterborough add up to around 20% of the Trust's budget.

PFI originated in John Major's government in the early 1990s: it was described as a means to "privatise the provision of capital". Although there were early, improbable, claims that PFI projects could be cheaper than those funded through conventional public finance - and of course the usual salesmanship seeking to promote an image of the private sector as somehow more 'innovative' - NHS trusts were only persuaded to take PFI seriously by a combination of carrot and stick.

The stick came in the form of a rapid reduction in the allocation of Treasury capital to fund new hospital development - sufficient to halt almost all new hospital schemes from 1992 through to 1997.

The carrot was the alluring (largely empty) promise that the private sector would shoulder all of the risk involved in the construction phase of the project, and that it would deliver 'on time and to budget'.

What was not said was that the NHS would be charged handsomely for handing over the risk, in the form of a 25, 30 or 35 year rigid contract, during which time the hospital building itself was the property of a private consortium and a guaranteed, index-linked profit stream for private shareholders. And the public sector still effectively wound up stuck with the bill if anything substantial went wrong.

By 1997 the Tories had failed to finalise a single hospital contract, and it was left to New Labour, which in the six months before the election had dropped its opposition and embraced PFI, to sign the first PFI deals in the NHS. Completed new hospitals began to open up from 2000. Most were significantly smaller than the hospitals they replaced, with an average 25% reduction in numbers of beds in the first wave.

The average cost of a new first-wave PFI hospital was less than £100 million. But since then the projects have become much larger and more elaborate: many of the more recent schemes are now in excess of £300 million. PFI has become a major factor undermining the financial viability of a number of Trusts, with 22 admitting in 2011 to be facing PFI-related financial problems.

Early in 2012, George Osborne set up a £1.5 billion bailout fund to help ten

of the most troubled, but payouts were subject to rigorous conditions, requiring the hospitals to already be making drastic cuts, and it is not clear how much of this money, if any, has been distributed.

In May 2012 the Commons Public Accounts Committee declared that the current model of PFI is "unsustainable". In too many cases, the Committee argued, investors appeared to be making "eye-wateringly high" profits. NHS trusts were forced to seek deeper cuts in other budgets to maintain PFI payments.

Con-Dems

Despite George Osborne's promise in opposition that the Tories would stop using PFI, over 40 new PFI contracts were signed by the coalition government in its first two years in office.

In August 2012 'hit squads' of lawyers and accountants were sent in to seven of the most indebted hospital trusts to seek to renegotiate their PFI contracts. But ministers made clear from the outset that the government would not walk away from any of the contracts - and nothing of substance has been changed.

In December 2012 Osborne unveiled another approach, with the announcement of a new form of PFI, to be known as PF2. It would create contracts in which the public sector would become a minority shareholder, and therefore in theory share in any 'profits' that are to be made - from the public purse.

One justification for the inflated cost of PFI is that the private sector is taking on the various "risks" involved in constructing the hospital to a tight schedule. The process has been described by the auditor general of the UK National Audit Office as ranging from "spurious" to "utter rubbish" - "If the answer comes out wrong, you don't get your project. So the answer doesn't come out wrong very often."

Only when these often very large, imaginary 'risk payments' are added to the PSC does PFI appear even comparable in price, and it seldom even then appears to be cheaper than public funding.

Billions in taxpayer's money is paid out, signed away and put at risk with minimal scrutiny. There is ample scope for conflict of interest and even corruption, with little hope of redress.

The NHS spent £39 million on drugs in 1948, its first year (that's £1.13 billion at today's prices). It now spends about £12 billion a year on drugs

Drugs companies legally rob the NHS by using a legal loophole called "flipping" to push up the price of medicines in some cases by up to 2,000% - at a cost to the public purse of tens of millions a year

Shut down the town to save Stafford Hospital services

Andy Bentley
Staffordshire Socialist Party

Unelected administrators plan to slash key services at Stafford Hospital and facilities in surrounding towns. It would mean people traveling 20 miles to the hospitals in Wolverhampton or to the new University Hospital of North Staffs (UHNS) which has 300 fewer beds than the old one.

Many thousands of angry people have turned up to eight administrators' 'consultation' meetings since early August. But despite hospital staff and others being cheered to the rafters when they challenged the administrators, their demands to save services will be ignored by these hatchet men.

As we predicted this 'consultation' has been a sham and a waste of money. The only consultation that matters was the 50,000 of us who marched on 20 April against any plans to dismantle Stafford/Cannock hospital!

This helped to stop the administrators going for a full closure. But the

powers-that-be still want to get rid of maternity, paediatrics and intensive care and downgrade A&E. We need to step up the fight to defend Stafford and Cannock! Decisive action is necessary.

The Socialist Party says if we are to make them listen to us and keep our services then we must close down the town for a huge protest! Every business should close, with every worker stopping work for a day or half a day to build a giant weekday rally that can make crystal clear we will not accept the loss of any of our services.

Support Stafford Hospital, the group which organised the 20 April march, should name the date for a shutdown. This would receive massive support locally and nationally. In particular appeals should be made to surrounding hospitals like UHNS to support this action.

Health unions at Stafford hospital should build support for it and other trade unions should join in by organising workplace meetings to mobilise support. Community groups and residents associations could organise local public meetings.



1942 After years of struggle by workers, the fear of revolution after the war produces the Beveridge report. This heralded the welfare state reforms.	1948 Labour health secretary Aneurin Bevan introduces national health service, available to all free at the point of use and financed entirely by taxation.	1952 Charges for prescriptions, agreed by Labour before 1951 election defeat, introduced.	1965 Prescription charges abolished by Labour government, though the same government brought them back in 1968	1980 Black Report shows that, despite medical gains and the dedication of NHS staff, class inequalities in life expectancy still haunt Britain. The findings were backed up by reports in 1987 and 1998.	1982 Area health authorities abolished, starting a process of destroying democracy in the NHS.	1990 NHS Community Care Act sets up NHS Trusts and introduces an internal market system within the NHS.	1997 Blair government turns to hugely wasteful but millionaire friendly Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to build new hospitals.	2003 Labour opens first Independent sector Treatment Centre where private firms are paid huge sums in contracts to treat NHS patients.	2004 Foundation Trusts introduced by Labour - more competition between Foundation Hospitals for staff and resources, dependent on fulfilling targets.	2013 Health and Social Care Act makes even more clear capitalism's intention to run a market system where profits come before social needs.
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What can we do to defend the NHS at the ballot box?

Dave Nellist, chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) argues for an electoral challenge to defend the NHS.

Hospitals, such as George Elliot in Nuneaton, are under threat of take-over from private sector companies. Channel 4 News recently found that there has been a surge in the use of private ambulances in parts of the country, crewed by staff who may have as little as five days' medical training.

The NHS is expected to receive almost £500 million this year from private patients seeking prioritisation, which even the government acknowledges could result in "a growth in waiting lists and waiting times for NHS patients". Although accelerated over the last three years, hospitals are only using the same powers to raise income from private patients originally given to them by Tony Blair.

More of the same

And there's the problem. As even Dave Prentis, pro-Labour leader of Unison, has recognised: "Labour built the bridge that the Tories are marching over".

Huge demonstrations of tens of thousands (in Stafford, Lewisham and elsewhere) show there is no lack of willingness of people to fight to save their health service. And workers are taking action too. But what do we do at election time when all establishment parties broadly agree to the direction the NHS is travelling?

The current £20 billion 'savings' being imposed on the NHS by the coalition government actually arose from Labour plans. Former Labour ministers are even advising private firms seeking to profit from the NHS! Former Labour health secretaries Alan Milburn and Patricia Hewitt have earned tens of thousands of pounds a year advising firms which specialise in healthcare investments, run private hospitals



or provide outsourced services.

There is no evidence of winning back the Labour Party to the demand of 'renationalise the NHS'. Falkirk West showed the reaction of the Labour leadership when Unite attempted to influence the selection of just one MP.

TUSC

Labour now seems permanently wedded to public services run either on market principles, or by big businesses themselves. There is only one organisation planning to stand widely in elections which has pledged support 100% for an NHS publicly funded, publicly delivered, and publicly accountable (by being fully publicly owned!) and that's TUSC.

TUSC was set-up in 2010 to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates against the pro-austerity establishment parties.

TUSC candidates are pledged to:

- Stop all privatisation, including the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)
 - Bring privatised public services and utilities back into public ownership under democratic control
 - A high-quality, free National Health Service under democratic public ownership and control
- The Labour leadership is moving towards abolishing the voice of the organised trade union movement in the Labour Party. It is growing ever more

urgent that more trade unions should break the link with New Labour themselves and join with the RMT and leading trade unionists from other unions to found a new party.

As part of the process of building an independent political voice for working class people, TUSC is planning to stand over 600 candidates in next May's council elections. Around the country meetings will be held to invite active trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to come forward.

Unlike others, TUSC intends to root itself in the organisations and communities of the working class, unashamedly popularising socialist policies. **Could you be one of next year's candidates? Find out more at www.tusc.org.uk**

The Socialist Party fights for:

- No cuts. Axe the Act: Abolish the Health and Social Care Act which prepares the way for the further selling off of our NHS to private organisations
- A fully publicly funded NHS, free for all at the point of use
- End big business profiteering from the NHS: Abandon the Private Finance Initiative which is bleeding the NHS dry
- End NHS job losses and low pay. No downbanding.
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries and all private health providers
- Democratic control and accountability of health services
- United action to defend the NHS – the TUC must name the day for a 24-hour general strike against austerity
- A new mass workers' party that fights for these demands. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as a step in this direction
- A socialist planned society that can genuinely meet and exceed the original aims of the NHS

Defend NHS Wales from Tory-Labour cuts

Claire Job
Swansea Socialist Party

In England the Health and Social Care Act is dismantling the NHS. In Wales even without the Act, underfunding, years of neglect, poor planning and a spineless Welsh Government are having the same effect.

"It's true the NHS is under threat... in England" is what we hear too often from union leaders in Wales who claim that the Labour Welsh Government protects the NHS in Wales. At the Wales TUC conference this year there was only one motion on the NHS - it called for a fight against all cuts, and was voted down by union leaders. This does not reflect the mood of members.

Lengthening queues for planned treatment in NHS Cymru's hospitals is a scandal that is getting worse because of cuts being made by the seven health boards in Wales to meet the Welsh Government's spending targets.

Spending targets have driven change in healthcare services in Wales - for example, we are currently awaiting news from the South Wales Programme consultation which

would cut the number of A&Es in south Wales to just five serving two million people! Which hospitals are about to get downgraded? Which local community will have significantly reduced access to emergency and critical care beds?

Privatisation

It's true that in Wales we have been spared the naked privatisation of healthcare seen in England but the NHS in Wales is not free of market forces. The Welsh Government's Public Accounts Committee is asking for an investigation into claims that patients in Wales are able to jump lengthening queues for NHS care by paying to see the same doctor privately.

The Welsh Audit Office have alleged that cost-cutting measures are behind many of the 13,000 operations cancelled in Welsh Hospitals since 2010-11, due to either a lack of staff or lack of beds. Also that Wales will have the lowest spending per head on healthcare of any country in the UK by 2014-15.

Even all the cuts to services, beds and staff have not been enough to



make all the savings that the Labour Welsh Government has been asking for and, in each of the last three years, they have had to come up with extra funding in the last months of the financial year to ensure that health boards stayed within their targets.

For patients, however, the potential consequences of these cuts are much more serious than missed performance targets. There have been a reported 152 deaths of patients on waiting lists for cardiac surgery in Cardiff's UHW and Swansea's Morriston Hospital in the last five years, for instance.

As late as this May, at the Wales TUC, Welsh First Minister, Carwyn Jones, was claiming that savings would not be made through redundancies of NHS staff in Wales. The conference was barely over before that claim was being proved false - the Cardiff and Vale Health Board is in the final stages of a consultation over 324 redundancies.

It is not just a question of health workers and trade unionists in Wales showing solidarity and providing sympathy for our brothers and sisters in England. Whether the cuts are being implemented by the Con-Dems or Labour, we are united in the same fight to defend the NHS. The allies we can rely on in this struggle are not Labour politicians who implement NHS cuts but the millions of working class people who rely on and value their NHS.

The government is refusing to introduce minimum safe staffing levels into hospitals, despite the recommendations of the Francis report into the Mid Staffordshire Trust catastrophe in which 1,200 patients 'needlessly died'

Earlier this year drug company executives were secretly recorded boasting that they are selling regulated prescription drugs that cost "pennies" for hundreds of pounds because the government won't tighten NHS price controls

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Labour conference - blue shines through

Asked by a member of the public when he would "bring back socialism" Labour leader Ed Miliband replied: "that is what we are doing, Sir". Unfortunately, even for those wearing red-tinted spectacles, it would be impossible to spot corresponding socialist policies at this year's Labour Party conference.

Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls seemed to agree with Miliband: "I've always used the word socialism, I've no problem about that." But he then clarified that it isn't a word to "apply to an economic programme"! In fact Balls confirmed that Labour will stick with Tory spending limits for its first year in office, brutally declaring: "We won't be able to reverse all the spending cuts and tax rises the Tories have pushed through. And we will have to govern with less money around. The next Labour government will have to make cuts, too."

So Labour will inherit a wasteland and continue to try to make further cuts to the few public services that remain. Incredibly Ed Balls has even appealed to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) - a quango set up by the Con-Dems - to vet its spending plans!

Of course, one or two crowd-pleasers were pulled from the hat; notably the long-awaited pledge that a Labour government would abolish the iniquitous bedroom tax. This is to be welcomed, but meanwhile those affected by the tax face nearly two years of the misery of mounting rent arrears and threats of eviction. Most of those suffering the tax live in Labour-controlled local authorities that are dutifully implementing it.

Council housing needed

But if Miliband had called on Labour councils to refuse to implement the tax, promising that a Labour government would refund the money spent, the bedroom tax would have been made unworkable virtually overnight.

With five million people on waiting lists for social housing it would be enormously popular if Labour was to announce plans of a mass building programme of high-quality, affordable council housing. Unfortunately, however, while some welcome moves to encourage councils to build housing have been intimated, it seems that the house-building programme that has been trailed is primarily trying to encourage the private sector to 'close the gap'.

But the giant construction companies will only expand the supply of housing if it is profitable for them to do so; they have no interest in providing high-quality affordable housing. Measures to encourage them to build, such



1979 - Labour Party conference votes for a trade union motion on public ownership
photo Militant

as further relaxing planning laws, are unlikely to succeed. More substandard housing at prices well beyond the pockets of the majority is a more probable outcome.

Similarly, as Tom Watson has correctly said, Miliband has talked about 'strengthening' the minimum wage, but has not committed to increasing it to a living wage.

Unfortunately most of the conference announcements seem to blend in with the Tory blue conference backdrop rather than giving substance to any claims of standing for socialism. Labour, just as under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, is a party that accepts the logic of capitalism.

Miliband's adoption of the Tory slogan 'one nation' reflects Labour's belief that the interests of the 1% and those of the 99% are one and the same. It is only a question, claims Miliband, of encouraging 'responsible' rather than 'predatory' capitalism. But no amount of pleading will create a caring, sharing version of capitalism.

Worldwide the super-rich have £20 trillion stashed away in the world's tax havens, around half of which is owned by a mere 100,000 people. This is greater than the national debts of all the OECD countries added together. No tax is being paid on this vast wealth. In Britain alone it is estimated

that £120 billion of tax is avoided or evaded mainly by the rich every year.

Both Eds speak favourably of the 1945 Labour government. Yet the Labour leadership has done everything it can to prevent the conference discussing how the NHS - the greatest single achievement of that Labour government - can be saved from destruction. All resolutions on the NHS which go beyond promising to repeal the Health and Social Care Act have been ruled out of order. As a result the Labour Party conference will have no opportunity to vote to reverse all NHS cuts or to kick out private finance.

On 29 September tens of thousands of trade unionists will be demonstrating outside the Tory Party conference to save the NHS. This week the leaders of the main trade unions organising that demonstration have been at the Labour Party conference. However, the voice of the trade union movement - organising over seven million workers - has barely been heard at the event.

The discussion on Miliband's threat to break the link with the trade unions - thereby destroying the last vestiges of the collective voice of the working class within the Labour Party - was disgracefully given a measly 15 minutes on the agenda. How far the democratic rights of the trade union movement

within Labour have already been destroyed was shown by the fact that just one trade union leader - Paul Kenny of the GMB - spoke in the discussion. It seems the trade union leaders accept this travesty of a debate. Len McCluskey, leader of the biggest trade union in Britain, Unite, only gave his views at the Daily Mirror fringe meeting!

Miliband and Co have made it clear they intend to go ahead and finally break the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party, even if the process is not completed until after the special spring conference. Trade unionists are debating the question of how the organised working class can have a political voice.

Collective voice

The Socialist Party argues for the trade union movement to found a new mass workers' party. Alongside the RMT and others, we take part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which is doing important preparatory work for the creation of such a party.

This year's Labour Party conference once again shows that Labour is no longer a party that stands up for the working class, and is likely to convince more trade unionists that the time has come to found a new party.

Others still hope that Labour can be 'reclaimed' by the working class. A serious attempt to do so would require a massive campaign; accepting one token speech on the most essential issue for trade unionists being discussed at the Labour Party conference is not a good beginning!

If, however, the trade union leaders who think that the Labour Party can be reclaimed were to go to the special conference and vote en masse against these proposals it would be the first significant rebellion against the Labour leadership's destruction of working class political representation.

For Labour to be reclaimed by the working class would require far more; the trade unions would have to struggle for the adoption of a fighting programme - including ending austerity and public sector cuts, of a mass council house building programme, a living wage, and repeal of the anti-trade union laws; the expulsion of pro-big business elements, and the recreation of the party's democratic structures.

Given the grip those wedded to capitalism have on the party such a campaign is unlikely to succeed. Nonetheless, the result of fighting to defend the collective political voice of the working class could be the emergence of a powerful new mass workers' party from within the shell of pro-capitalist Labour.

While most of us have to struggle just to get by, the pockets of the rich and powerful in Britain are rapidly filling with wealth. In June - in one of those 'you couldn't make it up' moments - the MPs' pay body IPSA recommended an £11,000 a year pay rise for them! Since then MPs have been found out yet again claiming outrageous expenses.

Internationally, the struggle for a better future than what capitalism can provide is also hotting up. Look at Brazil, Turkey, Egypt...

Meanwhile the bloody situation in Syria shows once again capitalism's brutal face. As does the 40th anniversary of the bloody overthrow of the reformist Allende government by the western-backed Pinochet military coup.

In the pages of the Economist and Financial Times, leading capitalist thinkers continue to sweat - the

situation "ain't too rosy" and they know it! They're sometimes even forced to admit it, after years of denial, "that Marx bloke - he was sort of right."

There's only one event this year that brings this all together and that's Socialism 2013. Come to Socialism and discuss the current struggles of ordinary people in Britain and internationally, and the history of our movement and the lessons it provides. Discussions at Socialism 2013 range from how to save

the NHS; to Chile 1973; to Liverpool city council; to the founding of the Fourth International 75 years ago; to the basics of Marxism and what socialism would actually do.

Socialism 2013 is 'where it's at' this year to learn, debate and discuss and be part of the growing fight for international socialist change.

Lenny Shail

Ideas
to defeat
austerity

Bakers rise against Hovis

Victory shows zero-hours can be beaten

Members of the BFAWU bakers' union have won a battle to stop Hovis from using agency workers and zero-hour contracts to drive down wages, terms and conditions.

Geoff Atkinson, BFAWU spokesperson, said: "Our members at Hovis have achieved an historic agreement with the company.

"This landmark action by 210 members of a modest-sized union, along with meaningful negotiations with the company, has brought about significant change that could potentially have a positive knock-on effect throughout the entire labour movement.

"This result is one that can and should be used as a starting point for all UK workers. They should no longer be prepared to accept the driving down of their terms and

conditions as part of a nationwide race to the bottom. They have the right to real pay and real employment with real contracts; leaving a credible legacy for future generations of working people."

Action get results

Hovis management conceded defeat following the second walkout and shortly before the bakers started their third seven-day strike.

Managers initially agreed to give 24 zero-hour contract workers full-time contracts following the first strike (see last week's Socialist). Now they have also backed down on their plans to casualise the workforce.

Hovis say they'll now only use agencies when "there is insufficient commitment by employees to work overtime and banked hours".

Any agency staff who work a 39-hour week for 12 consecutive weeks will be moved on to parity pay. Hovis has said it will also review agency use and staff levels after three months, giving the potential for more permanent, full-time jobs.

This victory follows 14 days of strike action by workers determined to stop casualisation and pay cuts. The action saw round the clock pickets involving the majority of strikers, as well as a march through Wigan and a mood for solidarity action across the wider Hovis workforce.

Socialist Party members and National Shop Steward Network activists have supported the strike and picket lines, and will continue to do so if more action is needed to enforce the agreement.

Read the full BFAWU statement in the socialistparty.org.uk notebook



On the Hovis picket line photo North West SP

Another crackpot scheme for the NHS

Jon Dale

Tory Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's latest plan for the NHS is to send up to 50 'of the best doctors,' nurses and businessmen to the USA to learn how to become top managers.

In the USA, health spending per head of population is the highest in the world, yet a fifth of the population have no health insurance. 58% reported delaying or going without medical care in 2011 because of cost.

Health services administration is a huge burden in the USA. Insurance companies continually try to evade paying for investigations and treatment. Healthcare providers employ an army of administrators, accountants and lawyers to wrestle with the insurance companies, who employ equally large numbers.

Sending doctors and nurses to study in the USA shows that this is the sort of health service the Con-

980,068

people have waited in A&E for more than four hours in the past year. At the Royal London, part of Barts Trust which is set to cut 1,000 posts, emergency patients could not be admitted for two days in September 2013

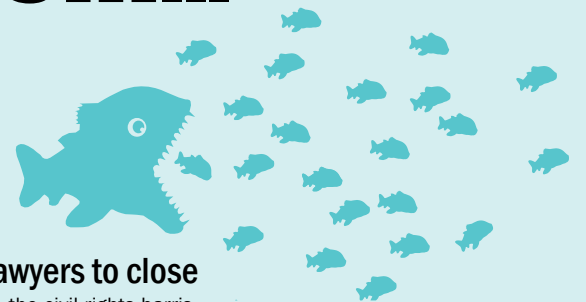
Dems aim for. Healthcare is being turned into a commodity to be

bought and sold - leaving those with the least money in the worst situation and all but the richest with terrible insecurity if they become seriously ill or injured.

As well as two months in a US business school, Hunt's plan includes a month's attachment with a big corporation. Microsoft, BT and FirstGroup have been mentioned. It was FirstGroup's overcrowded Great Western train that broke down in August, stranding passengers for almost six hours with insufficient food, water or toilets. Standing passengers were offered an upgrade to get a seat in First Class - if they paid for it!

This is the future for the NHS - overcrowded, lacking basic care, but with the chance for an upgrade to First Class for those with enough money. This isn't new - it's Britain before the NHS was formed. Three decades of relentless privatisation by successive governments are turning the clock back 65 years.

Them...



Lawrence lawyers to close

Tooks Chambers, the civil rights barristers' group set up in 1984 during the miner's strike which has represented Stephen Lawrence's family, is set to close due to the Con-Dems' legal aid cuts. The chambers is 90% publicly funded.

Tooks first acted for miners wrongly accused of riot and affray, and is currently representing the Duggan family at the inquest into the death of Mark Duggan.

Energy bills up 10%

British Gas is planning to increase gas and electricity bills by up to 10% - four times inflation.

This would take an average 'dual fuel' bill to £1,474 a year. That's 13% of your take home pay if you work a 38-hour week on minimum wage (and far more of your income if you're unemployed or underemployed). On cold winter days, the cost could be £20 a day.

Of course, say privatised energy market promoters, you could switch supplier. But other energy comes are predicted to follow suit.

70% of households say they went without heating at some point last winter to reduce bill costs. At the same time British Gas, SSE, EDF, E.ON, Scottish Power and npower have all seen their profit margins almost double. British Gas owner Centrica made £1.58 billion in just six months.

Leaky argument

Water bills are also on the up. Thames Water are sticking a £29 water surcharge on bills to pay for the building of a 'super-sewer'. Privatisation of water boards was supposed to make it easier to raise money for these sorts of 'clean up' projects. (A similar argument's being used for the sell-off of the Royal Mail).

Instead, most water companies, including Thames Water, are owned by debt-ridden private equity gangsters. Since the Kemble Water consortium took over, Thames Water's debts have tripled.

Grimsby or Cyprus?

Another costly privatised service is rail. Ticket prices are due to rise 4.1% in January. But don't worry, the price of a return ticket is going to be capped - at £500! As the Independent pointed out, that's over twice the price of a trip on the Orient Express, and more than a week's holiday in Cyprus.

Last year £2.7 billion was given in government subsidies to private train companies.

Universal waste

The government's own Major Projects Authority has predicted that up to £200 million will be wasted on failed IT for Iain Duncan Smith's Universal Credit 'reform' (ie cut) in benefits.

That's the sort of thing that happens when contracts worth £23 million get signed off without the 'proper authority' due to the pressure to keep the project on time.

But better to waste money on private computer firms than on people's needs, IDS would probably say.

Tax avoiders' harmony

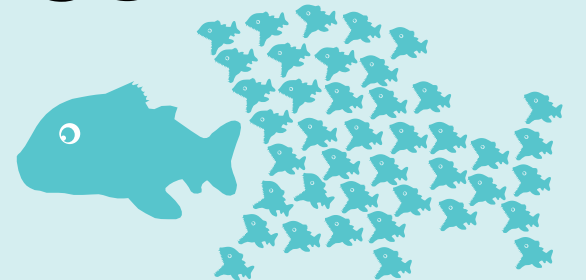
'Give us yer money' multi-millionaire Bono has again defended U2's accounting - putting money in the Dutch Antilles islands to minimise the amount of tax paid.

Interviewed in the Observer, he attacked the "cranky left" for criticising him. "Tax competitiveness is why Ireland has stayed afloat. When the Germans tried to impose a different tax regime on the country in exchange for a bailout, the Taoiseach said they would rather not have the bailout. So U2 is in total harmony with our government's philosophy."

The harmony of low taxes for big business and the rich, big cuts in public services and welfare and a €60 charge to visit a doctor. Maybe the 13% of workers unemployed, or those who have left Ireland to find work elsewhere, don't feel very afloat, Bono.

Read 'The Frontman - Bono (In the Name of Power)' book review in [Socialism Today](#) - see below

...& Us



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Industrial and political battles at Hull city council

Mick Whale

It has been a week of twists and turns in the battle to defend terms and conditions for Hull council workers. The workforce is clear that if you stand together you can have an impact on management and politicians alike.

A few councillors, including the magnificent Hull three who voted against the cuts and were suspended from the Labour group for their actions, are completely opposed to any of the cuts. Others are just starting to realise the devastation that faces the city and are starting to panic. Another group wants to smash the council workforce and privatise as many services as possible.

The local trade union leadership pointed out, when Labour took over from the Lib Dems in 2011, that if they implemented the cuts Labour would be seen as the party of cuts. This is now being borne out as the Lib Dems have started to regain support.

The trade union negotiators started discussions with the council in good faith. But negotiators and the workers they represent were furious to find that behind our backs, the authority had sent out letters which effectively served notice of redeployment!

Some Labour politicians are blaming the officers for sending out the letter without their knowledge. This may well be true, but who is



Fighting against cuts to park staff in 2010 photo Hull SP

running the council?

The unions' response was bold and immediate. With very little notice, we organised a successful lobby of a Labour group meeting. Many of the councillors were visibly shaken.

Some Labour leaders think that all they need to do is to explain the severity of the crisis facing the city and the workforce will accept the cuts. The authority privately admits that around 1,500 jobs will have to go in the next two years. But the workforce has already rejected cuts

in pay and terms and conditions in a ballot.

Some of the more cynical Labour leaders will probably claim that the failure of the workforce to accept cuts will mean they will have to fall elsewhere. But we will not allow the council to play the workforce off against services and service users in a race to the bottom.

Significantly, some Labour leaders are accepting in private that Labour should have joined with the trade unions to fight for more resources for the city. They have yet

to make this clear but it is an indication of the pressure which is mounting on them.

The cabinet has set in train proposals to dismiss the workforce and re-engage on worse terms and conditions. But also, senior members of the cabinet have been given a brief to try and negotiate a more "acceptable" set of cuts with the trade union negotiators.

The problem remains that the council has budgeted to make £2.8 million cuts in terms and conditions. It is difficult to see how a package could be put together that would be accepted by the workforce!

The unions will take part in negotiations but we will not allow them to deflect us from campaigning for action among our members.

Increasingly, the battle to defend jobs, terms and conditions is taking on a political rather than simply industrial colour. Council employees are increasingly understanding that they need a different leadership in the council.

Some see this as a change in the Labour leadership but many are questioning whether they can support Labour at all.

Labour should remember that it was the mass ranks of the local authority workforce that swept them into office in 2010. Those same council workers will be the shock troops campaigning for anti-cuts candidates in 2014 if they continue on the current course.

Stop privatisation of the Probation Service

A probation officer

On 19 September Chris Grayling put the Probation Service up for sale. The trade union Napo called widespread lunchtime protests. Hopefully, industrial action will follow. We need public protection, not private profit.

The government plans to privatise 70% of the probation service's work to private companies such as G4S, Serco and Sodexo and is pushing through this ideological idiocy at breakneck speed to have us sold off by the 2015 election.

The plan is that the private sector will supervise most medium risk offenders. Supervising offenders in the community is a highly skilled job and medium risk offenders are predominantly men convicted of violence, sexual offences, burglary, robbery and domestic violence.

These plans will undermine the good work the service is doing. The government's own risk assessment (which they won't publish) shows that the changes pose a real threat to public safety.

As a probation officer of 15 years, I am fighting these privatisation plans with Napo. While the existence of the Probation Service is threatened and staff become more and more demoralised, in my work I have never encountered suffering and want on the current scale.

Clients have had their benefits stopped, and two have ended up serving sentences for theft, though



Aylesbury Napo members against privatisation - part of the nationwide wave of protests photo Napo

prison costs massively more than providing benefits.

Prior to the sanctions, neither had re-offended for a significant time. People who offend often come from disadvantaged backgrounds and common issues for our clients include mental illness, childhood abuse and neglect, domestic abuse, poverty and substance abuse.

We can be sure that the government has not considered the consequences of this privatisation on either the public, victims of crime or the offenders, who are those affected most. The only people who will benefit are the private profiteers.

Glasgow Unison strike wins important victory

Philip Stott

Three days of strike action by at least 80 Glasgow City council homelessness social workers have resulted in an important victory. The Unison member whose suspension by management on 13 September sparked the walkout has been reinstated. Social work management has also agreed to draw up new caseload management proposals within four weeks. Unison stewards will have an input in drafting them.

Workload was a key factor in the dispute that led to the suspension and then a walkout by union members. By 16 September staff had walked off the job at the other four offices in Glasgow. They stayed out until 18 September when the workers went back united after hearing that the suspension was lifted and management was prepared to engage in real discussions on workload.

Glasgow City Unison has made clear that a formal ballot for action will take place unless there are real changes in workload. Striking workers told us that on average they were handling 50 cases per staff member, resulting in a deteriorating service and demoralisation.

Scandalously, on 17 September Glasgow City council, a Labour council, had threatened all the staff with dismissal unless they went back. They had also hired a QC to move for an interdict against the unofficial strike.

The fact that important concessions have been won underlines the importance of militant and decisive action by workers, even action that breaks the anti-union laws. Glasgow



A previous battle against cuts in Glasgow - this time by care workers photo Duncan Brown

City Unison refused to repudiate the strike, a demand pushed by council management after threatening to make the union liable for the costs of the strike.

As one striker told us: "We've proved that by standing together we can force management to listen to our concerns. After a year of a formal grievance on caseloads, and frankly being ignored, we now have the management listening."

A Unison member also thanked those that had sent the hundreds of messages of support from across the UK, Ireland, the US and even Turkey. "They were a great boost to workers and helped keep up the morale."

See: www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk for more on this and a report of the pro-independence demonstration in Edinburgh on 21 September

In brief

Grangemouth

As we reported last week, workers at the Grangemouth oil refinery in Scotland are balloting for strike action over attacks on working conditions and pensions, including the victimisation of a Unite senior steward. Stevie Deans, chair of Falkirk Labour Party, was suspended from the Party during the debacle when the Labour leadership falsely accused Unite of interfering in the selection of the parliamentary candidate. He was then suspended by Ineos, the owners of the oil refinery.

He was only reinstated after the workers threatened to walk out. But Unite says: "Ineos is continuing with a sinister campaign of victimisation against an innocent employee".

The adjacent petrochemical plant, also owned by Ineos, is threatened with closure.

The ballot closes on 27 September.

Royal Mail ballot

On 20 September the Communication Workers Union (CWU) served legal notice to Royal Mail of the intention to ballot members for strike action over pay, pensions and privatisation. Ballot papers will go out on 27 September. The result will be announced on 16 October. If there is a yes vote, the earliest strike date would be 23 October. This is the first national strike ballot in Royal Mail since 2009. It affects 115,000 postal workers in Royal Mail and Parcelforce.

RMT

John Reid, currently London regional secretary of the transport union RMT is standing for election to the union's national committee, the Council of Executives. He is standing on a programme to defend jobs, pay and conditions and to unite all grades in the battles against the many attacks on RMT members.

RMT members who are drivers on the Victoria line on London Underground are due to strike from 9pm on 24 September over working conditions.

Firefighters

Firefighters in England and Wales will walk out for four hours from noon on 25 September. This is over the massive attacks the government is waging on their pension scheme. There is a national agreement that during the strike firefighters will be able to volunteer to return to work in the event of a major incident. But in Surrey and Buckinghamshire the employers are preventing firefighters from entering stations for the duration of their shift - leaving those areas unnecessarily without cover for nine hours.

In Wales firefighters will march to the National Assembly for a protest at 1pm.

The FBU must be given full support by the whole trade union movement to give the union confidence to take further action, particularly given the employers' strikebreaking plans, which could turn this struggle into a bitter dispute.

Website

For the full version of these articles and more workplace and trade union news, see www.socialistparty.org.uk

Labour to scrap bedroom tax in 2015 - we demand an amnesty now!

Hugh Caffrey

Labour's promise to scrap the Con-Dems' bedroom tax will be welcomed, especially by the 600,000 people suffering it. Labour's change of policy is the latest victory for the anti-bedroom tax movement.

But we can't wait until 2015 - councils should immediately axe the bedroom tax, restore housing benefit payments to their pre-April level, withdraw all court proceedings and eviction orders where the bedroom tax has been a factor in rent arrears, write off all bedroom tax related arrears, and order housing associations (HAs) to follow suit. Councils should use reserves or borrowing to pay for this.

The Labour leadership should promise to reimburse all local authorities for the costs incurred if it wins the next election.

Unworkable

A combination of legal and political pressure has forced Labour to shift. But 50,000 tenants could soon face eviction. Still urgent is the building of an 'anti-eviction army' in every community; and the campaign for councils and HAs to adopt 'no eviction' policies.

In Kirkby, Merseyside, the bailiffs were sent packing by a 'ring of steel' which the local campaign group formed around the home of a tenant threatened with eviction.

Local authority unions everywhere should adopt the position of Bolton Metro Unison, to defend members who refuse to enforce the bedroom tax.

The bedroom tax has been made unworkable by its own logic - forcing poor people to pay money they don't have. Non-payment is running at 50% or more in many HAs.

Some authorities, fearing an organised opposition or massive loss of rental income, have given concessions - 'reclassifying' rooms, exempting tenants who meet certain conditions, topping up the discretionary housing payment fund as the Scottish parliament did, or agreeing minimum repayment amounts for arrears.

Legal victories in Scotland over the minimum size of a room for one adult (70 square feet) have got housing bosses worried. Many tenants are threatened with eviction over bedroom tax on rooms which are smaller than 70 square feet, or even 50 square feet!

Now it turns out that may be illegal, the Chartered Institute of Housing says councils should be measuring room sizes. Wouldn't it be easier to just scrap the tax?!

Labour says it will, in government, help councils to help people who want to downsize. In some cas-



photo Jim Halfpenny

Anti-bedroom tax campaigns have pushed Labour to concede scrapping it

es this will be possible - and it was more possible before council housing was broken up! But often there is nowhere else to go. If there is, it is likely to be in the more expensive private sector.

Housing programme

The answer to the housing crisis is to build a lot more council housing. Miliband and Co have made verbal gestures, but when New Labour was in government and where it is in control of councils, it hasn't done this.

Labour shares the same aim of austerity as the current millionaires' government. Its plans to urge the private sector into providing more 'affordable' rented homes will not go beyond costly token gestures on that basis.

Part of the problem is the chaotic patchwork of 'social housing' providers. Social housing should be owned by councils, democratically controlled and managed, including by representatives of tenants, workers, and the wider community, together with the local authority.

The building companies and landlords exist to make a profit. That means holding up rents and house prices, and any serious measures

would have to tackle this.

Councils must swiftly implement a massive expansion in council housing through new-build and renovation. Where profiteering landlords and landowners get in the way, or refuse to renovate/let empty housing at affordable rents, councils should use their powers of compulsory purchase.

An expansion of council housing with affordable rents would drive down private sector rents. Linked with rent caps, this would benefit all tenants, and reduce the housing benefit bill.

Austerity means robbing the millions to bail out the billionaires. The sums are staggering - £120 billion in dodged taxes, £750 billion sitting idle in corporate accounts. That's where the money should come from to fund a massive housing construction/renovation plan.

This would be fought tooth and nail by the bosses, and that's why the answer to the housing crisis is ultimately the socialist public ownership of the banks, construction companies, and housing companies. As part of a democratic socialist plan, these enterprises could be put at the service of society to meet human need and end the housing crisis.

What we are fighting for:

- Axe the bedroom tax now! No evictions - write off the arrears
- Cap rents - stop the Tories' rent-rise proposals
- End privatisation - bring social housing and the allied maintenance and administrative departments back in-house
- For democratic control over housing policy, maintenance and construction plans; involving elected and accountable representatives of tenants and housing workers together with the local authority
- Get rid of the rack-renters, speculators and profiteers. Build/renovate a million affordable, high-quality council homes to end homelessness and create jobs.
- Take the large construction, housing, landlord and finance companies into socialist public ownership under democratic workers' and tenants' control and management
- Take the top 150 companies into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management, as part of a democratic socialist plan to guarantee every single person a decent home, income and future.

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.

Mafia capitalism

Royal Mail privatisation again reveals the mafia-like outlook of the Con-Dems and confirms Michael Corleone's observation in *The Godfather* that 'a man with a briefcase can steal more than a 100 men with guns.'

Previous privatisations have resulted in a bonanza for privateers and consultants and the loss of public control over vital utilities like energy, water, rail, etc, now wholly or partly foreign owned. French energy company EDF uses its UK profits to subsidise its French consumers. Rail now receives more taxpayer subsidy than when it was nationalised.

This is the economics of bedlam.

The Con-Dems are a government based on lies. The example of efficient private mail delivery in Belgium for instance is false. The claim that private investment is necessary for Royal Mail to develop as a world class service is false.

I applaud the post office workers for taking action to resist this scandal, and wait in vain for Miliband to declare that Labour will take Royal Mail back into public ownership.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

This letter was sent to the Liverpool Echo

Unappreciated

I have the distinct pleasure of living in Nick Clegg's constituency, Sheffield Hallam, in a village called Dore - an affluent and very pro-Lib Dems area. That became abundantly clear when I attended the 'Lib Dems appreciation society' ie the deputy prime minister's Q&A meeting at a local school. Hundreds of questions sprung to mind when the opportunity to ask Nick one arose. My choice was to challenge Nick on his party's slogan: "A stronger economy, a fairer society". The bedroom tax,



tuition fees, changes to mental health services, the introduction of divisive academies; all issues that affect me personally and all policies that defy the creation of a 'fairer society'.

So my question was ready. I attended and waited while the locals asked questions about such pressing issues as cars turning left onto Dore Road!... Then I got my chance. I asked my question and watched the show. Nick Clegg went on a furious tirade! Ignoring every issue I had mentioned, he accused me of using a 'cherry picked list'. He refused to let me challenge him on what he said, despite the fact everyone else had been able to.

Nick had obviously been expecting a nice easy night being asked uncontroversial questions by his loyal supporters. And when faced with a dissenting voice he immediately threw himself on

the defensive. The deputy leader of our country didn't know how to respond to a 19 year old college student other than to go ballistic.

Graydon Robson, Sheffield Socialist Party

Establishment rocked

Welsh socialist rockers the Manic Street Preachers have released their 11th album featuring an anti-Thatcher song, apparently written long before her death this year. It starts with the



1984-85 miners' strike and moves through Hillsborough and onto the present, and is a critique of the attack on the working classes over the last 30 years by Thatcher and her heirs.

With lines like: "And the endless parade of old Etonian scum, line the front benches so what is to be done", singer James Dean Bradfield calls it, "the most spiteful, angry track on the album."

While promoting the album the band also appeared on BBC Breakfast and gave probably the best political analysis heard on the show in ages when lambasting the feeble opposition offered by New Labour to today's Tories; laying bare the urgent need for a new mass workers' party that can bury Thatcherism for good, and ensure we're still not fighting it in another 30 years.

Scott Jones, Llanelli

Jobless tyranny

Two and a quarter million unemployed people have had their lives ruined by this government.

On 5 November at 1pm there will be a protest outside Southampton Job Centre after the Department for Work and Pensions imposed a sanction on my JSA (for the fifth time). Protests like this one should be organised in every town and to get media attention for the plight of the jobless.

Mike King, Southampton

Free market

'Million Jobs for a Stronger Economy' - a Lib Dems campaign - seem to think traineeships will create jobs, but we know for big business wanting to increase profits, traineeships are the perfect option to get work done for free, with government funding to top it off.

To tackle youth unemployment we need to create real jobs with decent pay, not provide access to free labour of young people, through workfare and traineeships. Rather than making real jobs, companies will just keep coming back for free staff.

Helen Pattison, east London

Greece: Neo-Nazis murder Pavlos Fyssas, a left activist and rapper

The left and organised working class must organise a powerful anti-fascist movement

Andros Payiatsos
Xekinima (CWI Greece)

On the night of 18 September the municipality of Keratsini, in greater Piraeas, was overwhelmed by tens of thousands of anti-fascists. They were expressing their anger at the cold-blooded murder of Pavlos Fyssas, a rap artist and anti-fascist activist, the day before.

Pavlos Fyssas was well-known for his bold anti-fascist songs and left ideas. He was attacked by neo-Nazi Golden Dawn thugs in front of many witnesses and four armed policemen, who did nothing to prevent the killing. A supporter of Golden Dawn was later arrested by police

and he reportedly confessed to the murder.

Pavlos Fyssas is the first Greek activist to be murdered by Golden Dawn supporters. Up until now, they have concentrated their attacks on immigrants, causing a number of deaths. But since last year they have begun to concentrate more attacks on left-wing anti-fascist activists.

Pavlos wrote and sung against fascism. He was born, grew up and lived in Keratsini, a traditional working class area in the city of Piraeas.

Pavlos was watching a football match in a cafe in the town centre when he was recognised by some Golden Dawn thugs.

They had targeted him because of his songs, and mobilised a murderous gang to wait for Pavlos



Pavlos Fyssas - left wing rapper murdered by neo-Nazis

once he came out of the cafe.

Pavlos and his friends, sensing that the atmosphere was getting dangerous, decided to leave the cafe, only to discover that about 30 or 40 thugs were waiting for them outside. He was stabbed in the heart by what doctors described as a "professional" attack.

Two evenings before, again in a working class area in Piraeas, Golden Dawn attacked a group of about 30 Communist Party members who were fly-posting. It is estimated that about 50 thugs attacked the Communist Party members with sticks with nails and nine people were hospitalised. Among the injured is the leader of the Metal Workers' Union, who lives in the area.

After the rise of Golden Dawn (GD) during elections in May and June 2012, anti-fascist committees sprang up and, on many occasions, GD thugs were chased out of areas and their demonstrations cancelled due to counter, anti-fascist demos. On one occasion, immigrants chased away GD thugs. On another, in Chania, Crete, the leader of the local Nazis was thrown into the sea by anti-fascists!

Regaining the initiative

The recent attack on the Communist Party members can only be explained as an attempt to regain the initiative by Golden Dawn. If they could attack what is generally recognised as the best organised force on the Left, then the fascists are the ones who are seen to "rule the streets".

What is tragic is that the Communist Party (CP or KKE) has no real anti-fascist campaign, and therefore the attack against it was not followed by any serious anti-fascist initiative by the CP. Thus the effect on the movement, in general, by the attack on the CP members, was what the fascists aimed for: fear and demoralisation.

The truth of the matter is that the mass Left parties are 'fast asleep' over the issue of fascism. Both the KKE and Syriza (radical left coalition party) underestimate the danger of fascism. Syriza has made some steps towards a better understanding of this issue and developing some anti-fascist campaigns, but they are far from sufficient. Fundamentally it is mainly up to local activists to decide to take anti-fascist action, and not so much as a result of clear directions from the Syriza centre.

There is no unity of the left over the issue of fascism, not only the Communist Party but even Antarsya (the anti-capitalist left alliance) refuses to work together with other forces, particularly with Syriza, over the issue of fascism.

There is no understanding that an anti-fascist front and campaign needs to develop across the whole of the left and the organised working class. Important practical measures, such as setting up defence committees, are ignored, whereas the fascists are training in the use of firearms under the guise of 'private enterprises'.

Moreover, there can be no answer to the threat of fascism unless the left decides to fight against not just the policies of the Troika and the Greek government, but against the capitalist system itself, which is the root of the re-emergence of the fascist threat. On this, again, the left parties are miles away from what is required.

Despite these weaknesses of the 'official' left parties on this issue, thousands of anti-fascists are organising campaigns and committees, in city after city, and developing powerful campaigns. After Pavlos' murder, their struggle will become more determined.

There are good reasons to believe that Pavlos' death will awaken many who might not realise how deadly serious the general situation is becoming in Greece. This is the best tribute to Pavlos: to fight the rising danger of fascism and for a better life under an alternative to capitalism - a socialist society.

Pavlos lost his life, fighting and standing; he did not bow to the fascists, not for a second. According to eyewitnesses, Pavlos's last words to his enemies were: "You want to fight like men? Come one at a time". But the fascists would not. They do not have that courage, cowards that they are.

Pavlos Fyssas will remain a fighter of our movement. He will be on our banners and slogans. We will make sure he did not die in vain!



Golden Dawn thugs

Teachers show the way forward

Build for all-out general strike action to defeat new austerity attacks!

Public sector workers have, yet again, demonstrated their determination to resist the Greek government's austerity attacks, as demanded under the bailout conditions of the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank). The bailout terms mean that 25,000 public sector workers will be put into a "mobility pool" - effectively laid off - by the end of this year, on massively reduced pay. If, after eight months, they cannot find alternative jobs (which is most likely given the depth of the recession in Greece) they will be sacked. In addition, 15,000 public sector workers' jobs will be axed next year. In response, a five day teachers' strike commenced on Monday 16 September and civil servants held a two-day strike beginning on 18 September. These strikes represent a revival in the workers' movement after a pause in the class struggle, in part due to the devastating impact of capitalist austerity on people's living standards.

Xekinima members report on the start of the teachers' action.

Participation in the first day of a five-day teachers' strike was massive, with an average 90% participation nationally.

The teachers' marches were massive too, with 30,000 demonstrators on the march in Athens and 10,000 in Thessaloniki.

Although mainly made up of secondary and high school teachers, contingents of workers from the public sector (social security, pension funds, public insurance funds, social welfare and university administration) were very big, as well.

Four union federations coordinated their action with OLME (the secondary school teachers' union) and announced they would take repeated strike action.

Student union contingents were equally big on the demonstrations, as were those of primary and private school teachers. Together with teachers in Athens, hundreds of school students joined the march and created a very vibrant mood with their chants.

Unions representing social housing workers and the Department of Development were also present with banners.

However, there is a long way ahead and the only thing we know for certain is that the government, together with the help of the main TV channel owners and newspapers, and the forces of repression, will intensify their attacks against these workers.



The same strength and resilience must be shown by workers from other union federations that have entered the fight.

The most essential thing is that the movement of trade union federations which is proceeding to five-day repeated strikes becomes as wide as possible, as soon as possible, with the involvement of more sections of the working class.

An indefinite general strike is the strongest weapon that the workers' movement has against its capitalist tyrants.

If this weapon is used 'lightly', without a plan and adequate preparation in the workplaces, it can backfire. If it is used correctly, ie if it has massive participation, determination and expands into many sectors, it can not only overthrow the government's policies but also the government itself.

(Translations by **Amalia Loizidou** and **Eleni Vetsika**)

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



Pakistan: False police case against comrade Hameed Chanah

Socialist and union organiser targeted by feudal lords and corrupt state officials.

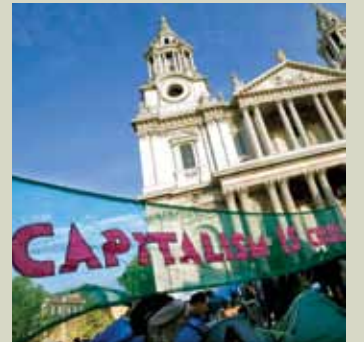
Khalid Bhatti, Socialist Movement Pakistan (CWI)



Germany: Merkel wins as Social Democrats crumble

Greens and reformist left lose support after failing to challenge capitalism.

Sozialistische Alternative (SAV) reporters (CWI Germany)



The causes of capitalist crisis

A reply to Andrew Kliman.

Peter Taaffe and Lynn Walsh, Socialist Party (CWI England and Wales)

Book review: Militant Liverpool - A City on the Edge

Between 1983 and 1987 Liverpool's Labour council, then led by socialists, refused to transfer the burden of Tory government cuts, introduced by Margaret Thatcher, onto the backs of Liverpool's working people. The 'Liverpool 47' councillors adopted the slogan of 'better to break the law than break the poor', first used by the jailed councillors of Poplar in 1921.

Liverpool council - which included supporters of Militant, the Socialist Party's predecessor - was the only local authority that successfully extracted extra funding - £60 million - from Thatcher's government. The council was never voted out, but pushed out by a combination of the Tories, the national Labour leadership (under Neil Kinnock, now a Lord), and the courts using retrospective legislation. The councillors had carried out their socialist promises, but there has been an attempt to bury the council's achievements in an avalanche of distortion.

One of these councillors Tony Mulhearn, a Militant supporter and now Socialist Party member who was also president of Liverpool District Labour Party (DLP) from 1980 to 1986, reviews *Militant Liverpool - A City On The Edge*, by Diane Frost and Peter North. This book was published by Liverpool University Press this year.

Michael Gove recently paid Ed Miliband the ultimate insult, claiming he was a worse Labour leader than Neil Kinnock. Gove ludicrously refers to the Unite union's doomed attempt to transform New Labour, saying: 'While Kinnock moved bravely and remorselessly to eradicate Militant's influence... Miliband has done nothing to stop the takeover of his own party.'

So, a timely reminder of the ruling class's fear of the example set by the Liverpool 47 heralds another book on the city's socialist council. Three decades on, the authors say: 'this book sheds new light on what is for some a dark period in the city's past best forgotten, while for others is a memory of the city that refused to lie down and die, and a continuing inspiration.'

The introduction, headed 'The Militant years: mad, bad and never coming back', and the first chapter, entitled 'Liverpool from world city to basket case' seem to belie their claimed objectivity.

Indeed, the introduction quotes Kinnock's attack on Liverpool council in full, describing it as 'what many thought was the speech of his life'. It must now be the most repeated speech since Churchill's 'blood, tears and sweat' in 1940.

However, further reading suggests the authors' methodology was

ironically suggesting the ugly, proceeding with the good, and finishing with the bad.

The authors draw extensively from Liverpool - A City That Dared To Fight (see below), but the wide range of quotes from friendly and hostile sources indicates comprehensive research.

Quotes gathered from members of the 47 and its allies are faithfully recorded. The 47's programme and achievements are given due prominence and the charge by detractors that the council created its own problems is blown out of the water. The city's economic history and the catastrophic situation that the 47 inherited is accurately outlined.

A balance sheet of contributors suggests, however, that undue weight is given to people opposed to the 47. Of the 17 interviewed nine are hostile, five are friendly, with three neutral.

Surprisingly, among the neutrals is professor Michael Parkinson, author of the 1985 book *Liverpool On The Brink*, who appears to have modified his animosity when he says that blaming Liverpool's misfortunes on the 47 is 'misplaced'.

The book dwells on the charge that the 47 intimidated their opponents. Apart from Kinnock and former Labour MPs Peter Kilfoyle and Jane Kennedy, the most baleful charges are churned out by ex-councillor Gideon Ben-



Mass rallies of workers supported the fighting stance of the Militant-led Liverpool council photo Paul Traynor

Tovim and councillor Steve Munby, the latter an ex-Communist Party member and now staunch council member who has not voted against a single cut. Despite him never being seen at a District Labour Party meeting, Ben-Tovim ludicrously claims that any opposition to the 47 at DLP meetings was suppressed by intimidation.

He also makes the absurd claim that the council disregarded the plight of the black working class. He wallows in academic reports and distortions surrounding the Sam Bond affair, which is the book's largest passage.

Much is made of the opposition to Bond's selection as Principal Race Relations Officer. There is no focus on the poisonous amalgam of the Tories, Liberals, the Nalgo and NUT union leaderships, and the Communist Party leadership or the media's hysterical role with the Liverpool Echo, Murdoch and Maxwell fermenting opposition to the appointment.

However, the book records that the 47 pumped more investment into the predominantly black Granby area and, in addition, employed more black youth than any previous administration.

By contrast, both Munby and current Liverpool Mayor Joe Anderson have continued with a catastrophic decline in the council's employment of both white and black workers. When the 47 left office in 1987, over 30,000 workers were employed directly by the council. That figure is now below 8,000.

The book recognises the 47's massive popular support, reflecting Liverpool's desires and aspirations, even going beyond Labour's traditional working class vote. For instance the authors quote a 'besuited investment manager' at a recent drinks reception for green investors who defended the council, saying: 'What did you expect us to do back then, give up and die?'

The final chapter on the aftermath makes no mention of right-wing Labour's catastrophic role. Follow-

ing the undemocratic dismissal and surcharging of the 47, the new council put up rents, introduced redundancies, implemented the poll tax and crushed democracy in the party. This resulted in its rejection by the working class, leading to Labour's decline by the mid-1990s to an insignificant rump of 12 council seats.

The closing pages give prominence to more hostile observations. Shamefully the 47's deputy council leader, Derek Hatton, justifies Mayor Anderson's cuts policy claiming that what happened in the 1980s could not be repeated.

The key question of the catastrophic absence of leadership today is studiously ignored.

Compared with some, this book offers a reasonably balanced evaluation of the Liverpool events, but to acquire a full understanding Liverpool - A City That Dared To Fight is still essential reading.

What was achieved

- 6,300 families rehoused from tenements, flats and maisonettes
- 2,873 tenement flats demolished
- 1,315 walk-up flats demolished
- 2,086 flats/maisonettes demolished
- 4,800 houses and bungalows built
- 7,400 houses and flats improved
- 600 houses/bungalows created by 'top-downing' 1,315 walk-up flats
- 25 new Housing Action Areas
- Six new nursery classes built and open
- 17 Community Comprehensive Schools established following a massive reorganisation
- £10 million spent on school improvements
- Five new sports centres, one with a leisure pool attached, built and open
- 2,000 additional jobs provided for in Liverpool City Council Budget
- 10,000 people a year employed on Council's Capital Programme
- Three new parks built
- Rents frozen for five years


Manchester: Rally and exhibition - Liverpool's 1983-87 socialist council


Monday 30 September. Rally 7 - 9pm. Exhibition opens 5.30pm, with refreshments.

Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester

Speakers include **Peter Taaffe** and **Tony Mulhearn**, co-authors of 'Liverpool - A City That Dared to Fight'

Hosted by Manchester Unite local government branch.





Liverpool: A City That Dared To Fight
by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn **£11.99**

The Rise Of Militant
by Peter Taaffe **£11.99**

Militant Liverpool - A City on the Edge
by Diane Frost and Peter North **£16.99**

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Obituary - Steve Draper

I am sad to report that long-standing Grimsby Militant and Socialist Party member Steve Draper died on 9 September from a heart attack.

While Steve had not been able to be active in recent years due to ill-health, he had remained a committed member, regularly paying his membership dues and subscribing to the Socialist paper.

Steve was at his most active in the battle against the poll tax. I remember a demo in Grimsby of 3,000 organised by Militant members. He loved reading and writing and for many years it was like he had a regular spot in the Letters column of the Militant, he wrote so often.

While not known to many of the new Socialist Party members in Grimsby, his dedication and commitment to the socialist cause should act as an inspiring example. Our condolences to Steve's brothers, Rob and Jim and the rest of his family.

Alistair Tice

University unions' ballot

Students and staff - unite and fight!

After another year of being offered real-terms cuts to pay, university workers represented by UCU, Unison and Unite are balloting for a major national campaign of strike action and industrial action against cuts, against zero-hour contracts and the gender pay gap, and for job security. Students can play a key role in working alongside lecturers in common defence of education.

Shockingly, a US lecturer Margaret Vojtko, died homeless and in poverty on 1 September after 25 years lecturing at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Some lecturers in Britain experience the same grim reality as some US academics face: living on the edge of ruin and working 60-hour weeks while vice-chancellors stuff their pockets with six-figure salaries.

Swindle

As Unison notes, universities are in their best financial position in years; Cardiff University's chief operating officer, last year announced the university is "sitting on a pile of cash" and began a £130 million programme of capital investment. Management tight-fistedness is driven by the model of university as a business not a public service.

Students, meanwhile, can see they've been swindled by 16 years of Labour and Tory manoeuvres to undercut the working class's access to higher education. While tuition fees have gone from nothing in 1997 to £9,000 for most undergraduates, the Coalition are going ahead with Gordon Brown's plan to sell off the loan book and re-write the terms.

At pre-strike ballot meetings, UCU representatives were clear action should be coordinated among as many unions as possible. Rank-and-file university workers need

to overcome a conservative leadership and make sure action goes beyond university walls and is built into a one-day general strike. With the NUT, NASUWT, CWU and FBU unions all preparing for action, the time is as ripe as it was in late 2010, when students last rose up.

For students, the announcement that university staff are looking towards potential strike action should give renewed focus to the fight to defend education. As part of the government's austerity programme, 'savings' of over £400 million are planned to higher and further education in the next two years.

Attacks include a £60 million cut to maintenance grants, £260 million to be taken from colleges and £45 million to be snatched from higher education teaching budgets. Students should aim to take joint action with, and fight alongside, workers as much as possible.

This means organising big student turn-outs to support workers on picket lines, mobilising for joint rallies and demonstrations and building united anti-cuts campaigns involving students and staff on every campus and in every college.

Sabotage

When university workers are on strike, students should be 'on strike' too. The announcement of this ballot should act as a call to arms - for students as well as staff.

Last week I brought a motion to the NUS National Executive calling for closer work with UCU and support for the upcoming strike. NUS Vice-President Raechel Matthey, part of the union's Labour Students dominated leadership, successfully opposed the unions' support with an outrageous claim that UCU had "sold students up the river" in the past. Matthey offered no evidence for



Students should strike alongside their lecturers photo Paul Mattsson

her claim.

Ignore right-wing sabotage of the growing relationship between students and lecturers - students on every campus should go to their lecturers and tell them they will

help build for action because, as NUS paradoxically agrees, the short disruption of a strike is better than the devastation coalition cuts are wreaking on education.

Build for a YES vote, build for

strong pickets, and build for a one-day general strike to bring down this tottering government.

Edmund Schluessel
NUS National Executive & UCU member (personal capacities)

'Success' for owners - zero for workers

With £200 million profit, a company valued at almost £4 billion, and 90% of staff on zero-hour contracts, many in Britain's ruling class see Sports Direct as a modern success story. But for the almost 20,000 workers who live life on a knife edge, it's not so rosy.

Following the 'successful' stock market flotation shareholders were invited to the company's HQ in Shirebrook, Mansfield, and were greeted with champagne and a round of back slapping as record profits were recorded.

Meanwhile at a distribution centre in the town, workers on zero-hour contracts were being paid the minimum wage and subjected to terrible working conditions.

As a 'casual' worker they are denied paid holiday, sick pay and access to company perks or bonuses. These contracts are often promoted as providing a flexible labour market, something that Labour and the Lib Dems have been calling for. But these are just another way for the capitalist class to control and further exploit the working class.

Life on a zero-hour contract is not easy. Sometimes not knowing when or even where you are going to work, get paid or if you will even have the money to pay bills next week, can have a serious effect on the lives of the company's largely young workforce.

This makes it difficult to plan ahead, to save money or pursue education or hobbies - if you are waiting by the phone, waiting for work, it's harder to get things done!

A zero-hour contract worker

The Spark
Newsletter of Youth Fight for Jobs - Sick Of Your Boss? underemployment initiative special £1
To order email youthfightforjobs@gmail.com



Socialist Students gains new members

University of East London

At the University of East London (UEL) over 70 people have signed up for Socialist Students. The university's draconian attendance policy was beaten last year through a campaign launched by Socialist Students.

The stall was inundated by lecturers and students congratulating us. One student said that despite privatisation and also anger on campus nothing ever seemed to change until Socialist Students started the campaign. It is a brilliant example of how, if students organise, they can win.

Kyle Williamson

Manchester University

Campaigning against zero-hour contracts at Manchester University we sold 24 copies of Megaphone, the Socialist Student magazine. On the second day, we increased the number of signatures on the petition and sign-up sheets to 98 sign ups and 132 petition signatures.

On Friday Socialist Students national chair Ian Pattison spoke at a well-attended meeting on socialism and what we stand for. All present said they intended to attend regular meetings on campus and join the 29 September NHS march. Some even volunteered to support the Hovis and FBU pickets - not your average freshers' week activity!

Manchester has two universities, so this is only the halfway point. If we repeat this week's performance, we will have a strong basis for a fighting student organi-

sation in the city.

Tom Simpson and John McFarlane

Westminster

Over two days 30 people signed up to Socialist Students Society at Westminster University. We sold the Socialist and the Megaphone magazine to people impressed by the recent success at UEL in defeating the attendance policy there. They wanted to learn more about how Socialist Students helped students organise the campaign. Labour Students want to hold a debate on the link with the trade unions which could take place later this term.

Helen Pattison

Kingston

In just one short day campaigning so far at Kingston we have given out 300 leaflets and signed up 30 people to Socialist Students. Students wanted to talk about the trade union and Labour link, they spoke about anger towards the Labour councils pushing through the bedroom tax and raised the question of an alternative being built from the trade unions.

Derby

Socialist Students at Derby made a fantastic start to the academic year. We were the only group campaigning and over 60 signed our 'interested sheet'. Our informal meet and greet was well attended. With the freshers fair still to come

we hope to become an official society and to build Socialist Students as a campaigning force on campus.

Matt Whale, Derby Socialist Students

Sussex

80 people signed up to Sussex University Socialist Students. Our group was popular among freshers, but second and third year students were also often keen to sign up. Clearly, the massive campaign against privatisation that took place last year has helped create a big layer of students hungry for ideas to change society. As one student put it - "after everything that's happened on this campus, I think I have to be interested in Socialist Students now".

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Megaphone
Magazine of Socialist Students
2013 edition includes articles on NUS, fighting the EDL and zero-hour contracts.
£1
To order phone 020 8558 7947

SUPPORT TEACHERS' FIGHT TO DEFEND EDUCATION

"We can't afford not to strike"

Jane Nellist

National Union of Teachers (NUT), Coventry joint secretary, personal capacity

Last term's strike in the North West showed how determined teachers are to defend their pay, pension and working conditions. On 1 October NUT and NASUWT members across the East and West Midlands, Eastern, Yorkshire and Humberside regions will join together to take one day of strike action.

When I explained in a school meeting about the changes to the pay policies as well as the likelihood of more attacks from Tory education minister Gove on our working conditions, including longer working hours, fewer holidays and less preparation (PPA) time, teachers were even more determined to take strike action. What's more, they wanted the day to be named for national strike action in November.

"We cannot afford not to strike", that was the view of one young teacher in her second year of teaching. She went on to describe how she often ends up in tears because of the pressure. She feels she can't possibly achieve the workload without working every evening and all weekend. "How can I do this until I'm 68?" she asked. "How could I do this if I had a family?"

Teachers are realising that if they move schools, there is no guarantee

that their new school will pay them the same rate. It's going to be harder to move up the pay scales, with more links to 'performance' and the goal posts changing regularly.

Already we have lost over 15% of our take-home pay with frozen cost of living increases and pension increases. With mortgages harder to get, it's going to make it more difficult for teachers to get housing.

If it had not been for our two days of national strike action in 2011, the cuts could have been much worse. We know that taking action can make a difference!

Although an inconvenience to parents, they understand why we are forced to take this action.

Following further regional strike action on 17 October, the NUT and NASUWT are planning national strike action if the government fails to listen to their demands.

Given that so many sectors and workplaces have grievances with their employer and with the government, it would be so much more powerful if we joined together and took coordinated strike action on the same day.

What is clear is that we have to stand firm and, if necessary, be prepared to take more strike action. The government attacks are aimed at getting education into a fit state to be privatised - it's not good for teachers and it certainly isn't good for our pupils. Just like the young teacher said - we cannot afford not to strike!



Striking teachers, unimpressed by Tory education secretary Gove photo Tanya Rybko

Elect a fighting teachers' union NUT leadership

Martin Powell-Davies, secretary of Lewisham NUT and a member of the national executive is standing for election as vice-president of the union.

He says: "Pulling back from action on pensions in 2012 encouraged this government to attack our pay in 2013. Any further hesitation will invite even worse attacks on our conditions in 2014. We can't afford not to act.

- Build NUT/NASUWT school committees to cement unity and maintain joint action
- 'Save to strike'; collect funds to support colleagues facing the greatest hardship
- Coordinate local strikes to encourage action against unacceptable pay and appraisal policies; advise members not to agree to unacceptable targets based on Ofsted gradings and/or excessive targets

- Announce the date for a national strike in November - and appeal to other unions in dispute such as the CWU, PCS, FBU to take coordinated action with us on that day
- Prepare for further action next term; consult over calling a two-day national strike"

The election starts in October. For more information see: electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk

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 45 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!