

# Tories' rags and riches Britain



photo Paul Mattsson

## Join the socialist fightback!

### socialism 2013

Fight against cuts, crisis and capitalism!

A weekend of discussion & debate hosted by the Socialist Party – London 2-3 November

For more information see page 2, or go to [socialism2013.org](http://socialism2013.org)

James Ivens

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times.

When Charles Dickens wrote his Tale of Two Cities, he saw a world divided by poverty and excess. But even his alcoholic anti-hero Sydney Carton isn't a scratch on today's super-rich soaks.

Last week in Mayfair, two oil magnates fought a "full-on Champagne war". Stunned witnesses described the competing capitalists ordering "more and more" bubbly. Their con-

test for biggest bill totalled £131,000, or a decade on the minimum wage, in just one night.

For many minimum-wage workers, the "war" seems permanent — and the enemy is want. At the same time last week, the Red Cross announced plans for emergency hunger relief in Britain. Better known for work in the war-torn third world, the charity has not distributed food here since World War Two. More than half a million rely on food banks for meals, many in 'gainful' employ.

According to the Mirror, the "Bollywoods" bought so much booze

that a third went untouched — only to be poured away at the end of the night.

The Guardian recently reported on working class Liverpudlians faced by the "heat or eat" dilemma. Unemployed chef Peter Browne detailed his £2-a-week food budget, subsisting on noodles, spaghetti and short-dated bread. He, like many of us, has been forced into fuel poverty by rising prices, job destruction and welfare cuts.

While the Peter Brownes of this world scrimp and struggle, the elite parasites down Dom Perignon in

exclusive hideaways. Under capitalism, based on exploitation and inequality, they have plenty to celebrate.

Private firms are siphoning off tens of billions from an NHS shackled to crippling, decades-long PFI contracts.

Since 2009, wholesale energy prices have increased by around the same measly amount as net household income. Yet dual fuel charges have exploded by eight times as much!

And last week's deeply unpopular sell-off of Royal Mail could pay for more than one new helicopter. Day one saw traders make an instant 38% profit. Meanwhile

posties face ongoing attacks on pay, pensions and conditions.

Dickens' masterpiece concluded with the French Revolution. That event showed how the poor masses booted out their oppressors.

Today we again need to build a mass movement, this time based on the potential power of the organised working class, to end this 'them and us' society.

The Socialist Party fights for socialism — a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few.

If you agree — join us! See page 8 for details of meetings in your area

the **Socialist**

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# Workers and youth re-assert their political voice in South Africa

Leading Workers And Socialist Party (Wasp) and Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM – CWI South Africa) member Mametlwe Sebei will be the final speaker at the Socialism 2013 rally. Sebei spoke to the Socialist on 12 October about the work of Wasp and the current strike wave in South Africa.

## Why was Wasp launched?

Wasp was established to re-assert the class and political independence of working class and poor people. The Marikana massacre [16 August 2012, when 34 miners were killed by police] has decisively revealed the capitalist and brutal anti-working class character of the African National Congress (ANC). This event, more than any other, has also concentrated the minds of all classes about the gulf that separates the ANC leadership from the masses of the working class that has elevated it to power with an overwhelming majority in every election since 1994.

It therefore set in motion a search for an alternative. For the ruling class this has meant the creation of new parties such as AGANG, led by an ex-chairperson of Goldfields Consolidated Mining.

For the working class, with the mineworkers at the forefront and DSM's assistance, an alternative was realised in the launching of Wasp.

Working class resistance has been escalating - particularly with the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008 - signified by a 289% increase in public protests according to police reports. But the lack of a mass political party capable of uniting struggles around a common programme leaves strikes isolated.

We counterpose our demands to the neo-liberal policies of all capitalist parties: for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, the mines, banks, big farms and factories, for democratic workers' control.

## Can you tell us about the current strike wave in South Africa?

Analysts forecast massive job losses in the mining industry, as much as 250,000 in the next five years. An official survey reports that already 23,000 jobs have been lost since last year.

Anglo-Platinum took the lead when it announced plans at the beginning of this year to lay off 14,000 workers. Over 98% of its labour force struck in protest in the past three weeks.

The strike was a culmination of many skirmishes between the workers and the company since the announcement was made and the strikes of last year, in which Anglo-Plat workers played a vital role.

In spite of several tactical mistakes of the union leaders, the strike represents a victory for the workers, if only because it confirmed their organised power and determination to fight.

The company has retreated from its initial plans. So far, none of the permanent workers have been subject to forced lay-offs. However the union leaders have sacrificed casual and contract workers, which will severely undermine unity forged by the workers last year.

There were other strikes in the gold, diamond and coal mining, transport, auto-manufacturing and motor industries, among others. In general, these strikes have been victorious. In the motor industry, for instance, workers will get a 10.5% pay increase this year, a similar figure gained in gold mining, etc.

Wasp and DSM have actively intervened



Mametlwe Sebei photos Wasp

in these strikes, while also raising our public profile through the capitalist media.

Unlike last year, these strikes have been trade union led. Last year's strikes certainly radicalised the entire labour movement. Even ANC-linked NUM strikes have demanded 60% wage increases.

With the political authority and credibility of DSM enhanced in the eyes of many mine workers, our support and comradely criticism was highly welcomed and attracted layers of ordinary workers to Wasp.

## What are the next steps for the struggle in South Africa?

We look to build Wasp into a party not only for the working class, but of the working class, with roots in workplaces, working class communities and among the youth. In spite of a grave shortage of resources, we have been establishing bases in many communities.

We are now also penetrating the rural villages of Limpopo. In one of these areas, Fetakgomo, three weeks back, we led a mine-workers' march and huge youth demonstrations demanding that the closed college be reopened. Hundreds of young people took part and almost all the schools in the area were shut down.

Meetings of the Socialist Youth Movement (SYM) attract huge numbers of young people. This week alone, in two schools of Ngwanamala and Mokhuloane, in Nchabeleng village, meetings were attended by 54 and 62 students, respectively. Many young people of Cosas, the ANC-aligned youth organisation, have joined SYM. Some are playing a leading role in building Wasp as well.

SYM has also been growing phenomenally in an increasing number of universities and colleges. It is organising in seven of South Africa's nine provinces. At the Tshwane University of Technology we gained two representatives in the 12-member student council, contested by over ten organisations.

Wasp and DSM are deepening their roots among the masses to prepare national campaigns over public services, against labour brokers, for a national minimum wage, free education and many other areas.

**Sebei will also be speaking at the Sunday afternoon 'South Africa: birth of the Workers and Socialist Party' session**

To see the full version of the interview, go to [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

**Celebrating Black History month in October**

# RALLY FOR socialism 2013

**2 NOVEMBER 6.30pm**

Friends Meeting House  
173 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BJ

## Speakers include

### Mametlwe Sebei

Workers and Socialist Party  
South Africa

### Peter Taaffe

Socialist Party general secretary

### Bob Crow

RMT transport union general secretary

### Mark Serwotka

PCS civil service general secretary

### Ian Pattison

Youth Fight for Jobs

## Part of socialism 2013

**2-3 NOVEMBER**

## A weekend of discussion and debate

### Sessions held at

ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

Saturday 3pm, Sunday 10am and 1pm

See the full timetable at: [socialism2013.org](http://socialism2013.org)

### Ticket prices

Weekend £30/£15

One day £15/£8

Rally only £5

Golden ticket (weekend ticket plus accommodation): £50

10% discount on purchases before 2 November

**Full crèche: please phone or email to book a place**



Workers commemorate at Marikana on the anniversary of the massacre

## CLOSING RALLY

Sunday 3 November, 3pm  
Friends Meeting House

### Speakers include:

#### Hannah Sell

Socialist Party deputy general secretary

#### Paulo Eduardo Gomes

Party of Liberty and Socialism, Brazil

#### Dave Nellist

TUSC chair, former Councillor and MP

#### Rob Williams

National Shop Stewards Network chair

## [socialism2013.org](http://socialism2013.org)

**020 8988 8777**

[socialism@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:socialism@socialistparty.org.uk)

Send cheque or postal order payable to 'Socialist Party' to: Socialism, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD with your name, address, phone number and details of your purchase

Nearest tube stations: Goodge Street, Warren Street, Euston Square and Euston. Also close to Kings Cross and Euston train stations.

## Socialism 2013 appeal: Fund the international fightback!

### Ken Douglas

Socialist Party national treasurer

The Socialist Party is asking all its members and supporters to donate to the Socialism 2013 Appeal.

Your financial support is crucial to maintain the Socialist Party's campaigning on the two great questions facing the working class: the need for a 24-hour general strike to bring together all workers under attack from the Con-Dems; and for a new mass workers' party that can put forward a political alternative to austerity.

The successful National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby and rally at the TUC congress showed that this annual event has become an established platform for the left trade union leaders. The Socialist Party plays a significant role with others in ensuring that the demand for a 24-hour general strike against the cuts has been taken up by the TUC and is being raised throughout the trade union movement.

The Socialist Party, alongside the RMT rail union, has been the driving force behind the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which is now preparing to stand a record number of candidates in the 2014 council elections.

Internationally, we have seen the unprec-

edented success of Socialist Alternative, US supporters of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), in the ground-breaking election campaigns of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, Ty Moore in Minneapolis and Seamus Whelan in Boston. They are not only challenging the pro-big business candidates of the party machines in those cities, but are doing so by boldly putting forward a socialist alternative.

In South Africa, DSM has helped launch Wasp and shaken the pro-capitalist ANC establishment.

A proportion of the money we raise at Socialism 2013 will go to the CWI special appeal to assist the often difficult and pioneering work that our members internationally are engaged in.

Comrades in Tunisia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, South Africa and elsewhere daily risk imprisonment or worse. Their work would not be possible without the great financial sacrifices made by CWI supporters internationally.

By making a donation to the Socialism 2013 appeal you can help the work of the Socialist Party and the CWI. Can you give £5, £50 or £500? Can you ask other members and supporters to donate? Every donation, no matter what size, will make a difference and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.



# Council tax benefit cuts hit hard



Labour councils do not have to make cuts photo Suzanne Beishon

**Simon Carter**  
East London Socialist Party

A report by Labour says that 112 councils in England who responded to a freedom of information request have issued more than 156,000 court summonses to people in council tax arrears since April. Spread over all 326 councils, that figure could rise to close to 500,000.

On 1 April the Con-Dem government ended council tax benefit and replaced it with the mis-named council tax reduction scheme. Along with this change is a 10% cut in government grants to local authorities. Many councils simply passed on the cut by levying council tax on low-income households who previously were exempt.

For people on the minimum wage or claiming benefits, having council tax imposed on them is a double

whammy if also burdened with the hated bedroom tax.

In Labour-run Newham council, Blairite mayor Sir Robin Wales boasts of a '0% council tax increase for the fifth consecutive year'. So, a millionaire in the London borough has effectively seen their council tax bill reduced, while the poorest in the borough are facing court summonses, unable to pay the newly imposed council tax.

**Labour councils**

Indeed, Labour's report into council tax arrears, while having a pop at the government, fails to point out that in many cases it is Labour councils who are taking legal action against their poorest residents.

Again, despite Labour's pledge to abolish the bedroom tax, many Labour councils are threatening poor tenants with eviction. This makes a mockery of Ed Miliband's much

vaunted claim at the recent Labour Party conference of tackling the cost of living crisis affecting millions of people.

It reinforces the Socialist Party's argument that Labour represents no real alternative to the current

**156,000**  
court summonses  
issued to people  
by 112 councils for  
council tax arrears

government coalition parties. That is why working class people should think about standing as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates in next May's council elections on a 'no cuts' programme.

## SSE: So Sodding Expensive!

**John Sharpe**

An estimated 7,000 pensioners died between December 2011 and March 2012 because their homes were too cold. 6.7% of the population live in fuel poverty - up 50% since 2010.

Meanwhile ten million SSE customers face an average 8.2% rise in their fuel bills - three times the rate of inflation. And this follows 9% last year. The rise in the South East is 9.7%.

Average fuel bills could hit £1,465. In 2004 the average was just £525. This is against a background of pay cuts, pay freezes and benefit cuts.

"We're sorry" said SSE's boss Will Morris.

SSE recently reported profits of £1.4 billion, up 5.6% on last year. £515 million was paid out in dividends and SSE has repeated its promise of an above inflation rise in

dividends this year.

Three top directors at the company received more than £6 million in pay and perks last year, including £2.6 million to chief executive

**£1,465**  
possible average  
fuel bills in the near  
future

Ian Marchant. He recently stepped down with a £10.4 million pension and £4.8 million in shares.

Earlier this year SSE was ordered to pay £10.5 million by regulator Ofgem for conning customers into thinking they were on the cheapest tariffs.

"I'm disappointed" says govern-

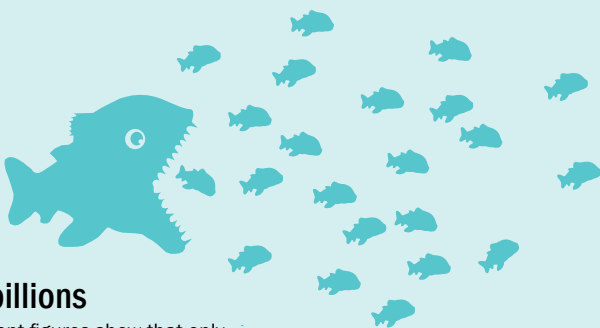
ment minister Michael Fallon. His advice: "Change supplier." So, as expected, nothing to do with me guv, you're responsible. Isn't every commentator predicting the other companies will do the same?

SSE has blamed "green taxes". But that accounts for less than a fifth of the rise and most of that goes to help poorer families with insulation according to Lord Green who wrote the review of climate change economics.

The government is about to announce a long-term price support deal for EDF's planned Hinkley C nuclear power station. The price is reported to be roughly double the current market rate for electricity, and is locked in for 35 years.

We're 'sorry' and 'disappointed' too. But not half as sorry and disappointed as these gangsters will be when the whole of the energy industry is democratically nationalised.

## Them...



### Missing billions

New government figures show that only £3.3 billion a year is paid in UK corporation tax - compared to £14 billion paid in bonuses to top staff.

The government is losing £1 in every

6,000%, has allegedly moved part of its business to Switzerland to avoid millions of pounds of corporation tax. A similar approach is being taken by Google, which saves itself billions in global taxes by funnelling money through Bermuda and the Netherlands.

**£3.3bn**  
is all that is paid in  
UK corporation tax  
each year

£10 due to it from companies through tax avoidance and evasion. The total being uncollected by the government is £35 billion a year (and this doesn't even include the 'profit-sharing' schemes of Amazon, Google and Starbucks). Some of the worst culprits have been revealed...

### Stick the Boots in

Chemist chain Boots is using a loophole to avoid £1.1 billion of tax. Unite the Union has pointed out that this could pay for 78,000 nurses, two years of prescription charges or 5.2 million emergency ambulance calls (Boots earns £2.2 billion from prescription medicines and other NHS-funded services).

### Wonga rip off

Pay-day loan company Wonga, infamous for its interest rates of nearly

### Breaking point

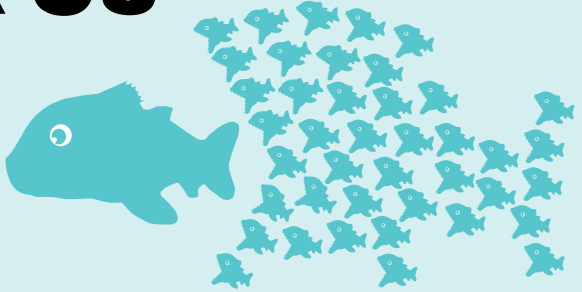
The medical director of the NHS in London, Dr Andy Mitchell, has said that health services are at "breaking point". Echoing a national report which states that hospitals cannot afford a safe level of staffing, Mitchell said the capital's NHS services are "unsafe and unsustainable".

Unfortunately Mitchell and the national report seem to suggest that the solution is to stop trying to have hospitals which provide a fully staffed full range of services. The Socialist argues the solution is to properly fund all health services as needed and stop draining the NHS budget through privatisation like PFI.

### Luxury cars

While the rest of us are struggling to pay for the basics like food and fuel, the super-rich seem to be doing ok. Sales of luxury cars have continued to rise throughout the recession. Jaguar Land Rover, for example, reported record sales in September and has experienced a 16% rise in sales since last year. Worldwide deliveries of Bentleys have increased by 9% in the first nine months of the year.

## ...& Us



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

### What we heard

Helen, a Lewisham school rep, rang me to update me on support in her school for the strike in London and elsewhere on 17 October.

One colleague (under management pressure) had told her that she had joined the ATL instead of striking. Helen asked her how a history teacher of all people could think we had ever made the gains that we are trying to protect without struggle?

The colleague came to see her the following week: "I thought about what you said. I've rejoined and I'll be on strike on Thursday."

**Martin Powell-Davies**

### @tweets this week

**Tony Saunois**

Labcons will be tougher on benefits than Tories and not close free schools. Why don't they just merge with the Tories. It would be clearer.

**PCS Union**

Lowest paid civil servants far more likely to have been targeted for job cuts, @statisticsONS figures show

**Ronnie Job**

1,200+ in Swansea in arrears due to #BedroomTax Will our Labour council give no evictions pledge to reassure them?



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# Probation officers’ to take on ‘failing Grayling’

**Chas Berry**  
Chair, Kent branch, National Association of Probation Officers (Napo)

Delegates and visitors gather in Llandudno this week for the most crucial Annual General Meeting in Napo’s 101-year history. With the result of the industrial action ballot due to be announced on 18 October, a big ‘yes’ vote can be a springboard for the next stage of our campaign to defeat the government’s privatisation plans.

On 9 October our campaign received a boost with a 300-strong parliamentary lobby that filled two large committee rooms and stunned MPs from all parties with its passion and vibrancy. On the same day Justice Secretary Chris Grayling was confronted by Napo members outside the World Conference on Probation at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre, just across the road from Parliament, demanding answers to questions about public safety.

News about yet more mess-ups by contractors G4S, this time at the privately run prison HMP Oakwood, gave added weight to the chant “failing Grayling!” The beleaguered Grayling was later spotted skulking along

the corridors of power trying to avoid a confrontation, but we are not in the mood to let him off the hook.

Napo members are realistic enough to know that privatisation won’t be defeated by lobbying alone. We have to turn a ‘yes’ vote into decisive action that can stop the government in its tracks.

Already, the Ministry of Justice’s (MoJ) misnamed Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) programme is behind schedule and will need staff cooperation to see it through. Strike action, combined with non-cooperation with TR processes and ‘working to rule,’ can cause massive disruption and force Grayling to abandon his plans.

Newly elected Napo general secretary Ian Lawrence and his team should be commended for their independent stand during national negotiations, but it is now time for Unison and GMB, representing significant numbers of lower grade, administrative and Community Payback staff, to join the fight. The end of the MoJ’s bogus ‘consultation period’ on 21 October should be the trigger for industrial action ballots in our sister unions as a precursor to joint action.

A strategy to win will need coordinated action across the service,



Napo members’ protest against privatisation photo Napo

linked to action already taking place by workers in other sectors such as teachers, firefighters, civil servants and postal workers. The 60,000-strong demonstration in

defence of the NHS outside the Tory conference shows the potential for harnessing the widespread anger to inflict a mortal blow against this government.

## Time for national action on education

**Chris Newby**  
London

Teachers have had enough. Enough of education minister Gove’s proposals that will mean working until they are 68. Enough of the performance related pay that pits them against each other.

Enough of the plans to increase teachers’ workloads even further. 50% are already quitting teaching within the first five years of starting their careers.

Gove has said that he is not prepared to discuss his proposals. Regional strikes and national action in November and beyond, will be the force that can persuade Gove to pull back.

It is vital that the NUT and NASUWT leaderships build on the momentum from these regional strikes by naming that national strike day.

### NUT elections

Lewisham NUT secretary Martin Powell-Davies is convenor of the Local Associations for National Action Campaign (LANAC), which was formed to maintain and build a network of lo-

cal NUT associations and school reps. Martin, a Socialist Party member, has been selected by LANAC to stand for election as NUT vice-president in an election which runs from 30 October to 20 November.

Martin’s strategy to build this campaign to defend education includes:

- Work to get every school out on a united one-day strike in November
- Call on other unions – like firefighters, postal workers, civil servants – to strike alongside us
- Build united NUT/NASUWT school committees to keep up the pressure for joint action
- Sharpen up our communications – make sure that every teacher, every parent, understands why teachers are taking action to defend education
- Campaign in our communities to broaden the support for our fight against Gove’s attacks
- Collect for hardship funds so that no colleague feels unable to join our strike action
- Continue our action next term: if Gove won’t step back, then we should step up to a two-day strike

**For more information see: [www.electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk)**

## Fight the Royal Mail sell-off

**Lenny Shail**

The sell-off of the remaining publicly owned parts of Royal Mail was completed over the last week. This represents the sad passing of the last remaining form of publicly owned communications.

With the announcement of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) ballot result due as we go to press, many postal workers will be asking: ‘what can we do now?’

The CWU ballot is expected to return a strong ‘yes’ vote for industrial action.

This should be the cue for the CWU leadership to announce national strike action as soon as possible. They should look to coordinate joint strike action with all the other unions that are in dispute to shake this weak Tory-led coalition down.

While still seeking to defend terms, conditions and jobs under the new privatised regime, the CWU leadership must not lose sight of the very realistic aim to win back Royal

Mail from private hands.

A campaign of rolling national strikes, combined with local walk-outs and stoppages and other forms of industrial action can make the privatisation unworkable. It could force the government to reverse the process and bring Royal Mail back under public ownership, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

Such a battle would place firmly on the agenda the need for genuine public and workers’ ownership and control of the postal service and the entire communications industry

While strike actions remains the key, without a political strategy the CWU is fighting with one arm behind its back. The refusal of Labour leaders to accept their own conference decision to reverse privatisation under a Labour government is further proof of the need to break the CWU link to the Labour Party. It raises once again the need for the CWU to fully engage in the building of a new mass workers’ party.

### In brief

#### Higher Education

Members of the University and College Union working in higher education have voted for action over pay. 62% voted in favour of strike action and 77% for action short of a strike. Their pay has dropped by 13% over the last four years. Unison members have already voted for action and the result from the Unite ballot is due shortly.

#### Carmarthenshire cuts

Labour-led Carmarthenshire county council has announced £30 million of cuts over the next three years. It warns that ‘hundreds of jobs will go’. The Unison branch is pledged to fight these cuts and defend all jobs. It is calling on the council to launch a mass campaign alongside the trade unions and the people of Carmarthenshire to refuse to implement the cuts. Please send messages of support from the Carmarthenshire branch website: [unisonccc.org.uk/contact-us/](http://unisonccc.org.uk/contact-us/)

#### RMT

Socialist Party member 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. See Vote John Reid for RMT Council of Executives on Facebook

#### City Link

On 5 October City Link workers staged protests across the country to highlight savage attacks on jobs and pay. Workers face pay cuts of up to £4,000, enforced overtime, the axing of the bonus scheme and changes in travel arrangements. The RMT members got a very positive response leafletting in Southampton with many facing similar problems at work. City Link was sold off earlier this year by Rentokil Initial to private equity group Better Capital who have now launched this attack on its workers. The response to the campaign has been enormous. RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley reported: “Over 800 have joined the union. Despite efforts by the company to block a ballot of our members through an injunction we will be re-ballothing members on taking action.”

**Nick Chaffey**

#### Defend the Four victory

After a momentous campaign lasting over six years, four Unison members, two now members of Unite, have won a tremendous victory against the Unison bureaucratic machine. Come and celebrate with them: Suzanne Muna, Onay Kasab, Glen Kelly and Brian Debus. 5pm onwards on Saturday 19 October at the Roxy Bar and Screen, 128-132 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB

#### Website

For more workplace and trade union stories, see [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

# Blacklisting victory - now build union strength

**Neil Cafferky**

It was a full house on Saturday night, 12 October, in the Bread and Roses pub in London, for a noisy celebration by construction workers and their allies from the labour movement. The occasion was a victory party for Frank Morris, a victimised Unite rep on the Cross-rail project.

After an epic 12-month battle against a multi-billion pound construction consortium, BAM-Ferrovial-Kier (BFK), Frank and the union won a total victory. Frank is now back at work and Unite have full union recognition on Europe’s largest construction project.

Frank’s campaign was the most

high profile example of blacklisting in the construction industry. It came on the back of revelations that top construction firms like BFK, McAlpine, Skanska, O’Rourke and many more were deeply implicated in the funding of a blacklist run by the now defunct Consulting Association.

Despite the euphoria on the night, everyone at the Bread and Roses was well aware that the fight against blacklisting in the construction industry is far from over.

On Friday 11 October an important Employment Appeals Tribunal finished its hearing. The case has been brought by leading anti-blacklist campaigner Frank Smith and argues that blacklisting is a breach of human rights. The judgement

has yet to be released but a victory for Frank Smith will have important implications for workers’ rights, acting to strengthen legal protection for workers.

Through sustained campaigning from the Blacklist Support Group, as well as the effect of Frank Morris’s victory, the leading culprits in the blacklist scandal have announced plans for a compensation scheme. In a press release, Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Costain, Kier, Laming O’Rourke, Sir Robert McAlpine, Skanska and Vinci all “apologise for their involvement with the Consulting Association and the impact its database may have had on any individual construction worker”.

Now there is the wider issue of police collusion with the Consult-

ing Association. This raises serious questions about the role of the state in disrupting trade union organisation. And equally important for the labour movement is clearing out any trade union officials who have been working hand in glove with the blacklists.

The blacklisting campaign still has work to do. The key task is to use the string of victories to build effective union organisation on the sites with democratic control of reps and branches by the rank and file. An important demand must be union monitoring of hiring practices to ensure any blacklisting can be quickly exposed.

This remains the strongest defence against victimisation and blacklisting.



# ‘Help to Buy’ no solution to housing crisis

**Paul Kershaw**

**T**he government has brought forward the second phase of its ‘Help to Buy’ scheme that subsidises low deposit (higher risk) mortgages on houses worth up to £600,000. The first phase was restricted to new build homes, now it can apply to any house.

Given the desperate shortage of housing many will look to the move with hope - research suggests two thirds of young adults hope to use the scheme to move or buy their first home. But the Independent’s Mira Bar-Hillel quoted Karl Marx saying “history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce” to describe the prospect of a new housing boom resulting from the scheme.

## What is Help to Buy?

The government guarantees 95% mortgages, shielding banks - not buyers - from 20% of the losses if a loan goes bad. While the poor are hit with a brutal bedroom tax, Chancellor George Osborne seeks to curry favour in the Tory heartlands with £12 billion of immediate support for buyers.

According to Andrew Grice in the Independent he cynically told the cabinet: “Hopefully we will get a little housing boom and everyone will be happy as property values go up.” To state the obvious, rising prices won’t help people to buy. But he expects rising house prices to be welcomed by home owners who stand to gain.

As much as £130 billion of mortgages could be financed by the scheme over the next three years

with the government underwriting them in the event of default. The scheme opens the potential for a massive further bailout for the banks - so much for Osborne’s claims to be ending a ‘culture of debt’.

Even big business mouthpieces have been alarmed by the move. Peter Mackay in the Mail poses the question: “So, a win-win situation - new houses for some and electoral help for the Tories? Or, lose-lose - a housing bubble which, if it bursts, leads to a backlash against the Tories for causing it in the first place?” The headline gives Cameron his answer “Don’t buy votes with reckless loans, Dave”. Even the IMF has expressed concern.

## Risk of defaults

The banks worry what would happen in a future crash, including the political fallout of another bailout and what happens to borrowers when interest rates rise. Even now, with historically low interest rates, one in 35 homes are at risk of repossession in parts of England according to research by housing charity Shelter.

Stretched home owners could suddenly face big increases in repayments and default - shades of the sub-prime crisis that hit the US state-linked mortgage lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac during the financial crash.

The policy springs from desperation. Despite positive noises about economic growth from Cameron and Osborne, they know the underlying position is desperately weak. Osborne appears to have learnt nothing from the crash, representing a capitalist class addicted



Young people struggle with the private renting ‘property high jump’ photo Paul Mattsson

to parasitical finance-dominated capitalism.

Many will be excluded from the scheme leaving them in

unregulated, insecure, private rented accommodation while others are drawn into unsustainable loans. As the Independent warns: “Left

on the beach will be aspiring home buyers nursing broken dreams and renewed cynicism towards all politicians.”

# Fight Tory plans to scrap lifeline for young

**Young worker**  
Brighton

Cameron’s proposals to scrap benefits for under-25s is yet another attack on young people from this government of millionaires. Over one million 16-24 year olds are out of work, not in education or training - and the Con-Dems’ solution is to cut the few bits of support left. The benefits available to young people aren’t lavish by any means, but they provide an important lifeline.

I have experienced living on benefits, having been unemployed after graduating from university. Without those benefits I would have been forced to move back with my parents, losing any sense of independence I had gained at university as well as, in effect, winding the clock back on

hopes of decent employment.

It would have been likely that I ended up in the same job I had before leaving home for university. Ending up with thousands of pounds worth of debt and returning to the same minimum wage retail job is not why young people want to go into higher education.

## What future?

The Tories’ vision for young people is clear - living with your parents until at least your late 20s. For many this would mean moving back to the very unemployment blackspots they tried to escape, and shattering hopes and aspirations.

We’ve already seen tuition fees price a generation of working class young people out of university, cuts destroy youth services and thou-

sands of jobs disappear. This government is constantly talking about a ‘dependency culture’, but denying benefits for young people would encourage even more dependency. Of course this is the sort of dependency the Tories like - taking welfare out of public spending and forcing working class families to effectively provide it out of their own pockets.

Living on benefits is a grim existence, being forced to search and apply for jobs that don’t exist while constantly facing the prospect of being forced to work for free through workfare. Benefits should be expanded to provide unemployed people with a decent standard of living.

But there shouldn’t be the need for young people, or anyone, to be out of work in the first place. The best way to reduce the benefit bill is



not to remove benefits from young people but to invest in a massive job creation programme, which could provide everyone with a decent job, and a decent wage.

It is clear that this type of future is a fantasy under the Con-Dems. Young people need to be fighting for a chance at a decent future and for a different type of society.

# Jobcentre staff struggling to cope

**Sean Dempsey**  
Jobcentre worker

When the latest plans for cuts in benefits were announced, familiar trumpets were blown about the Work Programme and Mandatory Work Activity (MWA).

But the parliamentary committee overseeing the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was utterly scathing about the privatised Work Programme, with its derisory success rate of 5.5%. DWP staff are even less forgiving, as we have been dealing with the people returning

from two years on the Work Programme, still with no CV or transferable skills.

Work Programme staff are more pressured than ever, with a frightening turnover as people are burnt out. The only improvements are a result of jobcentre staff being used to provide services to the Work Programme client group. Yet Avanta, G4S and the rest are still reaping profits from the benefits system.

MWA - four weeks unpaid work of up to 30 hours a week - is a programme essentially designed to bully people off Jobseeker’s Allowance. The scheme is outsourced

to Atos, which profits from finding placements. The placements are almost exclusively in local charity shops, with which DWP advisers often have contact anyway.

Most alarming is the new plan for jobseekers completing the Work Programme to attend their jobcentre daily from nine to five for up to six months. Staffing is already a problem. In one region, another 4,000-odd staff are to go by the end of the next year, through so-called natural wastage. Redundancy packages have come out. So the most common reaction to Iain Duncan Smith’s grandiose rhetoric

is, ‘Where are we getting the staff?’

Basic functions in some offices - such as holiday or sickness cover - are breaking down under the strain, with staff told to just get on with it and squeeze in the extra work. This has given rise to suspicions that the new plans might mean yet another private venture.

Pressure is also being exerted on the Flexible Support Fund - the discretionary fund that advisers use to pay for travel to jobcentres. At my jobcentre, it costs some people £9 to get in, as smaller local offices have been closed. If people were attending every day, two thirds of

the paltry payment of £71 a week would be spent on travel.

One thing we can be sure of, whatever the solution of the Rt. Hon. Millionaire for Work and Pensions, the people getting something-for-nothing are not benefit claimants. Instead it is the Tory allies in the private sector, swallowing more lucrative public contracts or hosting more free labour and reaping the resultant profits. The anti-workfare campaigns showed that a movement uniting the unemployed and unions can bring down Tory plans - the latest suggestions must face the same fate.



# WHY ARE OUR SCHOOLS IN CRISIS?

Headlines about the recent education report from the OECD blared that a quarter of adults in England have maths skills no better than those of a ten year old. Undoubtedly this is a major cause of concern.

However, Education Minister Michael Gove will try to use this to soften up public opinion for more cuts and privatisation. Here three teachers, members of the NUT teachers union, explain the reality of government policies that seek to make education meet the needs of big business - not students and society as a whole.

## Testing, testing, testing

Mick Whale  
Hull

Many people will have been shocked by the findings of the recent OECD report. England is languishing in 22nd place out of 24 major economically developed countries when it comes to literacy and 21st when it comes to numeracy.

Some respected educationalists have questioned the validity of the comparisons between the different countries in the report. They may well have a point, but taken at face value, the report raises serious questions about the education system in this country.

Employers' organisations continue to complain that British young people do not have the skills necessary to carry out the jobs in today's world. Many young people would reply with the question: 'What jobs?'

However, leaving that crucial point to one side, it is important to look at why, after more than a decade of often constant reform, under both Con-Dem and Labour governments, and change to education and schools, we appear to be going backwards.

Teachers, who work excessively long hours trying to deliver a first-class education, could provide book-loads of anecdotal evidence that would support the basic conclusion of the report: the English education system is failing.

There are lots of interrelated factors that explain Britain's educational turmoil. Central to the problems that schools face is the way that they are held to account by Ofsted and the role of league tables and performance targets.

No socialist would oppose the driving up of educational standards, which is what Ofsted is supposed to do. Neither would socialists oppose letting parents know how local schools are performing, which is what league tables are supposed to do.

The problem is that an Ofsted failure in most instances means that the headteacher faces probable dismissal. A failure to hit a particular target can also trigger government or Local Education Authority (LEA) intervention against a head and a school. This has been true under both Labour and Con-Dem governments. The punishment for failure now is the almost certainty of a school being turned into an Academy.

### Unrealistic targets

The pressure to reach unrealistic targets is applied to schools in general and individual teachers within them. What has been created by successive governments is a climate of fear. Fear of failure, fear of being Academised and, for many teachers and headteachers, fear of losing their jobs.

Government transmits threats to LEAs. LEAs threaten heads and heads threaten teachers that if their class does not meet its target, they could be sacked.

This climate of fear has created a workload problem which has to be experienced to be believed. Endless, often useless, pieces of documentation have to be produced to try to prove that everything possible is being done by everyone to meet the targets.

Some headteachers try to protect their staff, but many heads bully teachers with threats and intimidation and often impos-

sible demands. Many teachers I spoke to in the build-up to the 1 October strike in Yorkshire were thankful that the strike would give them an extra day to catch up with outstanding paperwork.

No wonder that, even at a time of high graduate unemployment, 50% of young teachers leave teaching after five years, as one survey found. Many older teachers are trapped by family commitments, mortgages, etc, in a teaching job which is stressful and life-shortening. In short, many teachers who love teaching, hate being teachers in the current system.

### Ofsted

All of these factors by themselves go some way to explaining the current malaise. The culture of fear in education has set back education. In order to survive (or dodge) Ofsted and the target-setting agenda, schools, heads and teachers have to show that the students they teach are making progress. The easiest way to do this is to raise the number of pupils passing tests or reaching higher national curriculum levels. This is particularly the case for GCSEs. Good exam results keep Ofsted and the government from intervening.

To get students exam passes, pressure is put on teachers to teach to the test. What this means is that rather than getting the rounded-out education that comprehensive education is supposed to deliver, students are spoon-fed how to answer the questions in the exams. This undermines the ability of students to develop their own learning skills.

This explains the paradox identified by the OECD report that pupils in Britain were leaving school with more exam passes than before, but no improvement in skills.

The national curriculum in England and Wales makes an assumption that all students make progress at the same rate every term and every year. This flies in the face of most educational research. Learning, like all things in life, does not follow a straight line. Sometimes it can take years for an idea, a concept or a skill to become fully mastered by a student.

This does not mean that the years spent accumulating that idea, concept or skill are wasted or unproductive. Rather, they are necessary time periods where progress is gained, but the national curriculum and the targets and tests do not recognise this.

The casualties are the school students. They are taught in a culture of constant testing. For those able to reach the required level, all is well. But those 'failing' or finding literacy and numeracy difficult are often given a diet of more literacy and numeracy.

No wonder so many pupils become disengaged and anti-school as they are forced to do the things they enjoy the least. Interestingly, Finland is the country which tests its children the least and it was 20 places above England, second in the table!

The current generation is just as bright as previous ones. In fact some educationalists believe that the 'computer generation' is able to process information much faster than previous generations and therefore could be becoming cleverer.

The crisis in education reflects the crisis in society as a whole. The teacher trade unions, together with the wider workers' movement,



need to ensure that a socialist programme replaces the false methodologies of a failing system with a system which recognises the worth of everyone.

## The education counter-revolution

Martin Powell-Davies  
NUT national executive, personal capacity

The Con-Dem government is waging a class war on education in Britain. Driving on with privatisation and cutbacks, it is reinforcing privilege, division and inequality. This follows the deep erosion of state provision under successive Tory and Labour administrations.

This educational counter-revolution has an important economic context. At a time of capitalist crisis and high unemployment and underemployment, as a civil servant, rumoured to be an adviser to Tory education minister Keith Joseph, chillingly put it:

"There has to be selection because we are beginning to create aspirations which increasingly society cannot match... When young people cannot find work at all... or work which meets their abilities or expectations... then we are only creating frustration with perhaps disturbing social consequences... people must be educated once more to know their place."

No government has yet sought to restore an openly selective system. But successive government policies, the national curriculum, school league tables and SATs exams, have opened the way to two-tier education and reinforced the class divide. New Labour's Academies and faith

schools paved the way to Gove's present onslaught.

School admissions policy is a key battleground in every area. Academies, faith and foundation schools have become their own admission authorities. Official statistics confirm higher exclusion rates in Academies.

Proponents of Free Schools and Academies, such as Tony Blair look to blame teachers, trade unions and local authorities for the problems created by a divided society and education system. The OECD

report can also form part of a propaganda campaign which hopes to soften up public opinion for further attacks on teachers and further moves towards privatisation.

But evidence from the US confirms that, on average, privatised charter schools do no better than their state-run counterparts. PISA results for Sweden show a significant fall in its international ranking since the introduction of free schools and as social segregation between schools has grown.

There is no doubt that many schools

have been attracted towards taking Academy status by the promise of advantageous funding arrangements at a time of shrinking budgets. But even those heads supporting conversion recognise that the 'bribes' to participate in the break-up of state education will not last forever.

The treasury will demand further cuts. Of course, smaller class sizes and greater funding would make a significant difference. But again, the international evidence exposes the truth. Pupil-teacher ratios in Swedish Free Schools have got worse, not better, as their owners aim to increase their profit margins.

In what the Guardian described as "a sign of Labour's determination to show it is open to reform" Tristram Hunt, the new shadow education secretary, signalled greater support for Free Schools.

He said: "If you are a group of parents, a group of social entrepreneurs, teachers interested in setting up a school in areas where you need new schools then the Labour government will be on your side. We are in favour of enterprise and innovation."

None of the establishment parties is in favour of well-funded comprehensive education. Yet again the urgent need to build a new mass party for the working class is underlined.

**This article is based on an extract from Martin's review of School Wars by Melissa Benn in Socialism Today, www.socialismtoday.org**

## Ready to teach the Heptarchy?

Jane Nellist  
Coventry

In my early years of teaching, under the Tories, the national curriculum was contained in ten heavy unusable folders that sat neatly in my cupboard. Gradually it's been slimmed down but the rigidity remains, now only legally binding for the shrinking number of maintained schools.

Schools have been tempted to consider Academy status with the 'carrot' of the freedom from the national curriculum although many have clung onto it. As for Free Schools, well their founders are able to impose their own ideas onto a

curriculum for their pupils.

I've always maintained that the best teachers are those that can be subversive and go 'off piste' when it comes to the curriculum, in order to meet the needs of the children they teach. As a teacher, you have to make the curriculum relevant to students if it is to mean anything. That's becoming harder and harder in this world of excessive scrutiny.

How sad that in some schools, art, music and PE lessons are sacrificed so that there is more time for the English and maths lessons, all to ensure that test results meet the ever rising targets set by government so that they avoid being picked off.

Aren't students being deprived of their right to a 'broad and balanced' curriculum (most misused words in education) if utilising paint and other art media as well as musical instruments is a rare oc-

currence? I would go so far as to label it child abuse.

It's important to recognise that the national curriculum underpins the whole system of accountability through a testing regime (SATs) and rigid inspection in the form of Ofsted.

The right wing has always distrusted teachers but, more importantly, it sees the curriculum not just as a means to educate our young people but to control what they learn.

The implications of a Gove-inspired curriculum include more learning by rote and a 'body' of facts. Is this a curriculum that will help to develop a new generation of young people to deal with the challenges they will face, or is it more like training for 'In it to Win It' or any other quiz show?

Isn't it more important for seven year olds to have the opportunity to study his-

tory in relation to their own local area using artefacts and resources which are relevant rather than be hung up on memorising terms such as 'Heptarchy' (the seven kingdoms set up by the Anglo Saxons)?

This curriculum is going to stifle creativity and learning and it is going to damage the life chances of young people. Teaching unions have an important role and responsibility to our communities to fight it.

Our aim should be that teachers are trusted enough to develop the body of learning for their school that meets the needs of their pupils and that they are accountable to their community.

Government 'experts' only seem to include heads, retired heads, celebrities, or people who are making quite a lot of money out of education. The real panel of experts is us, the teachers, the parents and the students!

### SOCIALISTS DEMAND:

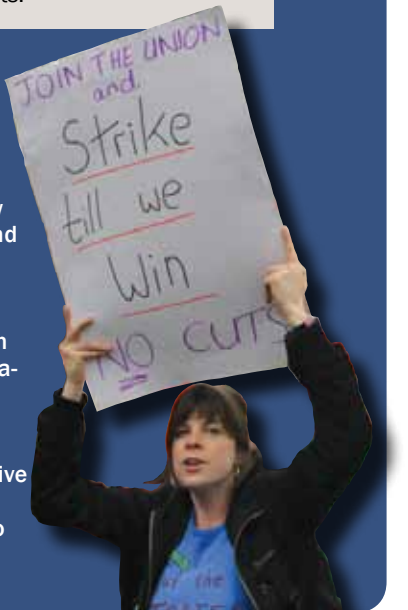
- Free, high quality education for all, from nursery to university. Increase public spending to provide decent staffing levels, smaller class sizes and good quality resources and buildings
- Abolish the national curriculum. Ofsted inspections and league tables. A new core curriculum should be developed with involvement of teaching unions, students and parents
- Big business out of education. Bring all Academies and Free Schools back into public control. Fully democratic

LEAs run by elected representatives, subject to recall, including school teachers and non-teaching staff, parents, local trade unionists, community organisations and secondary school students, to run schools

- An immediate end to performance pay, a minimum 20% non-contact time for teachers and significant pay rises for all school staff
- No cuts to support staff. Expand mother tongue provision
- End selection on any grounds
- End poverty pay and benefit cuts.

Poverty, overcrowding and poor nutrition are major contributors to poor educational attainment

- For the trade unions to build a new mass party to defend education and provide opposition to the pro-big business establishment parties
- For a determined strategy of action by teaching unions to defend education, including a 24-hour general strike
- For a democratic socialist alternative to cuts and capitalism that would allow the skills and talents of all to flourish





# TUSC: 2014 local elections campaign launched

**Clive Heemskerk**  
TUSC national election agent

As George Osborne announced a further 10% cut in council funding for 2015-16 in this summer's public spending review, Tory Party chairman Grant Shapps mockingly praised councillors for the 'good work' they were doing in "cutting their cloth more intelligently".

"When we said [in 2010] we would reduce their budgets by 26% over four years, we were told councils would be going bust by this stage," but they haven't, he said. "I think they can do another 10%." (The Guardian, 26 June 2013)

There couldn't be a clearer answer to the idea that councils should accept the cuts in the hope that things will get better soon. The dismantling of local public services will continue in the age of austerity unless we have working class people as councillors who are prepared to fight back.

Shapps' claim that council services aren't really 'cash-strapped' is, of course, completely untrue. Recent research from the Leonard Cheshire Disability charity shows that six out of ten councils are now commissioning 15-minute maximum home care visits for elderly and disabled people, with the number of such visits rising by 15% since 2008. Meanwhile the number of people who

got any council-funded support in their own homes fell from 958,000 in 2009-10 to 802,000 in 2011-12.

Other services have been equally drastically affected. Of the 3,500 Sure Start centres open in 2010, 558 have been shut and of those remaining only 500 still offer any childcare after



the obligation to do so was removed. One in 13 libraries – 347 – have closed in the past two years.

Councils, and councillors, have the power to make a difference – but only if they are prepared to fight.

That is the theme of the 2014 local elections campaign launched by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee at its meeting on 9 October. Next May will see elections in 160 local councils in England, a total of 4,156 seats. Labour controls 77 of

these councils – with 53 Tory-controlled, 22 under no overall control, and eight Lib Dem-led – which will all be attempting to push through a fourth round of austerity budgets. The case for the widest possible challenge around TUSC's 'don't implement the cuts' anti-austerity platform couldn't be clearer.

The steering committee agreed a 1 February national conference for TUSC candidates and campaign organisers. Before then applications to be a TUSC local election candidate will be accepted as prospective candidates, to avoid triggering the period when, being formally declared, all election expenses have to be recorded.

This 'pre-election period' will end after the February conference but prospective candidates should be out there campaigning, with letters to the local press, public meetings, flyers, etc, without waiting for the 'second stage' of formal authorisation.

During March the BBC, on behalf of all broadcasting authorities, will be preparing its local elections coverage guidelines. To guarantee receiving what they call 'balanced media coverage', parties need to contest 15% of the seats up for election – 624 in the 2014 local elections. The TUSC steering committee agreed to publicise this threshold target with the aim of achieving a clear idea of candidate numbers by

Hackney and Islington TUSC film showing:

## Riot from Wrong

Rio Cinema, Hackney, London

9 November 2013, 1.30pm

'Are riots inevitable under capitalism?'

Discussion will follow the film

## no2eu - yes to workers' rights!

North West launch of the 2014 Euro

Elections anti-austerity platform

Speakers include: Bob Crow, RMT

general secretary; Roger Bannister,

Unison NEC member (pc)

Saturday 26 October, 12-4pm

New Meadow Street Labour Club

193-195 North Road, Preston PR1 1YQ

More info: 07795 218 409

March so that TUSC can then enter into negotiations with the BBC.

In its three-year existence, over 100,000 votes have been cast for TUSC candidates. The 2014 local elections will be a chance to build on this still modest but not insignificant start to developing an alternative to the pro-austerity establishment parties.

**To apply to be a TUSC local election candidate in 2014, go to the TUSC website at [tusc.org.uk/candidates.php](http://tusc.org.uk/candidates.php) - To order copies of the A4-folded TUSC broadsheet appealing for candidates go to [tusc.org.uk/16794/24-06-2013/new-tusc-broadsheet-available-appealing-for-2014-local-election-candidates](http://tusc.org.uk/16794/24-06-2013/new-tusc-broadsheet-available-appealing-for-2014-local-election-candidates)**

## Save Kent's child centres

There is uproar across Kent over the threat to close or cut the hours of 27 Surestart children centres. Parents, socialists and trade unionists are adamant that there must be no cuts.

Kent county council (KCC) pays its 20 senior managers at least £100,000 each, with the corporate director earning £187,698 more than the prime minister. The former managing director of KCC was given a pay-off last year of £420,000 after leaving in 'controversial circumstances'.

Compare these grossly inflated wages to the ideologically driven austerity cuts of £1.5 million that KCC want to cut from our children centre budget.

On 19 September, 50 parents, trade unionists, socialists and anti-cuts campaigners protested outside the county council meeting which discussed the centre closures and further austerity cuts on libraries, care homes and council facilities. Unison members came out of county hall to leaflet councillors. Another protest is planned for the start of December.

**Eric Segal**  
**Kent Socialist Party**

• Read the full story at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

# Join the party for the millions - not the millionaires

**Lenny Shail**

Cuts of £155 billion to services and benefits for the elderly, the young, workers and families are being implemented. Yet the wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain rose by more than that in the last three years alone!

Capitalism has opened up the possibility of living standards beyond the wildest dreams of our grandparents and great-grandparents. Yet the potential of millions of people lies squandered in the dole and food bank queues up and down the country, and/or exploited in slave-like or zero-hour contracts.

Clearly capitalism has long since passed its 'best before' date. This brutal parasitic system cannot meet the basic needs of the vast majority of people, in Britain or internationally. More and more people are drawing similar conclusions across the world.

Capitalism is a system based on making profit for the rich. Not only is the working class exploited by the 1% - we actually create their wealth.

Socialists believe that within cap-

italism lies the seeds of a new way of organising and running society – a socialist society.

The enormous wealth that exists, currently in the hands of the capitalist class, is collectively produced by the working class. It could be used to meet the needs of the billions on the planet - eradicating unemployment, hunger and poverty.

## Mass action

But to do so requires taking the assets, wealth and means of creating more wealth out of the hands of the capitalist class and into democratic public control and management.

That way, we can begin to democratically plan and organise society on the basis of everyone's needs, not what fills the back pocket of the top 1%. But achieving this requires mass working class action that is organised with a strategy and leadership.

Socialist Party members are some of the most militant working class people - workers, youth, unemployed, disabled people or retired. In our day-to-day campaigning, the party is dedicated to fighting for every possible improvement for

ordinary people.

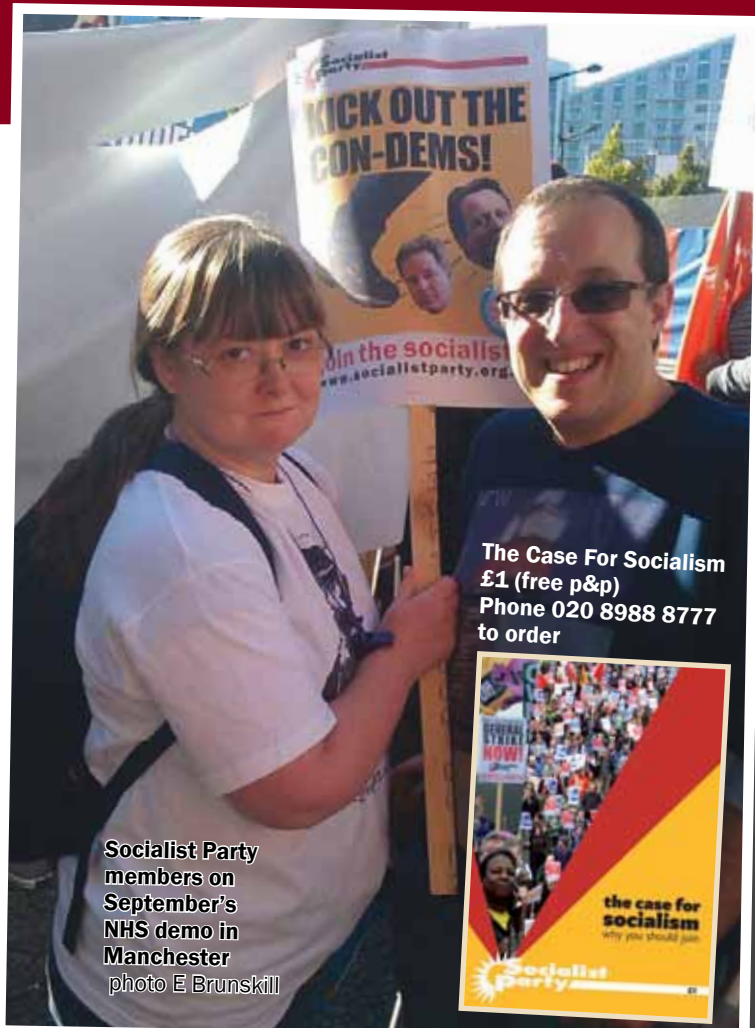
Across England and Wales, the Socialist Party organises on estates to fight the bedroom tax, defend the NHS, to save jobs and services; in trade unions, schools and universities; on protests, strikes, elections and demonstrations.

Our members are at the centre of many struggles, battles and campaigns taking place locally and nationally.

But we always link this to the need to fundamentally change society along socialist lines internationally. That is why the Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International.

We want working class fighters and campaigners to join the Socialist Party to help with the urgent task of defeating austerity and the struggle for a socialist world. That includes you!

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# Sri Lanka - 'No to Chogm' campaign

## Workers' unity to fight the oppression of Tamil people

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge**  
Tamil Solidarity national chair

Among the Commonwealth's stated 'core beliefs' are democracy and human rights. But democratic and human rights are being trampled on by the dictatorial regime in Sri Lanka, which is to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in November and then head the 53-state organisation. Canada has withdrawn from Chogm citing "reported disappearances, and allegations of extra judicial killings".

In the aftermath of the genocidal slaughter of up to 100,000 Tamil people in the three-decade civil war, the Sri Lankan regime stands accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Even the Commonwealth Lawyers Association has passed a resolution calling for Sri Lanka's suspension from the Commonwealth.

Following her visit, UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay said Sri Lanka is showing signs of heading in an increasingly authoritarian direction. The UN, Channel 4 and human rights groups have produced stacks of evidence revealing "torture and violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as intimidation of and reprisals against human rights defenders, members of civil society and journalists, threats to judicial independence and the rule of law, and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief."

Tamil Solidarity is opposed to Chogm in Sri Lanka. We call for no British government participation but warn that David Cameron and the Con-Dems are determined to join the celebrations. Channel 4 news reporter Jon Snow recently

reported that Foreign Secretary William Hague co-hosted a drinks party with the Sri Lankan government at the UN.

When a branch of the Unison trade union sent the Tamil Solidarity model letter to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in July demanding non-participation at Chogm, the response was revealing. The FCO said it will "urge" the Sri Lankan government to implement the recommendation of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and to respect human rights.

The LLRC, which was actually commissioned by the Sri Lankan regime, makes the mildest and frailest recommendations and yet the government refuses to implement it.

But there are signs of resistance. Tamils in Sri Lanka sent a strong message of defiance in the recent Northern Province elections.

On a 78% turnout they rejected the government parties. "This was despite", as the Economist described, "the efforts of sullen men from military intelligence near polling stations telling voters to back Mr Rajapaksa's ruling party." Building a mass party that will struggle for Tamils' rights remains an urgent task.

On 9 October Tamil Solidarity called a protest at Downing Street. As well as chanting angry slogans, speakers addressed the crowd, providing an opportunity to discuss and debate the strategy for this campaign.

Mayilon, a young worker on a zero-hour contract, explained why Tamil Solidarity works with the trade unions - to fight the exploitation we face here as workers and to link our struggles into a powerful movement to fight for the rights of all workers and oppressed people.

A statement from a young woman who recently visited Sri Lanka



**Tamil Solidarity protest in London against Chogm** photo S Sachs-Eldridge

warned of the way, in a situation of fear and poverty, frustration was finding very negative outlets. She reported "increased domestic violence and sexual abuse" and concluded that "it's very important for us to raise our voice on behalf of all those that have had their voice stolen".

Ben Robinson brought support and solidarity from the Socialist Party in the fight for the right to self-determination of Tamil people. He pointed out that Cameron has his

eye on business deals with the Sri Lankan regime. They work together, so workers and oppressed people must work together.

Young people were to the fore, on the megaphone, giving speeches and organising the action. The next step is the protest on 15 November at Downing Street which will coincide with the Chogm opening ceremony.

**To find out more or request speakers or leaflets:**  
**www.tamilsolidarity.org**

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## Refugees perish in Mediterranean "cemetery"

The Mediterranean Sea is becoming "a cemetery" said Malta's Prime Minister after another boat packed with refugees capsized near the island, killing 30 people. This latest disaster follows the recent tragedy off the Italian island of Lampedusa where up to 400 migrants drowned, and a similar accident off Egypt's coast last week when at least 12 refugees perished.

These desperate refugees were escaping wars and persecution from countries including Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan, but have no legal route to seek asylum in 'Fortress Europe'. Consequently, they are compelled to pay large sums of money to people smugglers who dispatch them from North African countries in rickety, unseaworthy vessels.

Capitalist politicians in European Union (EU) member states, playing on anti-immigrant prejudice, have effectively 'pulled up the drawbridge' on refugees with the number of asylum applications in Europe having fallen by half since 1992. Only 0.3% of global refugees get anywhere near the EU. The EU's asylum policy criminalises refugees

and militarises its borders.

These same establishment politicians are responsible, through military interventions and exploitative foreign policy, for making the refugees' home countries violent, unstable and impoverished places.

Those refugees that do make it ashore alive often find Europe inhospitable, treated as criminals and would-be terrorists, subject to huge fines (€5,000 for 'illegal immigration' in Italy for example), and stuck in bleak 'reception centre' camps.

In August, refugees in a camp in Amygdaleza, near Athens, revolted over their living conditions. Even the country's ombudsman for asylum policies described the camp as "prison-like".

The notorious Saulam refugee centre in Austria, set up by the late far-right politician Jorg Haider, was closed last year following reports of rotten food and a lack of access to medical care.

At Campsfield refugee centre near Oxford a major protest in 1997 led to nine inmates being charged with riot: all were subsequently acquitted.

Many asylum seekers end up sleeping rough on the streets of Europe's cities, some finding illegal work for a pittance of a wage.

But notwithstanding anti-asylum seeker prejudice whipped up by right-wing media and establishment politicians, the scale of the recent tragedies in the Mediterranean has led to demands for a humanitarian solution.

### Fortress Europe

When Italy's Prime Minister Enrico Letta along with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso recently visited Lampedusa they were greeted by local residents who shouted "disgrace" and "shame" at them for doing nothing to deal with the thousands of migrants washed ashore each year.

Capitalist politicians and commentators suggest 'increased cooperation and coordination'. But it is precisely the European coordinated refugee policy which is underpinning the humanitarian disasters at the borders of Europe.

The European Commission's new

Eurosur programme for border protection will increase surveillance of refugee boats but not necessarily lead to more rescues. And if bilateral agreements are signed with Algeria and Libya, increased surveillance could simply enable them to catch refugees before they reach Europe. This is despite both countries being criticised by human rights organisations for their treatment of refugees.

The EU's refugee policy, by fuelling racism, also serves to sow divisions within Europe's working class communities who are suffering capitalist austerity ie job cuts, low pay, cuts in services, etc.

This is especially the case where former social-democratic parties have embraced capitalist policies. It means that the exaggerated media claims of asylum seekers taking EU workers' jobs and 'milking' countries' welfare systems, are not countered but instead are reinforced.

Defending asylum rights therefore dovetails into the fight against capitalist austerity and for socialist policies.

**Dave Carr and Stefan Berg (CWI Sweden)**

### 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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

### www.socialistworld.net

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



### Irish Socialist Party MEP Paul Murphy - campaigning to retain seat for the Left

But SWP's sectarian actions could damage Paul's chances.

*Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) reporters*



### Italy: Berlusconi forced into a humiliating climbdown

Letta government faces continuing economic and social crisis.

*Chris Thomas, Controcorrente (CWI Italy)*



### Austria: Elections see further decline in support for main parties

Neoliberal parties enter fray but workers need a strong socialist alternative.

*Sonja Grusch, Socialist Left Party (CWI Austria)*



## 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.

**No progress here**

A recent book by Andrew Smithers, 'The Road to Economic Recovery', explains how business profit is less and less invested in long-term capital, and more and more distributed to shareholders - especially the largest of them. At its peak in 1970 in the US, cash spent annually on productive investment was 15 times higher than the amount going to shareholders. Now the ratio is less than two! The major capitalists are failing to carry out their much vaunted role of developing industry and commerce in society's long-term interest and are simply plundering society's assets. This explains much of the decline in worker productivity per hour across much of the developed world in recent decades. And 'captains of industry' prefer to recruit cheap labour than to undertake capital investment. In the 1970s and 80s, that investment was predicted to lead, through improved productivity, to a shorter working week and earlier retirement prospects for all. This forecast has now been put into reverse!

Until we put socialism firmly back on the agenda, our future is one of low wages, unemployment, long hours, and retirement put off until ripe old age! This is 'progress' under capitalism!

**Steve Appleton**

**Mail thieves**

photo Paul Mattsson

Theft. Pure and simple theft. The Tory government is selling off a postal service that doesn't belong to them. The British public owned Royal Mail not the Tory party.

Now Tory spivs in the City will soon be pillaging the assets of a once proud British institution. They must hate this country. They should have their tax benefits taken away from them and be made to pick up litter.

**Shaun Shute  
Gloucester**

**Postal casino**

On 10 October, £27 billion of investors' money chased £3.3 billion worth of shares in the Royal Mail sell-off. In one day the share price increased by 37%. The Labour Party just whinged that the government could have got more money for selling this state-owned, publicly funded organisation. Despite their recent conference vote Labour clearly has no interest in taking Royal Mail back into public ownership.

They also learnt little from 1980s privatisations when asset valuations were always set too low to gain quick sales and give the impression of a mythical 'popular capitalism'. Now Royal Mail's main objective will be to keep increasing profits for shareholders and top executive salaries and bonuses. We can expect job cuts, price rises and reductions in services to keep costs down. Another victory for the 'casino culture' over 'responsible capitalism'?

**Ian Hunter  
Derby**

**A tale of two Milibands**

Ed Miliband justifiably defended his father from the Mail's scandalous attack in their 'Man who hated Britain' article. However, 'One Nation' Ed's defence concentrated on Ralph Miliband's 'patriotism', indicated by his Royal Navy service in the war. However, by his left-wing stance, Ralph Miliband was opposing the Britain of the right-wing media. To the Mail, his opposition to imperialist war and the bosses' super-exploitation is 'unpatriotic' and anti-British. But the ideas of socialism we stand for are against the Britain of the capitalist class the Mail represents - the 1% or even the 0.1% that dominate society.

His son claims to want to reconcile these different class interests - super-rich with working-class people on zero-hour contracts and using food banks. That illusion is being exposed daily and will haunt Ed Miliband should Labour win the next election.

**Rob Williams**

**Mail anti-semitism**

Throughout history the ruling class tried to derail opposition to their oppressive policies by promoting Jewish stereotypes. Religious zealots, sub-humans, profiteers, treacherous communists etc, all these labels were used to justify vicious anti-semitism (or more accurately, anti-Jewish oppression). This misdirects people's anger onto Jews but also creates an atmosphere of terror (who will be targeted next?).

The Daily Mail used similar stereotypes to attack Ed Miliband's father. As the right get more scared that their policies are seen to be failing, we will see more anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, gay oppression, etc., used to try to subdue, silence, distract, confuse and/or divide us, the working class.

As socialists we must educate ourselves about all oppressions, and how they are used to divide us and we must speak out clearly against all forms of oppression including anti-semitism.

**Cathy Meadows**

**Red Ed's lot**

New Labour are back on track, Tristram Hunt MP (a Conservative surely but no, he's Labour) apologises for Labour trashing so-called 'Free schools'. And Rachel Reeves, newly promoted to the shadow cabinet (benefits spokesperson), says she will be just as tough on welfare and benefits as the coalition government.



**Tristram**

While most workers, unemployed and disabled people, want to see the back of this hated government, Red Ed's lot compete with them to see who can slaughter the working class the most. New Labour turning towards 70s style socialism after their conference? You're having a laugh, Daily Mail.

**John Marston  
Liverpool Socialist Party**

# Immigration Bill Whipping up racism to cut our services

**Naomi Byron**

Home Secretary Theresa May says the new Immigration Bill will stop 'health tourism', which is a major "drain" on the National Health Service.

The argument that unentitled people are benefiting from the NHS seems compelling. However, when questioned on Radio 4, May couldn't put a figure on the cost to the NHS. In fact, the Royal College of GPs reckons health tourism amounts to a minuscule 0.01% of the NHS budget.

Even if the government did introduce the proposed £200 charge on temporary migrants (including non-EU students) for use of the NHS, it wouldn't save any money. For a start the NHS already charges foreign nationals for using its services. In 2011-12 the NHS spent £33 million on treating foreign nationals, of which £21 million was recovered.

Clare Gerarda, chair of the Royal College of GPs, estimates that staff costs alone to administer the charge would cost £500 million - more than 40 times what is spent on healthcare for foreign nationals now!

Unsurprisingly, the Tories have the wrong target. The real drain on the NHS is the profiteering of private companies, who are bleeding the NHS dry. Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts - where the NHS signs contracts with private companies to provide services or build hospitals, and which are then leased back to the NHS at massively inflated costs - are one of the biggest causes of deficits and cuts in NHS trusts.

**Cancel PFI 'debts'**

In 2011 the public 'owed' £121.4 billion to pay for infrastructure only valued at £52.9 billion. Repayment costs are rising sharply. Between 2009/10 and 2011/12 they increased by almost £200 million. In London, where repayments rose by over 70% over the last three years, NHS trusts spent £143.9 million on PFI repayments last year.

The Tories' plans make no financial sense, until you see that once they set up an administrative system to introduce charges it is only a matter of time before charges are introduced for the rest of us.

This is the real aim of these new NHS charges for foreign nationals - to scrap the principle of NHS treatment being free at the point of de-



**Striking hospital workers fighting pay cuts in Mid Yorks** photo Iain Dalton

livery. The Tories' plans put public health at risk in other ways too. The presence of a public NHS has meant the virtual elimination of many deadly and debilitating but curable diseases. If poor people cannot access treatment, infectious diseases such as TB will again rear their ugly heads.

To actually stop the NHS being drained dry the first step should be cancellation of PFI contracts and privatisation, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

The next should be to cancel all planned cuts, taking immediate action to bring staffing levels up to the minimum required for safe practice.

Health workers in Mid Yorkshire Trust, who organised a successful strike earlier this year against plans to slash their wages and terms and conditions, have led the way. Health unions need to organise coordinated action to prevent cuts and stop the planned pay freeze.

It is doubly ironic that the Tories are talking tough on immigration, as the coalition has tried to slash jobs in the immigration service. In 2011 the government announced plans to reduce Home Office staff by a third, including 5,000 job cuts in the UK Borders Agency with 1,000 job cuts in the border force.

Only the threat of major strike action by PCS members in the Borders

Agency on the eve of the 2012 Olympics forced the government to agree to take on more staff.

Like this year's Health and Social Care Act, which effectively privatised GP surgeries, these proposed charges for NHS treatment are privatisation by the back door, aimed at selling off profitable services to the Con-Dems' big business friends.

Virgin Care, owned by Richard Branson, has contracts worth £500 million to run community healthcare on behalf of the NHS in Surrey.

The Bill also includes plans to fine landlords and estate agents up to £3,000 if they fail to check tenants' immigration status. Lawyers warn this is unworkable, discriminatory, and a step towards identity checks for everyone.

The Residential Landlords Association estimates that there are potentially 404 types of European identity documents they would have to be able to check.

Faced with expensive and complicated immigration checks for people, many landlords are likely to refuse accommodation to migrants as the simplest way to avoid fines.

This Bill is not aimed at protecting public services. The Tories hope that whipping up racism and division will weaken our ability to defend them.

## Let Us Rise! The Dublin Lockout – its impact and legacy

Foreword by Joe Higgins, Socialist Party TD  
**£5**

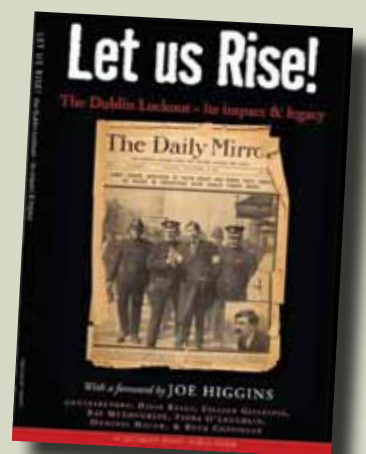
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# Robinson drops EDL but not his bigotry

**Ben Roberts**

Tommy Robinson and Kevin Carroll, the two most prominent members of the English Defence League, have unexpectedly resigned from the EDL.

The EDL has sought to exploit fears about the threat of far-right political Islam, conflating this with the beliefs of all Muslims, and organising a whole number of provocative demonstrations and protests in areas with significant Asian populations. These protests have often seen racist violence, and have had a clear aim of intimidating local communities.

Robinson (real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) explained his resignation by saying: "I have been considering this move for a long time because I recognise that, though street demonstrations have brought us to this point, they are no longer productive."

EDL demonstrations have often been met with counter-protests by anti-racists and socialists, and it is an important admission by Robinson that the EDL's street marches are failing.

However, these resignations do not represent a change in Robinson's reactionary political outlook. The resignations were facilitated and publicised by Quilliam, found-

ed by several ex-Hizb ut-Tahrir members, a far-right political Islamist group.

In 2010 the Guardian reported that a secret list was prepared by Quilliam for a top British security official which accused peaceful Muslim groups and others of sharing the ideology of terrorists. They reportedly received £1 million for this from the government.

In interviews, Robinson has cited the drinking culture and fascist sympathies of many EDL activists as his reasons for leaving. But these have been features of the EDL since its inception, despite the leadership's claims to be non-racist.

In reality the EDL has been in crisis, witnessing splits and power struggles over the last 18 months, while its protests faced opposition from anti-racists.

The resignation of two of the EDL's most prominent members will likely reinforce the EDL's disintegration and collapse. After being outnumbered several times - such as the attempt to march in Walthamstow, east London, where local youth and protesters broke through police lines to stop the EDL holding a rally - attendance at EDL rallies was in decline.

Other far-right groups, such as the 'infidels', split away from the EDL after an acrimonious falling out with Robinson and Co. However, since



**The EDL remains a threat to workers and minorities notwithstanding Robinson's resignation** photo Paul Mattsson

Robinson resigned, these far-right groups including remnants of the National Front, the infidels and others, have made overtures to the new EDL leadership.

With the BNP having gone through splits, and EDL demonstration attendance in decline, the far right is organisationally in disarray. However, after the brutal murder of

soldier Lee Rigby in south London, the EDL saw their demonstrations reach 1,000-plus, and BNP leader Nick Griffin was able to gain some publicity.

With the government's vicious austerity cuts and with Westminster parties promoting racist ideas, there is still potential support for racist and far-right ideas to grow and take

shape, as has happened in Greece. Building a mass, united working class fightback against all cuts and against racism is vital.

While many will be glad to see the EDL in further troubles, there is no room for complacency in combatting them and the environment in which they or other far-right groups can grow.

## Trade union-led anti-racist demo in Liverpool Fighting the far right threat also requires a strategy to fight austerity

**Tony Mulhearn and Hugh Caffrey**

On 12 October, thousands joined a national demonstration in Liverpool, called by Unite the Union following a series of attacks by members of the English Defence League (EDL) on Unite offices and PCS union members on Merseyside. Despite much-reported possible attacks on the demo, the far right did not raise their snouts.

This is the first national demonstration in a long time called by the trade union movement directly

against the far right. We support that step. Now the unions need to build a serious programme of similar demonstrations against every far-right event, threat or attack.

Speakers at the rally all declared the need to step up the campaign against the far right by defeating the British National Party's (BNP) North West MEP Nick Griffin in next year's European elections.

Petros Constantinou, a Greek anti-fascist activist, outlined the struggle against the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, whose recent murder of Pavlos Fyssas had provoked

mass anti-fascist demos throughout Greece.

The Socialist Party leaflet distributed at the demo argued that as "part of building a mass anti-fascist and anti-far right movement, the unions must build a new mass working class party to give a socialist way forwards.

"This month, PCS member Graham Woodhouse will contest the Bootle byelection for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Graham will argue for scrapping the bedroom tax and zero-hour contracts, creating jobs and building council housing, restoring public services and pensions and benefits, for workers' rights and decent wages."

### Confusion

Unfortunately, at the rally the call for the election of a Labour government was made without a single criticism of New Labour's commitment to aping the Con-Dems' savage cuts programme. Austerity is creating deeper poverty and despair - conditions in which racist and fascist ideas can flourish. The case for a fight against the cuts based on mass working class struggle was sadly lacking from the rally speeches.

Liverpool's Labour Mayor Joe Anderson attacked the far right but without at all being embarrassed by his savage cuts policy. Anderson's presence on the platform must have confused and angered those organisations that are fighting the cuts on Merseyside.

While council reserves are used to finance multi-million pound prestige projects, Anderson insists that using the same reserves to guarantee jobs and services would

be irresponsible! The far right will seek to capitalise on the social devastation to which the council's cuts are leading.

Another disappointment was Unite general secretary Len McCluskey's declaration that he was proud to share a platform with Anderson, going on to say he 'had faith in Ed (Miliband) in giving us hope for the future'. The fact that austerity and anti-trade union laws will continue under a future Labour government wasn't even mentioned.

When Len did mention the tactic of a general strike to fight austerity, in response to some heckling, it was done in a flippant manner. Unfortunately this will disorientate Unite activists and some will question Len's commitment to leading a struggle against austerity.

The confusing message from the platform was that the struggle against austerity is totally separate from the struggle against the far right. While organised action based on the involvement of working class people can block the far right when they try to march and promote their poisonous ideas, the struggle to defeat all they stand for requires a longer-term strategy.

The reality is that only a determined working class-led fightback against austerity can undercut the far right.

A one-day general strike would be a powerful message of working class unity, and would do more to undercut racism than a thousand speeches by Ed Miliband!

As part of building a mass anti-racist and anti-far right movement, the unions must also build a new mass working class party to give a socialist way forward.

### Bradford anti-EDL protest

### Police lock down city centre

Bradford city centre was locked down by a heavy police presence on 12 October in order to allow a 'static' protest by several hundred far-right English Defence League (EDL) supporters. A Socialist Party member explains what happened.

There was an eerie feel walking into the centre of Bradford on the day of the EDL's visit as the streets were practically deserted.

With no march route granted, it was basically a day out to the pub for the EDL, with various coaches shipping supporters into a police-designated pen.

The EDL's desire to be heard and their threat to cause havoc didn't materialise. Unite Against Fascism had arranged a peace festival a few streets away, but 50 or so of us from various organisations, including the Socialist Party, were determined to get closer to try to stop the EDL.

Police horses surged forward in an attempt to move us towards the UAF demo point, which we managed to avoid. Attempts by police to kettle us on at least three occasions were also thwarted.

In-fighting occurred within the EDL pen, with two reported arrests. Their speeches at 1pm were also cut short, with police escorting EDL'ers to their buses after only 20 minutes.

We anti-racists, stuck around, determined to protect our city. The rain had been pouring down all day and the EDL'ers now looked more pathetic than ever, drenched in their misery and insignificance.



**A new mass workers' party needs to be built to counter the far right**



## Teachers, firefighters, workers fighting back

# UNITE THE STRIKES!

**Rob Williams**

National Shop Stewards Network,  
national chair

**T**his autumn more and more workers are on the march. Or on strike. Or balloting to strike.

Postal workers are finishing their strike ballot as the Royal Mail is sold off. The posties know that in future when they are told that jobs have to go, or they have to work longer, or their wages have to be cut, it will be to maintain and grow the dividends for the fat cats. The CWU union has got no choice but to build for the biggest strike vote and get all postal workers out.

Firefighters in the FBU are marching on Wednesday 16 October in London and striking the following Saturday for five hours.

On Thursday 17 October, the teachers are out on strike in London and across the South and North East of England. The UCU lecturers' union, the HE members of Scottish EIS education union, Unison and Unite in higher education have all voted for strike action. All these unions should strike together but it poses a total education

strike if they can agree common dates with the NUT and NASUWT teachers' unions.

Napo's ballot also finishes this week for probation workers facing privatisation. On the 22nd, PCS's national exec meets to discuss the next stage in their action.

And finally, as we go to press, Grangemouth oil refinery workers are preparing for a 48-hour strike to defend their shop steward Stevie Deans. There are many other workers currently in dispute with the employers or the government.

Every worker involved in these struggles will be absolutely determined to win their own dispute and defend their pay and working conditions as well as protecting vital services from cuts and privatisation vultures. This will also require participation in the union branches so members have democratic control of the action to see it through to victory.

On all these demonstrations, picket lines and rallies workers will also be asking the same question – why can't we strike together? We will be stronger if we do. Sometimes it is a simple question of numbers.

The Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network

have, with others, been campaigning for the TUC and the unions to call a 24-hour general strike as the mass action necessary to face down the Con-Dem austerity offensive.

If the unions who are currently in dispute strike together, over a million workers would be out on the same day – a massive step in the right direction. It would give a huge boost of confidence to these workers but to the many millions watching on, including the increasing number suffering from these brutal cuts.

On 30 June 2011, 750,000 civil servants, teachers and lecturers from PCS, NUT, UCU and ATL walked out on strike together to defend their pensions. It paved the way for the massive two million-strong N30 strike of nearly 30 unions later that year. It could and should have been the beginning of the mass joint strike action that could have shaken the Con-Dems and even defeated them.

Unfortunately, it was stopped in its tracks by the TUC leadership and right-wing union leaders. But the cuts are escalating, with a promise from the Tory conference of austerity until 2020 unless we stop them. And the anger is building again.



It's time to make our demand for action on our side even louder: name the date for a 24-hour general strike! **See [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net) for more info and to subscribe to the weekly newsletter**

### What we stand for

**The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.**

**As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.**

**The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.**

**Our demands include:**

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, pay, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'Free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

#### WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade

unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

#### ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

#### RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

#### NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

#### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!