



# IT'S A ROBBERY NOT A 'RECOVERY'

## Time for a socialist alternative to austerity

Alistair Tice

Tory Chancellor George Osborne won't be coming to Socialism 2013. He doesn't need to attend the 'Are we naturally too greedy for socialism?' workshop because he knows he definitely is, with an estimated personal fortune of £4.3 million.

And he doesn't need to hear 'An introduction to Marxist economics' because last month he claimed: "Those in favour of Plan B have lost the argument... the UK economy has strengthened rapidly over the last six months."

Last week's fall in the unemployment figures seem to back Osborne up. They showed more people working than ever, a fall in the number of officially unemployed and a big drop in the claimant count. So what's really happening in the economy? Is Osborne's Plan A for Austerity really working?

Osborne claims, "we're turning a corner." But with the UK's GDP (total output) still 2.7% below the pre-crisis level, this is the slowest economic recovery in history.

No corner has been turned for the 355,000 people going to the Trussell Trust food banks in the last six months. And it's a 'recovery' based on more debt, with a million families a month taking out pay-day loans and the beginning of a new housing bubble - the biggest increase in new jobs has been estate agents!

Meanwhile in the real economy, business investment is down, manufacturing output is still 10% below the 2007 figure and the trade deficit is widening.

So how is unemployment falling? In the last five years, there has been

a doubling of those working part-time, who can't find full-time jobs, to 1.45 million. The number of self-employed has risen by 367,000 since 2008.

But this is not a sign of entrepreneurial spirit, more an army of 'odd jobbers' - handymen, cleaners, nannies and taxi drivers. 90% of the newly self-employed are part-time too, with 84% aged 50 and over.

Osborne also claims: "Our plan for the economy is a plan for living standards." For the super-rich, it is! The top 1% of earners have seen their share increase to 10% of total earnings, while the bottom 50% share has fallen to 18%.

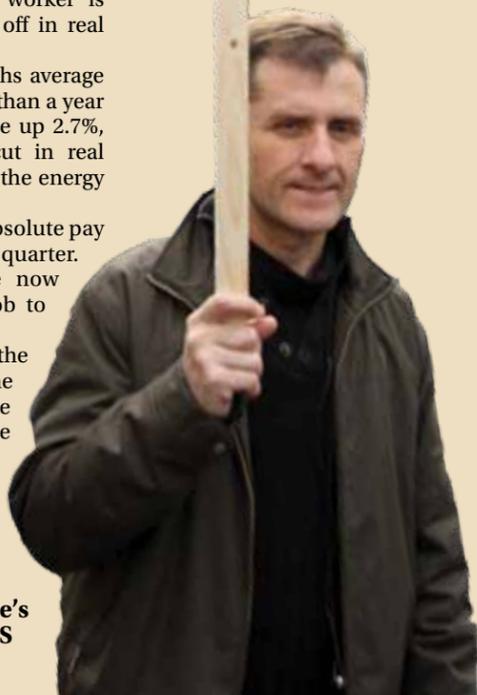
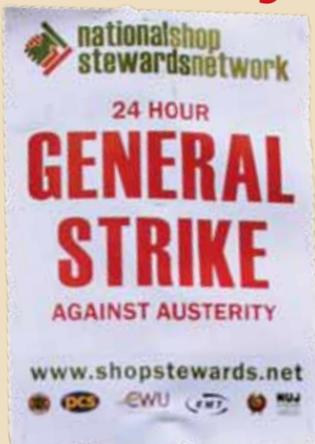
An average full-time worker is now £30 a week worse off in real terms than in 2008.

In the last three months average wages were 0.7% higher than a year ago but prices have gone up 2.7%, meaning another 2% cut in real terms. And that's before the energy price hikes!

In the public sector, absolute pay fell by 0.5% in the last quarter. Over a million people now work more than one job to try to get by.

So if you are part of the 'squeezed majority', come to Socialism 2013. George Osborne won't be there but 1,000 others will. Join us in discussing why capitalism doesn't work, how to fight the cuts, and more besides.

**Above all, hear our alternative to Osborne's Plan A, which is Plan S for socialism!**



Chancellor George Osborne is presiding over a massive fall in people's living standards, dressed up as an economic recovery

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# Build a no-cuts political alternative

**D**eep-seated anger at the seeming endless misery facing workers in Britain is growing with every passing day. The Tories will fight the next general election promising austerity until 2020. There is no recovery in workers' wages; on the contrary average real incomes fell by a further 2% in the last year.

The punishing squeeze on living standards is so severe that it has even been recognised by the government quango, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, headed up by Blairite Alan Milburn. Milburn has reported that today's working class and middle class children will be the first in a generation to grow up markedly poorer than their parents.

The Commission report describes the nightmare that is already facing young people. Graduates are coming out of university with up to £50,000 of debt. The number of 18 to 24 year olds unemployed for more than two years is at its highest since 1994. Meanwhile the proportion of 25 to 34 year olds who own their own homes has fallen from 60% to 40% in the past decade and is set to fall further as house prices spiral evermore out of reach.

In London house prices increased by 10%, or £50,000, in the last month alone, as international financiers put their money into the 'safe haven' of London property. As private rents also soar, and social housing remains as rare as hen's teeth, there is no 'safe haven' for those who merely want a secure roof over their heads.

Against this background, any opposition worthy of the name would be on course for a landslide victory at the general election. When Labour announced the freezing of energy prices for up to 20 months, it received overwhelming public support. No wonder, when fuel bills have risen by 40% since 2007. The right-wing media howled in horror at this very modest measure because they feared it could trigger a popular movement for wider and more far-reaching demands.

More than 70% of people would support re-nationalisation of the energy companies. And why stop there? What, for example, about nationalising the major food companies. The cost of food and non-alcoholic

drink has increased by 35.6% in the last six years, while the giant supermarkets have made huge profits.

Labour, however, has ruled out renationalising the energy companies, Royal Mail or any of the other privatised utilities. As Ed Miliband has made clear, a future Labour government would do the bidding of big business, no matter what outrages the capitalists commit. Writing in the Daily Mail he said: "I want to make capitalism work for working people, not destroy it." But capitalism is a system that works for the super-rich 1%, based on the exploitation and misery of millions of working people.

Labour's failure to condemn the disgusting attempts at union-busting by Ineos at Grangemouth oil refinery, never mind to call for nationalisation of the plant, demonstrates which side it's on. It was the Labour leadership's outrageous suspension of Grangemouth shop steward Stevie Deans as chair of Falkirk Labour Party that initially emboldened Ineos to launch their witch-hunt against him.

## Anti-worker

The recent shadow cabinet reshuffle was hailed by some as an indication that Miliband was shifting the party left, despite the fact that it included the ditching of Diane Abbott, the only remotely left-wing shadow cabinet member. Immediately, however, the new shadow cabinet has shown its true colours. Tristram Hunt, shadow minister for education, pledged to continue with 'free' schools. This means a Labour government would not reverse the decimation of state education that is currently underway.

And then Rachel Reeves, shadow minister for welfare, declared that Labour would be tougher on welfare than the Tories! With millions of the poorest currently facing destitution, this has rightly been met with indignation. Eight trade union leaders sent a protest letter to the Observer. Polly Toynbee, writing in the Guardian (22 October, 2013), reports that her, "inbox crackled with the sound of people tearing up their party cards: 'I rejoined recently, but I'm resigning again'" declares one.

Toynbee tries to defend Rachel Reeves' stance, because it is necessary to bend to 'public opinion'. Her own article inadvertently answers this when she argues that within six months of its implementation opposition to the bedroom tax has increased dramatically as a result of Labour's opposition to it. This gives a tiny indication of the difference a new mass workers' party with a clear 'no cuts' position could make to the fight against austerity.

Of course, it is not only Labour's verbal opposition to the bedroom tax, but people's own experience of the tax's inequity that has shifted public opinion. Nonetheless, it is only with Labour support that the government has been able to get away with whipping up opposition to benefit claimants.

Toynbee doesn't even attempt to explain why Labour isn't also opposing other benefit cuts. But her vivid description of the human misery cuts have created in Reeves' Leeds West constituency (which is part of a Labour-led local authority) proves the case that Labour should stand against all cuts in benefits in both words and deeds. One of Reeves' constituents sums up the reality:

"One grandmother loses it big time in a group meeting, with her grandchild on her knee. Campaigning with others at risk of losing their homes, she explodes: The Labour council, Reeves as her MP, everyone is to blame! No use telling her it's the government's fault: 'I can't get to David Cameron, but I can get to you and the Labour council who shouldn't collect this shocking tax!'"

Last week Southwark's Labour-led council summonsed 5,800 of its poorest residents to court because they could not afford to pay the extra council tax demanded of them since the benefit cuts in April. More than 400 attended a protest outside the court. According to Labour's own figures, this tale can be replicated nationwide, with 157,000 people summonsed so far. The vast majority of these are in Labour-led authorities!

Every council, as a few have, could have refused to impose council tax increases or benefit cuts on its poorest residents. Equally, every Labour council could have not only verbally opposed the bedroom tax but refused to implement it. Instead, without ex-

Writing in the Daily Mail Miliband said: "I want to make capitalism work for working people, not destroy it." But capitalism is a system that works for the super-rich 1%, based on the exploitation and misery of millions of working people.

ception Labour councils have implemented this senseless and punitive measure.

One of the biggest factors that have so far undermined the confidence of working class people to stand up against austerity is the lack of a mass political party that expresses their anger. Labour again and again demonstrates it is another party of big business that echoes the anti-working class policies of the government.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)) is made up of socialists and trade unionists – including the transport union RMT – who are working to begin the process of creating a political voice for all those who are fighting austerity.

In next May's local authority elections TUSC, will be aiming to stand as broadly as possible – with candidates in every major town and city where elections are taking place. The handful of Labour councillors who dare to oppose cuts in the council chamber will have TUSC's support, but TUSC will aim to stand against the many, many more who are implementing cuts.

TUSC appeals to every trade unionist opposing cuts and pay freezes, every anti-bedroom tax and benefit cut campaigner, to join together to make sure next May we can offer the strongest possible electoral alternative to the misery on offer from the three main parties.

## Grangemouth: a fight we can't afford to lose

**Philip Stott**  
Socialist Party Scotland (CWI)

Outrageously Grangemouth oil refinery and petrochemical plant workers have been told to sign up to a draconian package of cuts to their terms and conditions, or the company, Ineos, will refuse to restart the plant. These include a wage freeze, no bonuses until the end of 2016 and the tearing up of the final salary pension scheme.

Hundreds of union members took part in a Unite rally on 20 October, showing the determination of workers not to accept the bullying tactics of Ineos and its billionaire owner Jim Ratcliffe. They had support from other construction workers, public sector workers and local people.

It is vital that, while supporting the call for genuine negotiations, Unite stands firm. There should be no concessions to the company's slash and burn agenda on pay and conditions and the idea of an open-ended no-strike agreement must be rejected.

Many workers were angry that Scottish National Party (SNP) First Minister Alex Salmond has called on the union to agree to a "no strike policy, without strings". Ineos also wants

to attack union rights at the site – getting rid of full-time union representation. The threat to remove shop steward Steven Deans is still not resolved. Workers voted by 81% in favour of strike action over his victimisation.

Stevie, a Unite member, works as a fitter. He told the Socialist: "Ineos are trying to drive the union out. They are threatening to move union people to different parts of the site, in an effort to split up and isolate them."

Calum has just finished a four year apprenticeship at Grangemouth: "We don't have any choice, we have to fight this blackmail or there'll be nothing left."

"The union has been encouraging workers to hand their blue forms (new contracts) unsigned, back to the union office, not the management. Hundreds of us have done that," said Derek who has been working for nine years at Grangemouth.

Ineos has been indulging in a black propaganda exercise that says the company is losing money, hand over fist. They are demanding public money from the Scottish and UK governments. Yet as Unite's Scottish regional secretary Pat Rafferty correctly pointed out at the rally: "Sales have increased by more than 50% in

the last year, gross profits are up by 20% and their operating profit is up by a whopping 56%. Ineos made profits of £2 billion last year alone."

Ineos is registered in Switzerland, avoiding paying corporation tax in the UK and buries money in tax havens across the world. The Socialist Party Scotland leaflet demanded that Ineos' books be opened up to trade union inspection.

Unite assistant general secretary, Tony Burke, brought support from Unite members across the UK and from trade unions internationally, including Norway, USA, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, France and Italy.

Ratcliffe said that unless workers accept the draconian attacks on their terms and conditions the plant will not re-open. They have also threatened to sack the 1,400 workers within 45 days and re-hire workers on worse contracts.

This is a fight that the Unite members at Grangemouth and the entire trade union movement cannot afford to lose. If the plant is not restarted it will be clear that this is a lockout by the company of its workforce.

There will be an urgent need to discuss the occupation of part of the Grangemouth site, mass demonstra-

tions and protests. The Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) should ensure the organisation of a national demonstration in the next week or two demanding the plant re-open, with no cuts to the pay and pensions of the workers. An urgent shop stewards' conference of private and public sector trade unions should be convened to organise and plan a solidarity campaign.

A key demand will be for the nationalisation of Grangemouth by the Scottish and UK governments, to take the plant out of the hands of the profiteering Ineos and ensure that Grangemouth and the jobs and terms and conditions of the workers are protected and invested in.

In his speech STUC general secretary, Grahame Smith compared the actions taken to nationalise RBS and other banks and raised the need for similar action if Ineos management did not back down. This shows that the issue of public ownership is being discussed.

Nationalisation should be carried out democratically. The plant should be run under workers' control, by representatives of the workforce, the wider trade union movement and the Scottish government, but with a ma-



majority worker involvement.

Unless Ineos bosses back down, this dispute could explode into a struggle like the UCS struggle in the 1970s. The organised strength of the entire labour and trade union movement needs to be mobilised to ensure the union-busting, profiteering tactics of Ineos and its billionaire majority owner are defeated.

**As we go to press we know that half the permanent workforce has rejected the new contracts. See [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) for updates**

# Hypocritical Hunt blames families for care scandal

Tories' real goal is yet more welfare spending cuts

Sue Powell

A report that one million elderly people in the UK feel neglected and lonely is a "scandal". Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt has stepped up to hypocritically point the finger of blame at 'hardworking families'. Yet day-centres for the elderly were among the first victims of Con-Dem cuts, followed by council funding of home adaptations, respite care, home visits, and domestic help.

Hunt overlooks the 3,700 patients a year now admitted to hospital due to malnutrition, rushed from (largely private) care homes or found in a state of "emaciated confusion" by neighbours and carers.

Millions of people care for sick and elderly relatives in the UK. As the population ages, this number has spiralled but the trend is mainly driven by a lack of good affordable care.

## Private companies

Why doesn't Hunt address the scandal of over 30 health and care companies dodging millions in taxes every year? His answer to the countless care scandals has been to recruit 600 volunteers (!) to scrutinise care homes and to open the door to more privatisation.

Private care companies rake in millions, while carers receive a pittance (£10 less than Jobseeker's Allowance). Family carers get no training or supervision, precious little support and are exempt from any legal scrutiny.

Carers endure devastating effects



Hunt wants hard-pressed families to relieve the state of welfare provision

on their family and social life, lifetime income, pension, mental and physical health. People like Socialist Party member Abdul and his two brothers juggled 24/7 care of two sick parents with young families and shift work.

One parent in hospital and another confined to home took its toll as the brothers begged and pleaded with their bosses over shift changes. Their wives, despite their own jobs, the kids and the needs of their own parents, helped too.

None of them had space to take their parents in. The whole family network was stretched to breaking-point. Who's got the space, time and money? The bedroom tax actually precludes it!

Hunt and his class have big homes, nannies, nurses, drivers, domestics and au pairs. Their responsibilities are discharged with a money transaction. However much we love our parents it's a burden: difficult for workers but for the jobless too. They're expected to be mobile, accessible and chasing mythical jobs 35 hours a week across the country.

Hunt's idyllic picture of family life is equally mythical. One cannot assume that all parents and children have healthy, loving relationships.

The Tories' Victorian family values belong to the same capitalist morality that gave us the sweatshop and the workhouse. Time to bin the capitalist system and its hypocrisy.

## Government policies - 'deeply divisive'

The government's social mobility Tsar - former Labour health secretary Alan Milburn - appeared to be off message when his Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission published its first 'state of the nation' report, saying that "Britain remains a deeply divided country".

The Commission said, unsurprisingly, that the wealth gap was widening and the numbers in poverty were growing.

It confirmed that the Con-Dems' spending cuts have been "regressive" with the bottom 20% of income earners hit the hardest.

And while urging the government to raise the minimum wage, the commission wants to means test pensioners to qualify for free TV licences and fuel allowances.

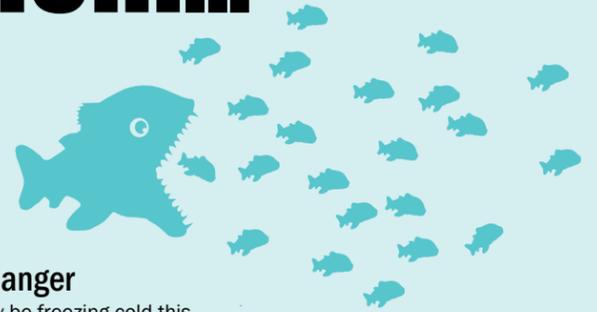
Milburn and Co do not argue that austerity, with its attendant social problems, is wrong but, rather, the government should take benefits from the elderly in order to increase them for younger workers. In other words; 'rob Peter to pay for Paul'.

The Commission goes on to say that, in the past, tax credits and public spending helped reduce child poverty, but under the Con-Dems' austerity measures these "props" have been removed. Therefore, the government should ask employers to step into the breach with higher wages. As if that is going to happen!

In reality, unless resisted by the workers' movement, the capitalist class will continue to squeeze workers and the poor to pay for the crisis in its sick system.

As Milburn admits: "The economic recovery is unlikely to halt the trend of the last decade, where the top part of society prospers and the bottom part stagnates. If that happens, social inequality will widen and the rungs of the social ladder will grow further apart."

# Them...



## Fuelling anger

OK, you may be freezing cold this winter, unable to pay the soaring fuel bills, but spare a thought for Sam Laidlow. The Old Etonian millionaire head of energy giant British Gas will have to shell out £3,000 a year to heat a 52 foot swimming pool at his modest £5 million Cotswold mansion.

But in this age of austerity Sam, too, has made cutbacks by shelving plans for a second 46 foot pool. So think about that financial sacrifice when you're confronted with a 9.2% price hike on your gas bill this November.

(see pages 6&7)

## Deserving rich

Shame on you naysayers for talking down British capitalism. UK companies listed on the stock exchange will pay over £100 billion in dividends to shareholders next year, a new record. The pay-outs exceed the £67 billion pre-recession peak and nearly cover the government's £113 billion net cash requirement in 2014.

Thanks to Clive Walder

## Rocketing rents

Housing minister Grant Shapps and Prime Minister David Cameron have both claimed that housing benefit caps (a maximum £250 a week for a one bedroom property, £400 a week for a four bedroom property) will drive down rents. Only in Scotland and the north east of England have rents edged down. Everywhere else in the UK rents have rocketed; in Wales by an average 7.2%, and by 4.5% in London (September 2012-September 2013).

## Social cleansing

According to a new report, soaring private sector rents and the government's benefit caps have pushed thousands of families out of London's wealthier boroughs and into poorer boroughs - a phenomenon termed 'social cleansing'. In the richer boroughs of Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea, the number of households claiming Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has fallen by as much as 30% (between May 2011 and May 2013). At the same time there has been an 86% growth in the number of LHA recipients in outer London.

The London Councils report also

shows the number of working households claiming LHA has doubled over four years, while the number of non-working households claiming LHA has increased by 10% over the same period

## Tough love

Telling an unemployed disabled drug addict to stop begging and "get a job" may sound to some as lacking in compassion, but not if you're £66,396 a year (plus consultancy fees) Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski. Mr McGuigan, who received the MP's advice, told reporters: "I can't get a job. I can barely read or write. Look at me I'm missing a leg." The MP, who thinks nothing of claiming all his first class rail fares between his Shrewsbury and Aitcham constituency and Westminster, and who advertised in 2009 for an unpaid intern, presumably thinks that humiliating the poor is simply 'tough love'.

## MPs' jackpot

Kawczynski and his fellow establishment MPs are expected to be quids in when Parliament's pay body recommends an inflation-busting 11% salary increase. MPs will now 'earn' triple the national average wage of £26,000.

Expect the three main capitalist party leaders (£142,500 annual salary) to tut-tut about this outrageous pay hike but then lament that their 'hands are tied' by the independent pay review.

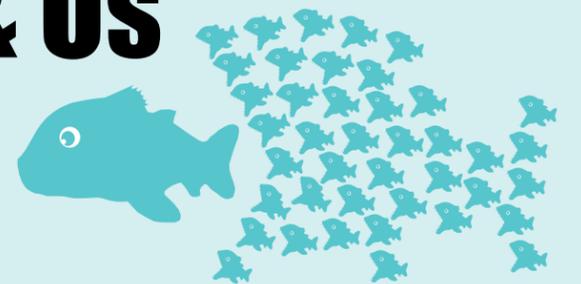
Public sector workers suffering years of pay freezes, pension cuts, job losses, etc, should greet the news with a call for a 24-hour general strike.

## Racist texting

Not content with deploying a bigoted and divisive anti-immigration advertising van in multiracial areas of the country, the Home Office has now sent out around 40,000 'go home' text messages, supposedly targeting illegal immigrants.

This latest government 'initiative' has enraged hundreds of people legitimately residing in the UK, who have complained after receiving these offensive texts. These include an anti-racism campaigner living in Britain since 1966 and an immigration caseworker at a law firm!

# ...& Us



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What we saw

F The Tories Freestyle  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiEqPzpMA9M

# Thousands join teachers' strike

**Martin Powell-Davies**

Member of the NUT Executive

Right across London, the South of England and in the North-East, tens of thousands of striking teachers took to the streets on 17 October to show their determination to stand up for education and to strike back against Gove's attacks on pay, pensions and conditions.

2,000 marched in Brighton and Durham, 3,000 in Bristol and anything up to 15,000 in London, where the march thronged down Whitehall and past the Department for Education.

Teachers are now awaiting news from the NUT and NASUWT leaderships about what follows next. A commitment had been made that the three regional strikes would be followed by a joint national one-day strike before Christmas. However, when the NUT Executive meets on Friday, it is not clear whether a strike date in November will be confirmed or whether the recommendation will be to postpone that action.

Any delay by the teaching unions would be a serious mistake. It would be a signal to teachers and ministers

alike that the NUT and NASUWT lack confidence and are backing away from their announced plan of action.

There is no need to lack confidence. The energy and anger at all the rallies on Thursday showed that there would be clear support from teachers for a clear plan of continuing strike action.

A postponement to some unconfirmed date would only disorientate our members and invite Gove to implement further attacks when he announces his response to the Review Body's report on changes to national conditions.

Some may argue that we should wait to see what the Review Body has to say or that we should see if we can first win concessions out of talks with Gove. But what will Gove be prepared to talk about? He has made clear that his 'direction of travel' is fixed.

Firm national strike action this year - with the threat of more to follow in 2014 - is what is required to force Gove into serious negotiations. That action should also be co-ordinated with other unions like the CWU, FBU, UCU and PCS too.

We have to learn lessons. Pulling



Marching in London photo Alison Hill

back from action on pensions in 2012 encouraged Michael Gove to attack our pay in 2013. Any further hesitation will invite worse attacks on our conditions in 2014.

Now is the time to step up our

action, not to step back.

**See Martin's blog for updates and news and about his campaign for the vice-president election: [electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk](http://electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk)**

## Large lively demos demand more strike action

Teachers across the south rallied in their hundreds as the majority of schools closed across the region. There were large rallies in Oxford, Portsmouth, Worthing and Southampton.

In Southampton there was strong support for the call for a national strike.

This was best summed up when local headteacher, NUT and Socialist Party member Liz Filer received the loudest applause of the day for her call: "We should be out with the postal workers. We should have a general strike on that day of all public sector workers".

Her call featured on the front page of the local paper the following day. Not all were onside however, a notable critic was local Labour MP and close adviser to Ed Miliband, John Denham.

His words shocked many activ-

ists and will remind many why the time for unions to disaffiliate from Labour is long overdue.

**Nick Chaffey**

### Plymouth

The Plymouth rally was attended by about 250 teachers. The platform was given over to ordinary teachers and activists which included Chris Webb representing Post Office workers fighting against privatisation. Chris got a standing ovation.

**Alex Moore**

### Bristol

In Bristol, a south-west regional march and rally was attended by 3,000-4,000 teachers and their supporters.

Onlookers applauded and beeped their car horns in support, reflecting

a generally positive view of the action by parents who know that the teachers are fighting for their children's education, despite the inconvenience of a school strike.

This was the biggest trade union demonstration in Bristol since 30 November 2011 when 20,000 public sector workers marched through the city.

With teachers threatening a national strike this term and higher education staff, postal workers and probation officers all voting for industrial action, surely the time has come for coordinated action to stop this government of millionaires once and for all.

**Matt Carey**

### Oxford

In Oxford well over 600 teachers, students and parents attended a

rally calling for an end to the Tory cuts in education, putting a stop to Tory pension plans and also calling for Gove to go.

The rally itself had a good cross section of local speakers including councillors, local parents and teachers.

### Durham

In Durham at least 2,000 striking teachers marched to the Rally for Education. Overheard on the march were a group of teachers from Middlesbrough, which has just had news of further devastating cuts in council services, discussing the absolute necessity of unions coming together for a general strike.

So many turned up for the rally that even the overflow meeting overflowed!

**Elaine Brunskill**

## Probation officers vote to strike against Grayling's sell-off

**Chas Berry**

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

Napo members have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over government plans to privatise the Probation Service. Announcing the result to around 500 members at Napo's AGM in Llandudno, general secretary Ian Lawrence described the 84% 'yes' vote as a "clear mandate" for action.

Unions representing 18,000 probation workers have been trying to reach agreement with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) since it announced its Transforming Rehabilitation

agenda in May. But constant interference by secretary of state Chris Grayling, whose Machiavellian approach to negotiations has been compared to the Simpson's character Montgomery Burns, means that industrial action seems almost inevitable.

The confidence of members was boosted by the comments of Steve Gillan, general secretary of the prison officers' union POA, who pledged action in support of striking Napo members, many of whom work alongside prison officers.

Given that the POA is banned from calling official action his remarks show how seriously his members view the destruction of probation, and the need to link it

with the struggle against prison privatisation.

Similarly, a message of support from PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, whose members in the MoJ are also in dispute, lifted the sights of members over the potential for coordinated strike action to defeat the government.

Grayling's acolyte, parliamentary under secretary Jeremy Wright, accuses Napo of putting the public at risk by our action and states there are "contingency plans in place" to deal with any disruption of the service. Our response is that Grayling and his reckless plans are the biggest threat to public safety. Ignoring all professional advice, even from some of his own party with legal

backgrounds, he is hell-bent on driving through this privatisation. Probation workers are determined to defeat him and concerted action across the justice sector will disrupt his attempts at a smooth transition whatever contingency plans he may try to put in place.

Pressure is mounting on 'failing Grayling' and this weak coalition government, and broader questions are being asked about the nature of the crisis we face including the question of political representation.

Members have no illusions that a future Labour government would re-nationalise the service and, in an echo of debates elsewhere in the movement, voted to support campaigns of civil disobedience.

### In brief

#### Breaking news

##### Demand for action in FBU

The London Region of the Fire Brigades union has passed an emergency resolution criticising the calling off of the strike scheduled for 19 October.

They say: "The strike on 25 September was supported solidly by members and was instrumental in bringing about the government's recent shift on the threat of mass capability dismissals.

We recognise that the union has already made concessions to the government's agenda prior to the ballot for strike action and therefore call on the executive council to reaffirm its commitment to fighting for the eight demands which form the pensions trade dispute, particularly in relation to the increase in the normal pension age and the hike in contributions.

We also call on the executive council to give immediate notice of a fresh strike, the duration of which should not be less than 24 hours. Further, this region demands that no future strike dates be cancelled unless the executive council has received an offer from government which it is prepared to recommend to members for acceptance."

#### Rail strike

Aslef members working for Cross Country trains have been balloted for strike action in a dispute about the rostering of Rest Day work. 81% voted to strike.

The Aslef executive committee has agreed strikes on 5 and 7 November. More strike dates may be added.

#### An Aslef member

#### Uni strike

UCU, Unison and Unite members working in higher education are striking on 31 October over pay and pensions. Staff have been offered a 1% pay rise this year, which means a pay cut of 13% since October 2008.

At the same time university tops have had their pay increased by more than £5,000 in 2011-12. The average pay and pensions package for vice-chancellors is almost £250,000.

#### No to privatisation

Nottingham University Hospitals Trust are intending to privatise the Estates and Facilities Department - in a contract valued at £200 million over the next five years. Three private companies have been shortlisted for the tender but the in-house bid has been rejected.

The Nottinghamshire NHS branch of Unite is consulting its members about this privatisation, which has shocked and angered them.

The regional full-time officer has not ruled out industrial action.

#### Website

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

## Fighting privatisation of shared services in government departments

PCS members in Shared Services in DWP and Defra are striking on 25 October in an important fight against privatisation. Members in UK SBS Ltd, the Shared Service Centre for the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) will be demonstrating their support too as they are due to transfer in 2015.

The strike is because of the fail-

ure to secure an acceptable agreement with the Cabinet Office over the proposed transfer of staff to the private sector.

A new company, Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL), will operate shared services functions for DWP, Defra and in 2015, BIS. It is planned that other government departments' work, and therefore

jobs, will transfer in the longer term. SSCL will be formed by a joint venture between government and a private company, Steria. Steria will have 75% ownership.

PCS is fighting to stop this privatisation. As part of this it is calling for an immediate delay to the transfer date - which is currently planned for 1 November.

It is clear that government wants to plough ahead with this transfer with no regard for the fact that there will be significant job losses, off-shoring of PCS members' jobs and office closures.

**The Defra offices are in York and Alnwick. The DWP offices are in Newcastle, Blackpool, Sheffield and Cardiff.**

# We need action against zero-hour contracts

## Join the day of action on 5 November

Claire Laker-Mansfield

How do you make a fortune worth £1.7 billion? It's perhaps not a question most of us have spent too much time pondering. For the average person, the more pressing questions are the ones about paying fuel bills, making food last and avoiding rent arrears. But if ever you do have the urge, it would be worth addressing the question to one Mike Ashley – proud owner of Sports Direct, currently in 15th place on the country's rich list.

The only thing is, you might be a little disappointed at the answer. Mike Ashley made his money in the same way most of them do – not through some special genius or unique innovation. He started out rich, he bought up other people's companies and – here's the most important bit – he employed thousands of workers on insecure zero-hour contracts and rock bottom wages. Because maximum exploitation equals maximum profit.

### Like it or lump it?

When Sports Direct and other big companies were exposed in the press for their enormous use of zero-hour contracts, it caused outrage. Anyone can see the deep unfairness of it. Your employer has total freedom and flexibility. You have to like it or lump it – plenty of people are queuing up to get more hours if you upset the boss.

But Youth Fight for Jobs says we're



not prepared to simply 'lump it'. The Sick of your Boss (SoyB) initiative is mounting a fightback against zero-hour contracts, low pay and

insecurity.

On 5 November we're calling a national day of action targeting zero-hour companies with protests,

stunts and occupations. In particular we'll be hitting super-exploitative Sports Direct. We're appealing to everyone who's facing these is-

ues at work, to trade unionists who support our campaign and to anyone disgusted by these contracts to join us on the day.

### Building anger

With this action, we want to put the spotlight back on the zero-hour employers who think they can get away with it. We want to give confidence to those struggling under the weight of low wages and casual employment that they're not alone.

Because ultimately, it won't be rallies and stunts that beat back greedy and exploitative bosses. It will be the workers getting organised. We can take inspiration from the example of Hovis workers who've taken strike action and beaten back zero-hour contracts. They've shown it's possible to fight – and it's possible to win.

What Mike Ashley and those like him fear most is not just bad publicity, it's the anger that's building on his shop floors, it's the potential for working class traditions – those of unions, strikes and solidarity – to assert themselves powerfully as his employees get a feel for their own strength.

That's why SoyB aims to use this day of action as a springboard for building groups of young workers and trade unionists who can help each other to get organised. If you're sick of your boss and want to join the fightback – protest on 5 November.

See [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com) for details

## Postal workers go into battle

Gary Clark

Assistant branch secretary, Scotland No.2 branch CWU, personal capacity

By a massive four to one majority CWU members in Royal Mail have voted to take strike action in defence of their terms and conditions after the privatisation of the company.

It's clear that the government undervalued the company to make sure that the threat of industrial action would not scare off private investors. The share price has already increased to 500p at the time of writing.

City spivs, guaranteed 70% of the shares, cashed in for a quick profit, where ten million shares were traded in the first 30 seconds. In seven minutes the price rose by 39%.

So the question has to be asked why were city firms like Lazard, Goldman Sachs and Barclays paid around £24 million for 'advice' about the sell-off. Clearly the government cares more about big business making a killing on the stock exchange than it does about providing a vital public service with good terms and conditions for ordinary workers.

At this year's Labour Party conference the CWU motion calling on the next Labour government to renationalise Royal Mail was carried without opposition. But the Labour leadership rushed around giving media statements saying that they will not renationalise Royal Mail.

Without doubt there will be motions going to the next CWU conference calling for disaffiliation from the Labour Party but we must do more than that and call for the trade union movement to build a party to



The fight is on to defend jobs and conditions photo Paul Mattsson

represent the working class.

Privatisation is a setback for the thousands of postal workers and the CWU but this should not be seen as the end of the dispute. We are entering a vital stage in shaping what type of company the new Royal Mail will be.

Management will see an opportunity to attack our terms and conditions.

The government and the private investors will want the new company to adopt the working practices of other mail companies, with poorly paid workers on poor terms and conditions.

That's why our members have voted massively for industrial action.

We must insure that any agreement includes no breaking up of the company and franchising of

delivery offices or delivery rounds and no introduction of a cheaper second-tier workforce.

We must fight job losses and maintain and improve our pension schemes. We should go further and end the constant cuts, unmanageable workloads and the bullying management culture.

We must be prepared to increase the action if required and link the

## 4 November should be just the start

A Coventry postie

The scandalous fire-sale of yet another public utility was brought forward in an attempt to dissuade workers from voting 'Yes' in the ballot for action against privatisation. And the chief executive of Royal Mail, Moya Greene, even pledged to pay workers who cross the picket line a £300 bonus in December!

But workers realised that we stand to lose a hell of a lot more than 300 quid after the three-year protection of terms and conditions offered by Royal Mail expires – our jobs for a start!

Not to mention the erosion of our pension entitlements. Entitlements because Royal Mail took a pension payment 'holiday' for 13 years while we carried on paying in.

And now our pensions are under attack again. Even after the government 'guaranteed' our pensions. In exchange for the £25 billion of assets in the fund of course.

Royal Mail may now be a PLC. But the workers still treat your mail with TLC. We care about the service we provide. And we're willing to fight to show it.

The initial strike date is 4 November. Now the CWU should talk to the FBU, the teaching unions and any other union who is in dispute, to coordinate future strike action and show the ruling class who really runs the country.

# ENERGY FOR THE MILLIONS...

From 23 November, fuel prices are rising steeply. Days after one power conglomerate Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) put its prices up by 8.2% on average, British Gas (BG), the biggest of them all, increased its electricity charges by 10.4% and gas charges by 8.4%. People ask what on earth is going on in the energy industry? Kate Jones of Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party investigates.

One in four households regularly has to choose between heating their homes and eating. Confronted with anger at rapidly rising energy prices Prime Minister Cameron merely advised us to switch suppliers. But all members of the Big Six energy cartel are putting up prices!

A British Gas spokesperson suggested customers could get round the increase by consuming less power, though their adverts were still telling us exactly the opposite. Lib Dem energy secretary Ed Davey advised us to wear a jumper. He echoed the 2008 comments of Centrica's then managing director Jake Ulrich. When announcing huge rises then, he suggested his customers should wear two sweaters rather than one to reduce their bills! In fact, many people do wear several sweaters and many old people already spend much of the coldest months in bed to try to save money.

At September's Labour Party conference, Labour leader Ed Miliband announced that he would freeze energy prices for 20 months and introduce a new system of energy industry regulation.

Miliband pulled this policy like a rabbit out of a hat with no details of how it would be implemented. But what would stop companies simply ratcheting up prices before the election, or what kind of regulatory system would replace Ofgem?

The main problem is who controls the energy industry. The privatised companies' main goal is to get as big a profit as possible. The 'Big Six' duplicate each other. They don't have separate electricity or gas supplies, they don't have separate electric cables or gas pipes, their main function is to send out massive bills.

The Big Six energy companies protest against the very idea of a price freeze, but they still make inflation-busting price increases. Before the latest round, one company (E.ON) announced it will scrap its 'Stay-Warm' tariff for older people, meaning higher bills for tens of thousands of pensioners.

## Fastest price rises

The Big Six supply gas and electricity to over 50 million homes and businesses, with over 95% of domestic customers. They emerged from the energy sector's privatisation in 1990 and are now largely owned by European multinationals.

French and Spanish-owned companies are free to hammer customers with big price rises in the unregulated UK market, but in France and Spain prices, though high, are tied to inflation. UK electricity and gas prices are rising faster than anywhere else in the EU, doubling in just seven years.

In addition to the Six, National Grid Plc operates the transmission of electricity throughout the UK, making £2.3 billion profit last year. Big Six profits rose from £2.15 billion to £3.7 billion in the last three years, with around 60% of profits going straight to shareholders, rather than into new capacity or keeping prices low.

Before the latest price rises, the typical domestic dual fuel bill stood at £1,420 a

year, up from £1,100 in May 2010, an increase of nearly a third, while most workers' wages are flat-lining or being cut. British Gas made a post-tax profit of over £1 billion last year.

As well as extortionate profits from our bills, these companies benefit from massive tax-breaks and subsidies, which keep the UK hooked on fossil fuels. The Con-Dems ramped up tax breaks for fossil fuels and now for shale gas ('fracking'). So, while the industry moans about high taxes, some enjoy multi-million pound tax breaks, and escape the real costs of economic and environmental damage caused by pollution, waste and climate warming.

The Big Six bleat that freezing energy bills will mean less investment in renewables. But they hardly invest in renewables already - over half the £13 billion invested in new electricity generation since 2006 was in new gas plants. The UK currently ranks 25th out of 27 EU member countries in the renewables league table. Ironically, four of the Big Six are owned by European companies from countries higher up the league table than Britain!

In 2012, small solar panel systems owners contributed a 14% share of renewable energy generation, bigger than any one of the Big Six. Small local projects' success shows that people are prepared to move to green power, jumping through planning, legal and regulatory hoops to do so, with local cooperative wind, solar and hydro schemes generating power - and income - for communities.

Future renationalisation of the power industry need not cut across such schemes - indeed by providing a proper system of tariffs, and grant assistance, democratically determined - public ownership could help boost local projects. However, by themselves, they cannot offer a solution to the British economy's energy needs.

## Private profit or public good

In a capitalist 'free market', companies such as the Big Six will only invest where it brings them profit. Electricity and gas were first nationalised by the 1945 Labour government, who saw central, long-term planning as vital. Their manifesto stated: "Public ownership of gas and electricity will lower charges, prevent competitive waste, open the way for coordinated research and development."

But since privatisation, there has been no planning or coordination to keep prices low or convert effectively to low carbon energy. Even the proposed carbon-capture to allow a 'cleaner' form of electricity from coal and gas was quietly abandoned. Meanwhile highly polluting coal power stations are having their lives extended, thanks to the Con-Dems throwing the Big Six yet more subsidies.

Miliband's price-freeze is a popular move. Four out of five people agree that the Big Six maximise their profits at consumers' expense. However, it is just tinkering with the problem. If it were possible to effectively regulate the energy market then wouldn't the last Labour government's energy secretary have done so - his name was Ed Miliband!

Even a threat of minor tinkering with their profits prompted the Big Six to threaten to turn the lights out - effectively a capitalist strike against British society. If Miliband is serious about tackling energy prices he would renationalise the energy industry - but New Labour is ideologically committed to defending capitalism and supporting big business, whatever its conference rhetoric.

If these capitalist firms claim that the money is not there or refuse to cooperate, the unions should build on their own members' anger and that of the wider public to create a mass campaign for the

renationalisation of this industry. It should never have been sold off into private hands in the first place.

"They should take up the call: 'Open the books!' This means we need to look at the accounts of the energy giants. Where have all the profits gone? At the top, money vanishes into massive salaries and bonuses for top employees and huge dividends for shareholders. The cash is there to prevent this double-figure inflation in price hikes.

## Nationalise

Let elected workers' representatives run the nationalised energy industry under democratic control. The only way to get cheap, sustainable energy is to return the industry to public ownership with immediate nationalisation of the 'Big Six'. A Mirror online poll found 94% would like to see energy returned to public ownership. There is no need to compensate the fat cat owners, although small shareholders would be compensated in cases of need.

Across the country trade unions and protest groups are organising to oppose fracking and environmental destruction. Linking up with all who demand nationalisation will be key. We should also fight for a socialist society in the interests of consumers and workers rather than capitalists' profits.

We could aim for a properly planned, carbon-free energy system, not run bureaucratically as it was in the past, but managed democratically, centred on committees of elected representatives of energy workers and the wider community. Decisions on major projects, like the proposed Severn Barrage, would be made democratically.

A publicly owned Green Energy company would construct solar panels and wind turbines and research new forms of renewable energy. A nationwide programme to ensure every home is properly insulated and fitted with energy-efficient appliances could reduce domestic energy demand by 40%. Similar measures in shops, offices and factories could save even more. This would also create thousands of much-needed jobs.

The government's aggressively free market attitude towards energy is summed up well in their deal with EDF and Chinese investors for Hinkley Point nuclear power plant. This protects shareholders' profits while boosting unsafe nuclear power and risking sky-high electricity prices for decades (see article page 11.)

In rural areas, where mains gas is unavailable, many currently depend on oil for heating, at the mercy of an unregulated market and causing high rates of fuel poverty. A nationally controlled and owned oil supply system would address this, until green alternatives can be implemented.

These measures would create thousands of skilled jobs in construction, power generation and distribution and in making equipment. Local community schemes could become part of a national plan with guaranteed tariffs to sell electricity to the grid, money to use for the benefit of their communities.

New homes and businesses would be built with much improved energy efficiency as well as being fitted with solar and other energy-generating technology, while older buildings would be retrofitted to similar levels. Bills would be kept affordable, no one would be 'cut off' as a result of poverty. Energy could be planned for the benefit of us all, not for the profits of a few.



## 2007-2011 DIVIDEND PAYOUT RATE

Centrica/  
British Gas **74%**  
EDF **58%**  
E.ON **56%**  
npower **57%**  
Iberdrola/Scottish Power **24%**  
SSE **63%**

Source: Bloomberg report for Greenpeace

# ...NOT THE MILLIONAIRES



## A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME INCLUDES:

- Freeze fuel prices now but don't stop there! We call for the immediate nationalisation of the energy industry with compensation only paid to shareholders on the basis of proven need.
- A democratically controlled, publicly owned, energy industry should put lower prices and protection of the environment first, not the vast profits, dividends and pay-outs to rich bosses and shareholders.
- A democratic socialist plan for energy should be worked out internationally involving workers in the energy sector, scientists, community and environmental organisations and the wider working class.
- This plan should aim to replace fossil fuels with massive investment into renewable energy - such as wind, wave, solar and geothermal energy sources. No to nuclear power.
- For a democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, implemented in a way that safeguards the environment.

## BIG PROFITS, LOW INVESTMENT THE 'BIG SIX' ARE:

- **CENTRICA/BRITISH GAS** - one of Thatcher's flagship privatisations. Centrica CEO Sam Laidlaw pockets a whopping £36,000 a week (and is fighting to retain his £2 million bonus) while the outgoing British Gas boss is walking away with over £13 million in pay shares and pension.
- **EDF ENERGY** - French-owned, with coal and gas-fired facilities, and eight nuclear power stations.
- **E.ON ENERGY** - German-owned. Although claiming to be 'one of the world's leading renewables companies', it invested just £2 billion in UK capacity since 2006, two thirds in renewables.
- **NPOWER** - also German, owns and operates nine power stations, the biggest investor - including renewables - in the UK over the last several years.
- **SCOTTISH POWER** - owned by Spanish multinational Iberdrola, which claims to be global leader in wind energy. Iberdrola is currently trying to shed its 50% stake in the UK nuclear consortium NuGen, which owns Sellafield. Must have seen which way the wind is blowing!
- **SSE** - formed from the old Scottish Hydro-Electric, Southern Electric, and SWALEC. The second largest supplier of electricity and natural gas in the UK. Britain's largest generator of renewable energy, but this is mainly Scottish hydro-power, constructed in the 1950s, under public ownership!

**British Gas**

Freezing Pensioners, not prices!

## A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME TO SOLVE THE ENERGY CRISIS

Pete Dickenson, author of *Planning for the Planet*, wrote in the Socialist that "the wider adoption and further development of existing technology, such as wind, wave and solar power" can only be realised "by eliminating the power of the big corporations."

"This means nationalising the main industries that dominate the economy. This will need to be done throughout the world, encompassing the 147 multinational corporations that recent research has shown dominate the globe."

"Two related factors underlie nearly all environmental threats - the quest for profit by big corporations and the inevitable tendency of competitive markets to degrade the environment. The task is urgent. It must involve the political re-orientation of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally with a socialist programme."

"As a first step, this will require the creation of new mass workers' parties to replace the discredited former workers' organisations. These parties, such as the Labour Party in Britain, have totally failed over decades to implement programmes to reverse the degradation of the planet..."

change, decisive action needs to be taken now, but there is no sign of this happening due to the rivalries between the main industrial powers. It falls on the shoulders of the international workers' movement to implement a programme to tackle climate change [and the energy crisis] - replacing capitalism with a democratic socialist system."

## Planning for the Planet: How Socialism Could Save the Environment

By Pete Dickenson

Order from [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)  
£9.95 plus p&p



# Turn anger into action: join the socialists

From 19 to 25 October Socialist Party branches are organising a recruitment week to put special emphasis on building our party. Here members report on the campaign stall which started the week. See [socialistparty.org.uk/articles/17104](http://socialistparty.org.uk/articles/17104) for details of meetings in your area.

## Southampton

People in Southampton are angry about everything! That was the conclusion from the Southampton Test branch stall as part of the 'Join the Socialists' week of action. And that anger is palpable, from the pensioner who has worked for decades before being forced to live on a meagre £130 per week, to the woman with a four year old daughter being sanctioned by the jobcentre for six weeks and forced to visit a food bank.

Socialist ideas and our strategy to defeat the cuts are able to give people hope that things can change.



The enthusiasm for our ideas was demonstrated by very vocal support for our call for the energy companies to be nationalised and run in the interests of ordinary people rather than profit. Many people left their details to find out about joining the Socialist Party and the fight to make these ideas a reality.

**Josh Asker**

## Coventry

Members of the Socialist Party were out in Coventry city centre, building support for socialist ideas in opposi-

tion to the capitalist system. Party member Dan Crowter who is also a leading figure in the Coventry Against the Bedroom Tax campaign, commented: "What is striking is the anger out there. With the recent announcements from the utility companies that they are going to raise their already high prices even further, many

people will be forced to 'heat or eat' this winter. None of the big three parties are talking about the solution - which would be to bring all privatised utilities back into public ownership run under democratic workers' control. "I would urge all of those thousands of people who

regularly vote Socialist in Coventry to seriously consider helping the socialist cause, by donating, subscribing to the Socialist, and by joining the Socialist Party."



their contact details to continue the discussions. With printed copies of all the petitions we have used recently in the area on the stall, you could see the scope of work the branch takes on. 250 leaflets advertising our next meeting were distributed.

Usually our stalls focus on one campaigning issue such as the NHS, bedroom tax or energy prices. Both new and longer standing members found it very encouraging to instead focus specifically on talking to people about socialism and joining the Socialist Party.

**Helen Pattison**

## East London

East London branch of the Socialist Party had a large stall in Ilford on 19 October. We sold papers and asked people to join the party. Many more people than usual are planning to come to our meeting and gave us



## TUSC candidates stand up against austerity

### Nottingham

Grant Shapps said at the 2013 Conservative Party conference: "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, I think they can do another 10%."

This is the reward for what both Nottingham Labour councillor Graham Chapman and the Green Party byelection candidate describe as "managing" the cuts.

TUSC candidates do not believe in "managing" injustices, we believe in fighting them. That is why I'm stating in the 7 November Dales ward byelection. Just imagine if councillors said "enough is enough, we will not pass on the cuts" and used some of the city's £133 million reserves as a stop gap, while building a campaign to demand the money we need from the government. TUSC councillors are prepared to lead that fight.

**Cathy Meadows**

### Sefton

At the 7 November byelection in Derby ward in Labour-run Sefton, only one candidate has a track record of supporting the trade union movement: TUSC's Graham Woodhouse. Thousands of Bootle residents are hit

**TUSC AGAINST CUTS**

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

by the bedroom tax. Labour in Sefton has cut £71 million from services, increased already-high service charges and is closing another seven libraries. The Labour council is simply doing what the Tories tell it to do.

Graham is a branch secretary for the PCS civil service union, and is also on the union's north west regional committee and the PCS Department for Transport group executive committee.

**Peter Glover**

### Stoke

Unite and Socialist Party member Liat Norris is standing for TUSC in the 14 November Stoke-on-Trent byelection in the Baddeley, Milton and Norton ward. TUSC will be the only party that is prepared to make a stand against all cuts. The Labour-run city council has already cut £77 million, decimating jobs and

services. Council leader Mohammed Pervez has now announced further eye watering cuts of £100 million over the next four years.

It's not surprising therefore that there is a seething anger against the plans to carry out further savage cuts while blowing a minimum of £50 million on a new and unnecessary council HQ!

**Stoke Socialists**

### Merseyside

Liverpool TUSC will be challenging the Riverside council seat made vacant by deputy mayor Paul Brant's resignation. Brant, who was also cabinet member for finance, referred to vicious cuts as 'savings'.

Brant remains chair of Riverside Housing, and we emphasise our implacable opposition to the bedroom tax. A further tranche of £150 million is now proposed which will savage the city's remaining services.

TUSC demands that the council defends jobs and services and that the city's financial reserves be used to restore services already cut. We call for a campaign of resistance to this millionaires' government.

**Tony Mulhearn**

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  
Speakers include Bob Crow, RMT general secretary  
Saturday 26 October, 12-4pm  
New Meadow Street Labour Club  
193-195 North Rd, Preston PR1 1YQ  
More info: 07795 218 409

## Swansea socialists oppose National Front: Fight racism with unity against cuts

### Claire Job

Swansea Socialist Party Branch Secretary

Swansea's Labour council will make £45 million of cuts to services and jobs over the next three years, under the name 'Sustainable Swansea'!

On Saturday 19 October, Socialist Party members arrived in Swansea city centre to petition and fight back against these crippling cuts. However, we found the far-right, racist National Front (NF) on the streets of Swansea with flags and banners spreading hatred and intolerance.

We took on the NF head on. We set up our stall on their pitch and opposed the divisiveness of racism with unity in fighting cuts. We explained to passers-by that the answer to defending jobs and services is to unite working class people.

We all face massive attacks on our living standards; we all use the same

services which are being cut to the bone, regardless of our race, culture or religion. It's the 1% who are to blame, the super-rich, the multinationals and the corrupt banking system, that put profits above the needs of people.

Joined by other left and anti-fascist groups, we campaigned, petitioned, explained and won support from young and old for our position of no tolerance to the NF and no tolerance to a Labour council passing on Tory cuts.

Racism and prejudice feeds off misery and the cuts being implemented by the council will certainly lead to lots of misery for working class people in Swansea.

It is because Labour doesn't offer a lead, because it accepts these spending cuts almost without challenge, that groups like the NF feel they are welcome to campaign in the city centre. Well they're not!

So join the socialists in a united fight against all cuts.

## Car appeal

The Socialist Party national office's estate car has finally packed up after many years of sterling service. The estate was extremely useful for demos, trade union conferences and other events as it could take a huge amount of material - placards, tables, gazebos etc - and saved thousands of pounds in van hire.

We are launching an appeal for any member who has or might

know of an estate car, MPV or small van that is reliable, mechanically sound (MOT) and in decent condition that they would be willing to donate to the party.

Please contact Hannah Sell or Ken Douglas at the national centre on 020 8988 8777.

**Congratulations to Drew Walton, who ran the Leicester Marathon on 13 October with a bucket and sold 25 copies of the Socialist and raised £85 fighting fund while running!**

## Get involved

I'd like to join the Socialist Party  I'd like more information about the Socialist Party

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# France: Deep malaise marks 'la rentrée'

## A fighting, working class left remains to be built

Clare Doyle (CWI Secretariat) and Leila Messaoudi (Gauche Révolutionnaire, CWI in France)

The return to work after the summer holidays in France, as in other southern European countries, is often seen as a time when the struggle of workers and students will be renewed, even taken up a level from the previous year. Not in 2013! This year's 'rentrée' has been characterised by a deep malaise.

As September started, the financial press in France was delighting in a 'reprieve' for the economy - growth of 0.5% at the most! Another piece of 'good' news was a lower monthly figure for unemployment. In fact, only a new way of calculating unemployment resulted in a lower figure! It remains at over 10% and for young people between 15% and 24%. New job cuts have been announced in every sector of the economy - Air France, Michelin, Danfoss, Technibel...

Nearly three million children in France are living in poverty and yet the Socialist Party (PS) government is launching a new attack on allowances for families with children at school. Budget cuts of €14 billion are on the agenda for 2014. In September, the cost of food and of electricity went up by 11%. In the countryside poverty is palpable; uprooted vines lie in piles at abandoned vineyards, villages are deserted as young people leave in search of an income.

The retirement reform that is presented as a 'mini-reform' is in fact a severe blow for present wage-earners and pensioners. It means a rise in contributions, taxation on what we pay into the scheme and an increase in the age at which you can leave work with the full pension - probably to 67 for those born after 1973 who have jobs.

### No choice?

The government's approach gives the impression of having no choice but to make the majority of the population pay for the crisis. But the facts suggest otherwise: the finance minister, Pierre Moscovici, has announced a lightening of the tax burden - compensation to the bosses in exchange for a tiny increase in their contributions, which they do not pay from their own pockets anyway. Gone into oblivion are Hollande's election scare stories about 75% taxation of big fortunes, gone is the talk of nationalisation for companies like Petroplus and Arcelor Mittal.

In the face of a lowering of conditions at work and of living standards, there is action being taken by workers affected; sporadic and sometimes longer action is taken, but separate from each other.

The 'Days of Action' called by the CGT (major trade union federation) against the retirement legislation started with 10 September, which was too soon after the rentrée to be mobilised for. Then a week of action was announced for 7 October and again very little was done. On the final 'Day of Action' in this round - 15 October - only the most battle-hardened workers took strike action and went on local demonstrations with little hope of affecting the legislation which has now gone through parliament.

Many people will be wondering what use it is to be on strike, to lose a day's pay, if it changes nothing. To be on strike, in view of the low wages

and precarious jobs, must serve some purpose, either in gaining something in the workplace or in a broader sense. A genuine one-day general strike is needed to confront the government and the plans of the big bosses to throw people out of work.

At present, no left party or trade union is taking up a serious fight against the bosses or the government. The government's attacks on workers are still moderate compared with other countries; the fear of provoking a generalised confrontation between the classes is ever present in France.

With the exception of the National Front (FN), now with a local by-election victory in Brignoles (South-East) under its belt, none of the main political parties is confident of its future.

The government of president Francois Hollande and prime minister Jean Marc Ayrault is not carrying out policies fundamentally different from right-wing ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy and his UMP party. Hollande is doing nothing decisive to show even the slightest opposition to big business. The 'socialists', in spite of their crippling unpopularity, may still be the best option for the capitalist class to push through their 'reforms'.

### The National Front

The right is in disarray and is having difficulty recovering from the blow inflicted on Sarkozy through the ballot box by the majority of workers and young people. In fact, at bottom, the UMP has difficulties because, apart from its style of government, very little separates it from the policy of the PS-Green government.

In this context, the FN presents itself as the only party in opposition to the PS and UMP. It has had this approach for 40 years but what is different today - after the left governments under Mitterand, Jospin and now Hollande - is that the 'left' in government is not pretending its policies are pro-worker. Their open anti-worker politics are accompanied by a justification that is racist. The PS no longer says the problems are the fault of the big bosses.

The interior minister, Valls, has adopted outright racist language in relation to the Roma in France. This approach has been highlighted by the deportation last week of a Roma school student, Leonarda. When she was taken off a school bus to be deported to Kosovo with her family, big protests and school student strikes erupted demanding she be returned to France.

Hollande, aiming to pacify the protests, said the girl could return to finish her studies, but without her family - only leading to further outrage against the president and his government.

### Real opposition needed

This absence of a stand against capitalism and racism by the PS benefits the FN. It can falsely present itself as a party of opposition while it is against workers - for retirement at 67, for example - and fundamentally for capitalism. It is in this way that it can continue to profit from this political vacuum particularly at the time of the next elections.

Those who are fighting the closure of their workplace or against a PSE ("Plan to Save Jobs") or fighting for better wages, have to be able to take up the struggle immediately and



School students protest against deportations



President Hollande and Prime Minister Ayrault

cannot count on this government to defend them. Against redundancy plans, against the destruction of retirement rights, against the deterioration of our living conditions, our working conditions and our education rights. In the face of racism and islamophobia, workers, young

him positively.

Today, if the Left Front wants to put up real opposition to current policies, it should take advantage of its position and appeal to all those who want to oppose the government to fight and make a broad call for organising and building the struggles.

### Divisions

But the Front de Gauche (Left Front) is under severe pressure. As local and European elections approach in the spring of next year, the Left Party and the Communist Party are divided on important issues.

The Communist Party justifies the idea of an electoral alliance with the ruling Socialist Party (in Paris, for example) by saying they aim to push the SP back to the left. But if the latter could go back, it would only be under pressure from mass mobilisations, not under the impact of an election result.

Among the population, a large number of people reject this society of precarious jobs, of poverty, which leaves more than 25% of its young people unemployed and also dictates how to dress, who to love, what to think, while it is not even capable of providing the basic necessities of subsistence: work and shelter. The causes of all this are exploitation, the rule of profit, it is in the foundations of the capitalist system. The struggle for a different society - a socialist society - is necessary.

This absence of a stand against capitalism and racism by the Socialist Party benefits the National Front. It can falsely present itself as a party of opposition

people and pensioners must be able to make their voices heard. We need a real opposition of the left against the government and the bosses which draws together all those who want to struggle.

Who is fighting for these interests at the moment? To the left of the PS there are several political forces. In 2012, the candidacy of Jean-Luc Mélenchon for the Left Front, was widely supported and a whole section of the population still looks on

### 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:



### Greece: After the Syriza congress

Party battles promise to be as hard as the Greek class struggle

Andros Payiatsos, Xekinima (CWI Greece)



### China: "Release Wu Guijun" - protests around the world on 23 October

Shenzhen factory workers' representative held by police for five months

From [chinaworker.info](http://chinaworker.info)

## 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.

**Deprivation**

On our weekly Socialist Party stall, we met a woman who runs a café in a deprived area of Mansfield. She said most people in the area had had their benefits cut or stopped.

In recent times, she had seen her takings halve. She sometimes feeds people and pays for it from her own pocket. Some people are struggling so much that they turn up at the café at the end of the day to ask for any scraps of food left over.

The starkness of what she said took me aback. In how many other places are there similar situations? The woman was very clear about who was to blame - the banks and the rich who gambled money that could have been used to pay for the jobs and services ordinary people should have as a right, and the politicians who have let it happen. Ordinary people are realising that austerity is for the long term. They know who is to blame, and are desperate for an alternative. The ideas we put forward in the Socialist Party, the need for a new workers' party and the replacement of capitalism with socialism, are resonating.

**Karen Seymour, Mansfield**

taking 'robust action' by making the energy companies 'put people on the lowest tariff'.

But if everyone was on the lowest tariff, that means no one is on the highest, rip-off tariffs and so some companies would still go bust - unless of course they raise the lowest tariff so it's only a few quid a year lower than the high one, which is exactly what they would do, if they ever thought for a minute that Cameron meant what he says.

Lesson 1: You can't control what you don't own. Nationalise the lot.

Lesson 2: Tories and Labour talk very similar tripe.

**Paul Gerrard, Salford**

**Slave driver of the year?**

I went into a JD Wetherspoon pub recently (purely in the interests of research you understand) and a sticker on the entrance door advised me that they had won some 'employer of the year' award.

I can only assume that none of their staff on zero-hour contracts were on the voting panel.

**Clive Walder, Birmingham Socialist Party**

**Bath child centre protest**

photo Jean Thorpe

Around 40 to 50 parents and children attended a protest outside a Bath and North East Somerset council meeting. The council proposes to cut up to 40% from their Children's Centre budget. Several parents spoke movingly at the council scrutiny committee about the impact these cuts would have. A petition of 200 names and the handprints of 30 children were handed in.

**Jean Thorpe**

**Shop around?**

The usual 'shop around' rubbish is Cameron's response to the massive embarrassment of British Gas price hikes on top of SSE.

9%! Try switching today, to n-power or E.ON, and find that in another month they'll have gone up 9% too!

You can't even begin to shop around unless you're on the Internet and 40% of people in Salford, like many deprived areas, aren't connected.

Cameron says Miliband's 'price freeze' will put the smaller companies out of business, just when 'we need more competition'. He reckons he has a better answer. He says the government is

**Too little too late**

Secretary of State Michael Gove is reportedly 'relaxed' about being condemned by all the teachers' associations. His view of educational theory, expressed on Question Time on the BBC was 'yadda yadda yadda'. This plays well with the Tory backwoodsmen whose votes he will need in his inevitable leadership bid.

His educational theory is epitomised by his 'Free Schools', free from educational theory, free from local authority support and most importantly free from qualified teachers.

It is small wonder that unqualified heads and teachers have found the job just a wee bit harder than they imagined.

While schools face cuts in every area, the Free School program has money to burn. An overspend of a billion pounds is something Gove is also 'relaxed' about.

Gove wrote a letter apologising to his French teacher which was published in the Radio Times. Too little too late. An apology to all teachers and the pupils whose future he has betrayed would be a start. For most of us Gove's head on a plate would be too little too late!

**Derek McMillan**

**Peaky Blinders**

Nick Hart's excellent review of the BBC drama Peaky Blinders (Socialist 782) points out that it was a fictional account of life in the early 20th century. In one episode the British police tortured to death a communist supporter.

Recent revelations about the police in the Stephen Lawrence case, Hillsborough and the infiltration of police spies in political groups show that people at the top of the capitalist system in real life seem prepared to go to great length to maintain their system.

This piece of fiction is making people ask how far today's state forces would go in clamping down on 'threats' to their system in the real world and how socialists should fight against their plans.

**Adam Freeman and Dave Boyes**

# Tunisia: Left-wing rapper, Klay BBJ, acquitted on appeal

## Small but important victory for freedom of speech

**CWI Tunisia**

The left-wing Tunisian rapper, Ahmed Ben Ahmed, alias Klay BBJ - who was initially condemned, in absentia, to 21 months imprisonment for songs allegedly "insulting officials and public morals" - was acquitted by an appeal court on 17 October.

Klay and fellow rapper Weld El 15 (Alaa Yaacoubi) were violently arrested on stage at a concert in the eastern town of Hammamet on 22 August.

Weld El 15 was beaten up by the police in front of the crowd. After his release, he went to hospital because of serious injuries. Klay was beaten up in police custody. Both were released but police confiscated their identity cards.

On 29 August, they were charged and tried in absentia on charges of having "assaulted an officer on duty", "attacked public morals" and "slandered". They were not informed in advance of the charges or the day of their court case.

Weld El 15 had already been given a two-year sentence in June for a song called Boulicia El Kleb (The Police Are Dogs), but was released in July following public outrage and solidarity protests.

In February 2013, when Klay BBJ was in Morocco, his mother received a 'visit' by two plain clothes police officers who warned that Klay should "stop producing songs talking about politics".

The lawyer said that Weld El 15, who has been on the run since his



**Klay BBJ**

conviction, would now also appeal.

Supporters of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) around the world expressed outrage at the conviction of these young politically engaged artists. A rap song produced by CWI supporters from five different countries demanded the charges be dropped.

A letter signed by 12 left MEPs at the initiative of Socialist Party Ireland MEP Paul Murphy, has contributed to Klay's release. The CWI welcome this important victory, part of the on-going battle in Tunisia against the attempts at curbing freedom of speech and silencing critical voices.

We also welcome the recent initiative of Tunisian rappers to form a national trade union to defend their rights against state repression. This can encourage linking the defence of the rights of artists, as well as the struggle of the youth from the poor

suburbs, from which the vast majority of Tunisian rappers come from, to the country's organised workers' movement.

**The fight goes on!**

The Ennahda regime has been using the penal code and methods inherited from the old dictatorial regime of Ben Ali to deal with opponents - police brutality, torture, arbitrary arrests, attacks on journalists, and political assassinations.

Even during the last appeal court session that decided on the fate of Klay BBJ, journalists and representatives of NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, were prevented by police from entering the tribunal. Meanwhile, dozens of musicians and other artists remain in jail or in hiding.

A national strike was staged on 3 September by the National Union of Tunisian Journalists in state-owned radio stations. This was against arbitrary appointments by the governing party Ennahda at the top of these media outlets, to defend the freedom of the press and against police censorship.

A battle has been won, but the struggle must go on! As Klay BBJ said in an open letter he wrote from prison: "Freedom of expression in this country is limited. I will always say the right word, and never curb my head down...No Pasaran!"

**A video of the police operation during the concert can be seen at: [youtube.com/watch?v=ZDpPKV6CIPc&feature=share&list=UU2pdLTVt8z3Fhx28Rkl4WQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDpPKV6CIPc&feature=share&list=UU2pdLTVt8z3Fhx28Rkl4WQ)**

# 200 say 'Tequila's got to go!'

**Mary Finch**

Leeds Socialist Students

"Tequila has got to go!" Almost 200 students marched and protested outside the Mezz Club in Leeds for Tequila UK's "Freshers Violation" night, following their use of rape as a marketing strategy.

Tequila UK uploaded a video of men being asked at the club night how they intended to "violate a fresher" - and were enthusiastic at responses like "I'm going to take advantage of someone" and "she's going to get raped".

This horrifying spectacle of rape culture sparked a huge backlash from people both on and off campus. The Feminist Society at Leeds University organised the hugely successful demonstration, involving Socialist Students and numerous student societies on campus, students from outside Leeds University and non-students as well.



photo Leeds Socialist Students

The petition to shut down Tequila UK, with over 3,000 signatures collected in under two weeks, was handed to the Mezz Club management at the demo. The equality and diversity officer of Leeds University Union plans to draw up a "zero tol-

erance" pledge for the union and the Mezz Club.

Socialists will not stand by while rape victims face the blame for their assault, while rape is trivialised, promoted and even used to sell club night tickets.

**Let Us Rise!****The Dublin Lockout - its impact and legacy**

Foreword by Joe Higgins, Socialist Party TD £5

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# What role can trade unions play in fighting welfare attacks?

## Youth Fight for Jobs statement

The PCS civil service trade union, a key supporter of Youth Fight for Jobs, has come under severe criticism on Twitter from Boycott Workfare for not organising its members to refuse to implement the government's attacks.

These misguided attacks raise important questions for the entire labour movement about how we can stop the Con-Dem austerity juggernaut. Youth Fight for Jobs explains that, with over six million members, fighting trade unions are central.

The PCS has spelt out its anti-austerity credentials in words and practice. It is ridiculous and false to claim that "PCS have done nothing" to oppose Con-Dem austerity and accuse PCS of "implementing Tory policies" and "letting [the] government off the hook".

It is a mistake to oppose a strike over pay by PCS members who work for Atos, arguing that "PCS union support Atos workers who abuse the disabled community". Boycott Workfare has even suggested that the problem is that DWP workers do not understand the guidance they have been given from management. This puts the blame for a disastrously draconian welfare system directly onto PCS members and away from the Tory government - this is "letting the government off the hook".

### PCS's record

PCS is one of Britain's most effective anti-cuts organisations and fighting trade unions. PCS was an initiator of coordinated strike action against attacks on public sector pensions in June 2011. This led into the tremendous two million strong public sector strikes in November of that year.

PCS has since campaigned for that action to be continued, as well as taking action alone. They have won victories which can inspire others to fight the cuts.

A clear distinction has to be made - PCS is not the same as the Con-Dem Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) headed by vicious Tory minister Iain Duncan Smith. PCS does not get to decide government policy. If it did, we'd all be in a much better position! PCS opposes the

The job of activists should be to fight for maximum unity in action between the trade unions, workers, unemployed and young people

horrific treatment of disabled people by the Con-Dem welfare system and has challenged the labelling of unemployed and young people as 'scroungers'.

Demands have been raised for civil service workers to refuse to participate in administering Con-Dem policy. The reasoning is understandable, but every strategy needs to be thought out carefully in terms of offering a good possibility of winning the objective. While this kind of action by PCS members may sound attractive, it is fraught with pitfalls. The job of some civil service workers



photo Paul Mattson

entails administering many brutal and disagreeable procedures, badly affecting all kinds of people such as welfare claimants, migrant workers, even those convicted of crimes.

But to refuse as individuals to carry out their job, or part of their job, would put workers immediately in jeopardy. In today's climate it could get them the sack. 25,000 workers have already lost their jobs in DWP since the Tories were elected in 2010. Trade union facility time is being undermined. Despite these threats some jobcentre workers have bravely blown the whistle on the sanctions being peddled by the Tories.

It is also worth remembering that the trade unions led many successful

campaigns to change objectionable laws and practices, such as ending legalised unequal pay for women or excluding racist activists from workplaces.

### Complications

It is a mistake to join the chorus of hate being thrown at the trade unions by the likes of the Daily Mail and the Tories - the job of activists should be to fight for maximum unity in action between the trade unions, workers, unemployed and young people. Duncan Smith, Francis Maude, and the rest of the Tory cabinet would like nothing more than to see the back of PCS, a massive block to achieving their austere-

ity policies. It is far better for the anti-austerity movement if Atos and jobcentre workers are in a strong union.

Boycott Workfare has said it's impossible for workfare to be administered without the unionised workforce of PCS. But recognising the potential power of the union is only part of the task. To refuse to participate in welfare reform as a whole trade union is by no means straightforward.

A case would have to be put that was generally agreed by PCS members as a realistic way forward. There would be understandable questions about why PCS members alone should bear the brunt of defeating this government on benefits. Even if there was confidence in this idea, while not an absolute obstacle, thanks to the anti-trade union laws it would not be possible to get a legal ballot, as the issue is 'political' and not a strict trade union grievance.

'Civil disobedience' and 'direct action', can be important elements of any campaign, but central to a movement capable of bringing down the Con-Dem government and ending austerity must be mass workers' action, starting with a 24-hour general strike.

PCS has been one of the main trade unions to make the call for coordinated strike action. Instead of attacking PCS we need other trade unions but also community campaigns and young, unemployed and disabled people, to come behind this call.

**See [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) for a fuller version of this statement and for an article by John McNally, vice president of the PCS**

# Big business lines its pockets from nuclear power bonanza

Pete Mason

You want generous, guaranteed energy prices, fixed for 35 years? No problem if you own a French or Chinese multinational company. Bad luck if you're an ordinary consumer.

Prime Minister David Cameron has 'kick-started' the nuclear industry with a big boost for the profits of French company EDF and two Chinese corporations who will build a nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point in Somerset. Meanwhile the situation in Fukushima, where Japanese nuclear power stations were destroyed by an earthquake and tsunami over two years ago, seems to worsen.

### Guaranteed profits

The Con-Dem government has negotiated 35 years of guaranteed profits to big business, promising the energy companies they can sell the electricity they produce at Hinkley at double the current wholesale market rate - the rate at which power generators sell their power to the energy suppliers. This huge subsidy will come out of our pockets through higher energy bills once the plant is running.

Massive subsidies have always been handed to the nuclear industry to cover the exorbitant costs of nuclear power, the extreme danger posed by nuclear reactors, and the unsolved problem of decommissioning nuclear waste - successive government's covert goal was always to facilitate nuclear weapons

production.

Nuclear energy is promoted as a low carbon alternative yet the dangers of Fukushima and nuclear waste show this is no alternative.

After the opulent profits and rich dividends have been extracted by owners and 'investors' all along the production chain, the fat-cat energy suppliers retail the electricity to us, the consumer, and we pick up the final bill.

Centrica, the corporate name of the former British Gas Corporation privatised by Margaret Thatcher in 1986, greedily demanded a higher subsidy than the Chinese and French corporations, so they lost out.

The Hinkley Point winners EDF and the Chinese corporations are state owned. All are run like voracious capitalist companies, but state-subsidised in order to grab a bigger slice of the world market.

If the last Labour government under the then energy minister Ed Miliband had renationalised the energy industry, the government would have had complete control over the situation from the start. But the Labour leadership rejects re-nationalisation.

### National plan

A state-owned energy industry could immediately plan to convert the country to solar, wind and tidal power supplies. A national plan could be drawn up, a scaled-up version of the ten-year plan implemented by the then nationalised British Gas in 1967-77, when a huge army of engineers efficiently con-



Making the point about nuclear power on a climate change demo photo Paul Mattson

verted 40 million appliances and 13 million gas customers from dirty coal gas to North Sea gas.

Energy minister Ed Davey warns that gas prices can only go up, so we'd better be glad we're paying extra for nuclear, or else 'we'll all be in trouble'. This contradicts all the recent government lies about fracking bringing endless cheap energy,

lies which were also followed by generous tax subsidies offered to fracking companies!

The cost of energy from coal, oil, gas and nuclear is not only to be calculated in the inflated subsidies and the huge bills we receive, but in the incalculable cost to the environment in which we live and suffer the consequences. By any long-

term measure, carbon-free green energy is far cheaper. It is short-term profit and insatiable competition between capitalist nations which prevents the harvesting of the free resources of the sun, wind and tides and instead chains us to escalating energy bills, soot, smoke and the ever-present danger of nuclear radiation.

# CAMPAIGN VICTORY FOR REBEL COUNCILLORS

## Local pool to be re-opened

In May 2012 Southampton elected a Labour council in the hope of ending the misery meted out by the Tories. Southampton's council staff had fought hard, striking to defend their pay and conditions and Labour had a mandate from the people of Southampton to protect local public services and jobs. The new administration, however, showed it intended to carry on with the Con-Dems' dirty work. Within months then Coxford ward Labour councillors Keith Morrell

and Don Thomas were suspended and then expelled from Southampton council Labour group for the 'crime' of opposing the closure of a swimming pool. Their stand received enormous support from the local community and across the city. They also received the backing of local council trade unions. Having set up a new group in 2012, Southampton Councillors Against Cuts, Don and Keith can now report on an important campaign victory:

Under intense pressure from the 'Save Oaklands Pool' campaign, Labour-led Southampton council has been forced to agree to refurbish and re-open the pool. A hold has been put on the planned demolition of the pool building and £1.25 million earmarked to do it up.

Everyone involved in the 'Save Oaklands Pool' campaign - users and staff, local residents, community groups, the trades unions representing council workers and members of the Socialist Party - deserve recognition for what they have achieved.

That recognition is being shamefully denied to them by Labour councillors, who closed the pool in

the first place, and who now want to take all the credit for 'saving' it!

We should remind everyone that last year the council leader said: "Oaklands Pool is closed and will stay closed. Get used to it!" But we refused to 'get used to it' and the campaign to save the pool from demolition began.

If it wasn't for the Oaklands pool campaign the building would have been demolished long ago, it was only the hard work of all of the above that forced Labour to re-think, finally doing a u-turn. Now we need to get Oaklands Swimming Pool open as soon as possible.

Right at the beginning of the campaign we demanded that the

Labour administration use some of the money it will get from selling the school site on re-opening the boarded-up swimming pool and giving it a major refurbishment. That demand has now, at long last, been adopted!

However the Labour council is still refusing to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the pool and is instead trying to push that huge task onto a voluntary community group to do the job for them, leaving former council workers at the pool out of their jobs.

We have always had reservations about the viability of this arrangement and believe the council should run the pool. Now the decision's



Keith and Don (centre and right) campaigning to save the pool photo Paul Mattsson

been made, the council should go full steam ahead and not waste any more time. Campaigners will continue to put pressure on to get work started immediately.

Keith and Don have proved in action that councillors do have a choice - it is possible for them to

refuse to implement the cuts, as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has always argued. They now sit on the TUSC steering committee and participate in the campaign to build a political alternative to all the austerity parties. See [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk) for more

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<b>Introducing socialism</b>	Are we naturally too greedy for socialism?	Is the Russian Revolution relevant today?	How would socialism actually work?
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<b>Fighting austerity</b>	Will there be a general strike in Britain?	65 years since its creation - can we save the NHS?	How can we beat the bedroom tax?
<b>Other</b>	What caused the 'great recession'?	40 years since Pinochet's bloody coup in Chile: what lessons of the coup need to be learnt	Zero-hours, organising the unemployed and the role of a trade union rep today
<b>Revolution and counter-revolution in the Middle East</b>	Egypt and Tunisia in turmoil	A cauldron of civil war - what programme should socialists put forward in Syria?	
<b>Political representation for the working class</b>	For councillors against the cuts - TUSC's electoral challenge	What form will a new mass workers' party take in Britain?	Forum: what conclusions should we draw from Miliband's 'clause IV moment'?
<b>Internationalism</b>	USA - can socialist ideas be built in the belly of the beast?	What future for Cuba?	Sri Lanka - 30 years since 'Black July' and the start of the Civil War: is a new period of struggle opening up?
<b>Anniversaries</b>	20 years on: the murder of Stephen Lawrence, police racism and the battle to stop the BNP	30 years on: Liverpool: a city that dared to fight	75 years on: the founding of the Fourth International
<b>Society</b>	Are socialists feminists?	Art, literature and socialism	Can capitalism deliver equality for disabled people?
<b>Other</b>	What's the role and relevance of a revolutionary party today?	Fracking, HS2 and nuclear power - socialist planning for the environment	European elections - how can socialists best counter Ukip?
<b>Other</b>	<b>Rally for Socialism</b> Saturday 2 November 6.30pm Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, NW1 2JB Speakers include Peter Taaffe - Socialist Party general secretary, Bob Crow - RMT transport union general secretary and a South African miner		South Africa - birth of the Workers' and Socialist Party

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