



STRIKING BACK!

Rob Williams
Socialist Party trade union organiser

Hundreds of thousands of workers are preparing to take strike action. This proves to the bosses and their Con-Dem government that the battle against their cuts is continuing.

Higher Education workers in UCU, Unison and Unite unions are striking together on 31 October.

Firefighters, members of the FBU, are on strike on Friday 1 November and the following Monday.

CWU postal workers and Crown Post Office workers are also out on Monday to send a defiant message to the government after Vince Cable's give-away sell-off of Royal Mail and the closure of post offices.

Probation workers in Napo are striking for 24 hours over Tuesday and Wednesday against privatisation.

Workers are painfully aware of the chasm between the supposed economic recovery and the catastrophe we are experiencing in our living standards.

The poisonous Tory media are crowing over the brutal terms that Grangemouth workers accepted to keep their jobs. They want to send the message to all workers - 'This is the real world and you have to accept it'.

But millions of workers facing the sky-high price rises from the fat-cat energy companies know all about the real world and are furious about it! In the last three years, official figures show that real wages in the UK have fallen by 5.5%.

No wonder that those in work, let alone people suffering on poverty benefits, are having to choose between food and heating their homes. (See page 3)

The decision of the leaderships of the NUT and NASUWT teachers' unions not to take national strike action as originally agreed doesn't tally with the mood of teachers on their regional strikes. In Lon-

don, thousands of teachers, mainly young, effectively blockaded the Department of Education offices. There, and in other cities like Bristol, thousands of teachers couldn't even get in to the packed strike rallies.

Likewise the hesitation from the TUC about naming a date for a 24-hour general strike does not match

Workers are painfully aware of the chasm between the supposed economic recovery and the catastrophe we are experiencing in our living standards

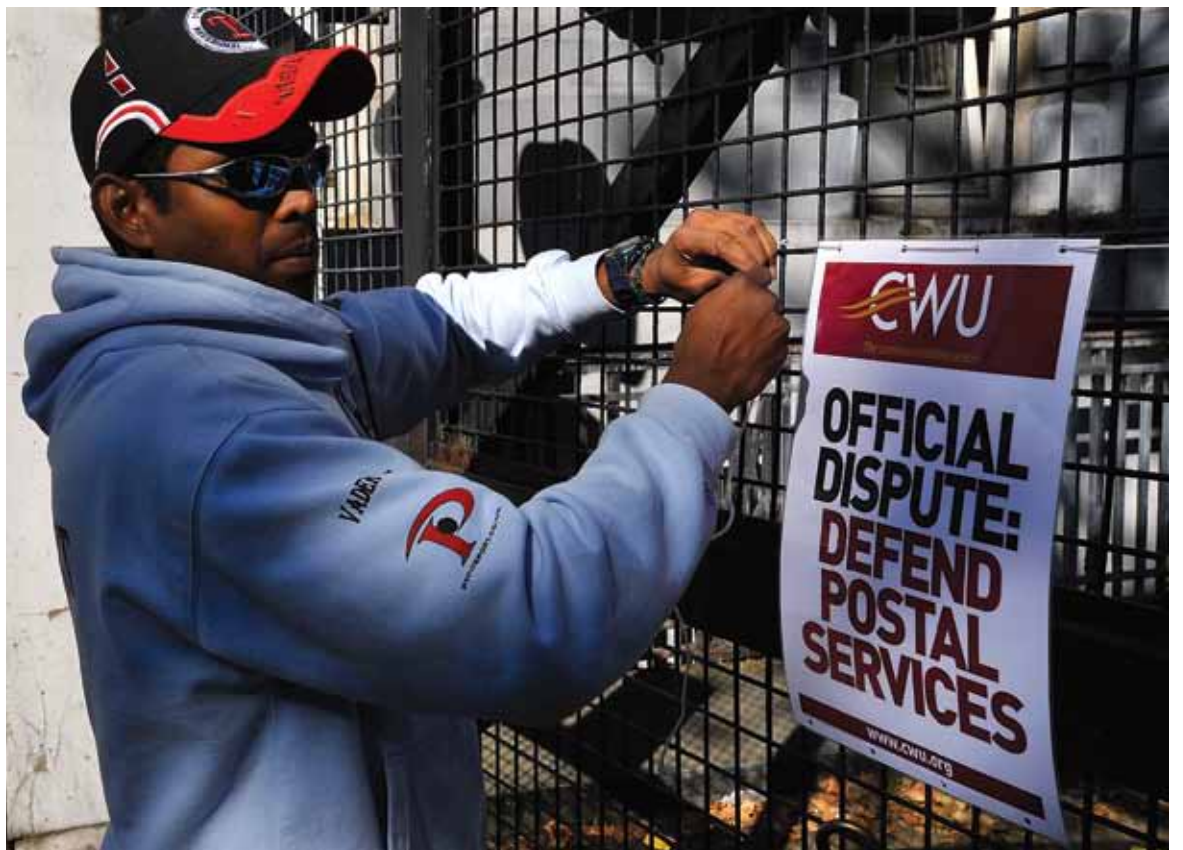
the boiling anger bubbling up among workers and all those suffering austerity.

The Tories and the bosses want Grangemouth to have the same effect as the defeat of the miners in 1985 and demoralise workers generally.

But the attacks on our jobs, living standards, and increasingly the very right to have an effective trade union, are relentless. It is becoming clear that to have anything that resembles a decent life means we have to fight and the best way is to fight together.

Unlike the Socialist Party the pessimists in the trade union movement may draw the conclusion from recent events that mass coordinated strike action, up to and including a 24-hour general strike, is now off the agenda indefinitely. But below the surface massive discontent exists in society. These strikes show that the potential still exists for mass action to force the Con-Dems back.

For more on Grangemouth see page 2. More on the other disputes on page 4



Postal workers, university staff, firefighters and probation officers are all striking photo Paul Mattsson

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Trade unions must learn lessons from Grangemouth setback

Ineos and its billionaire owner Jim Ratcliffe have announced a reversal of the company's plan to shut the petrochemical plant at Grangemouth. This follows a significant defeat for Unite on workers' terms and conditions, demanded by the brutal Ineos management as part of their "survival plan".

There were cheers at the mass meeting when the workers were told the plant would re-open. Having been told that 800 jobs were lost, it is understandable that the announcement was welcomed - at least for now. It will also bring relief to the around 2,000 sub-contracted workers at the site who were in the midst of being laid off.

As part of the deal Ineos will be bailed out to the tune of £134 million in Scottish and UK government grants and loan guarantees. The company claims it needs this to ensure a £300 million investment. After claiming the business was on its knees, Ineos is now saying the site has a 15 to 20 year future ahead of it. This is further proof that the company was lying about the so-called "financial distress" of the plant.

If this u-turn by the bosses was a result of being forced into a retreat by collective trade union action by Unite members, including an occupation of the plant, the reopening of Grangemouth would be seen as a step forward. However, this was not the case.

Unite's concessions

Instead Unite has agreed to sign up to no wage rises until 2016, cuts in bonuses resulting in a loss of up to £15,000, the tearing up of the final salary pension scheme, a three-year no-strike deal, and an end to full-time union conveners.

There was huge pressure on the shop stewards at Grangemouth following the closure announcement. More than half of the permanent workforce had been told their jobs were gone. The oil refinery was closed.

The Unite Scottish secretary, Pat Rafferty, was at that point urging that the union sign up to the company's demands.

In the absence of a fighting strategy by Unite to save the plant, and the building of a mass campaign across Scotland to demand that the Scottish/UK governments nationalise Grangemouth, the pressure proved too great for the shop stewards to resist.

We nevertheless recognise the commendable role the stewards and union activists have played over the last years in defending trade union rights and conditions at the plant, which was emphasised by the successful strike in 2008. This strength was also a key element in the victory of the Sparks construction electricians in 2012.

The union has suffered a significant setback at Grangemouth, which is one of the best trade union organised private sector workplaces in Scotland. It's a defeat that can embolden other employers to attack wages and conditions and trade union rights, unless all the lessons of Grangemouth are learned by trade unionists.

What could have been done to avoid this situation? A major campaign of victimisation against the union and senior shop steward, Stevie Deans, has been on-going for months. Stevie was suspended in July. This was lifted following the threat of a walkout. Ineos then hired a private firm to investigate Stevie's activities.

This was against the backdrop of Labour's suspension of Stevie Deans as chair of Falkirk Labour Party in June and the handing in of a dossier to the police urging an investigation into Unite, which emboldened the employers further.

The union organised a ballot for strike action over Stevie's victimisation, with an 81% vote in favour of strike action. A 48-hour strike was called for the 20/21 October.

There is clear evidence that Ineos, in all likelihood in conjunction with the UK govern-



Unite members at Grangemouth

ment, had been preparing for a confrontation with the union. Fuel had been stockpiled even before the strike was announced. And the attempt to decapitate the union leadership indicated the lengths to which the company was prepared to go.

In the run-up to the 48-hour strike Ineos announced they were going to put the plant into a prolonged "cold shutdown" rather than a short hot shutdown - a signal that they intended to keep the plant closed, effectively a lockout.

Unite's response, mistakenly, was to call off the strike over Stevie Deans' victimisation, offer no strikes until the end of 2013 and indicate that they wanted to negotiate changes in terms and conditions, rather than have them imposed by the company.

After talks broke down at Acas, the company said they intended to "go over the heads of the union" straight to the workers to ask them to sign up to new contracts on worse terms by 6pm on 21 October. Unite and the shop stewards called on workers to refuse to sign and over 70% of trade union members at the site supported the union's call.

Closure

On 23 October the company announced the petrochemical plant would close permanently with the loss of 800 jobs. The oil refinery would also remain shut. By 3pm that afternoon Unite, through its Scottish secretary, announced they had made a new offer to the company, effectively agreeing to sign up to the "survival plan".

On 24 October Len McCluskey said at Grangemouth: "There is nothing humiliating about negotiating plans to ensure jobs and communities are safe."

We agree that trade unions should fight to ensure jobs and communities are safe. But that is not what the Unite leadership has done.

This is the failed policy of concession bargaining - a policy of offering wage cuts, supporting cuts to pensions and even a long-term no-strike deal to "save" jobs. There are huge dangers for Unite if this became the norm, rather than a policy of fighting against all cuts.

There is no guarantee of a victory or even that a majority of workers with a gun to their heads would have supported a fighting strategy. But Unite members were not offered a fighting strategy.

Under the stewardship of Len McCluskey there has been a change in the culture of Unite. There have been important victories. But it's clear that the Unite leadership was not prepared for an all-out struggle against this particularly brutal capitalist employer.

Following the closure announcement, Socialist Party Scotland wrote: "An urgent mass meeting of Unite members should be organised. The shop stewards should draw up a plan of action to put to the workers to seek to defeat this act of corporate vandalism by Ineos."

"Decisive action by Unite, including the occupation of an appropriate part of the site, would gain mass support and apply huge political pressure on the Scottish government to carry through the nationalisation of the plant. Unite should now demand the nationalisation of Grangemouth."

"The STUC should call an immediate 'council of war' of trade unions and shop stewards from across the trade union movement to plan a mass solidarity campaign, including calling a Scotland-wide demonstration in the next couple of weeks."

A mass struggle could have lifted the spirits of the whole of the working class in Scotland and beyond with the real possibility of a victory, rather than a defeat and setback for the union.

The false policy of the Unite leadership towards the possibility of reclaiming the Labour Party for trade union interests was also a contributory factor in not coming out in favour of nationalisation at an early stage. Ed Miliband was personally responsible for the victimisation, and now the effective sacking, of Stevie Deans. His only other contribution was to welcome the union's concessions.

Socialist Party Scotland has consistently demanded the opening of Ineos' books and all its subsidiaries to scrutiny by the trade unions. This must be linked to campaigning for the nationalisation of the major corporations, whether profit or loss making, under democratic working class control and management.

Ineos' claims that Grangemouth was a £10 million a month loss-making site was a central part of their propaganda in trying to force concessions from workers and to extract further public money from the Scottish and UK governments.

Unite asked Richard Murphy, an accountant and a campaigner against corporate tax-dodging to review Ineos' public accounts. Murphy found that Ineos accounts imply that

they expect to make £500 million from Grangemouth alone by 2017 and that operating profits grew by 56% last year. Grangemouth chemicals made £7 million profit last year and £6 million the year before.

"Unlike any other company they decided to factor in investment as a loss," said Murphy. "They are using accounting rules I don't recognise." Ineos internationally also made a profit of over £2 billion in 2012.

Crowing media

Socialist Party Scotland completely rejects the idea put about by the crowing capitalist media that the union has been smashed at Grangemouth. Unite has made a big mistake in signing up to a three-year no-strike deal. They have also signed away an agreement that allowed for full time union representation on site.

This will, in the short term, give the employer the upper hand. Further attacks on the union and the shop stewards and the rights of workers are possible. Against the backdrop of a no-strike agreement it is vital that Unite rebuilds its strength and its membership.

As well as rebuilding its strength, the question of unofficial action can come to the fore. This tactic must be consciously discussed and planned, to help overcome the obstacle of the no-strike agreement.

This necessity is shown by the fact that in the aftermath of the deal the company is showing just how vicious and vindictive it will be towards the workforce.

Ineos' intentions were reported in the Sunday Mail on 27 October. As expected: "Ineos said yesterday that job cuts would still take place - and workers who refused to accept a 'sign or be sacked' contract will get a smaller pension." It has also been reported that Stevie Deans has resigned his job, in effect a sacking.

The events at Grangemouth are a serious setback for Unite and the wider trade union movement. Many active Unite members will be shocked at what has happened.

The task now is to discuss what programme is needed to defeat these kinds of attacks, to work to ensure the rebuilding of trade union strength at Grangemouth and, over time, winning back what has been lost.

This is edited from a statement by Socialist Party Scotland. See www.socialistparty.org.uk for the full version of the statement.

Stop rip-off energy prices

Nationalise the Big Six!

Ronnie Job

I hate SSE because of a boiler not installed when promised, leaving my family, including two young children, without hot water for four weeks this summer. I was hardly surprised when SSE became the first of the 'Big 6' energy suppliers to increase prices this winter. Given the new prices (up around 8.2%), despite the eventual installation of the new boiler, we may have to do without hot water this winter too!

The responses to Ed Miliband's promise that the next Labour government would freeze gas and electricity prices for 20 months were laughable accusations of 'Marxism' from Prime Minister David Cameron, and threats of shortages by the energy suppliers.

Apparently it is impossible to fix prices for families, many of whom will face the choice to 'heat or eat' this winter. But it is possible to fix profits for multinational energy suppliers; those contracted to build the new nuclear power station will be guaranteed generous sale prices for their electricity for 35 years!

Welcome as a freeze would be, to many hard up families, it won't

bring any relief this winter and energy companies will be able to make greater price increases before the election.

Cameron suggested that customers could switch provider to get a better deal. But when one provider raises prices, the others quickly follow; British Gas, Npower and Scottish Power have already followed SSE's example in raising prices.

The number of tariffs is deliberately confusing; SSE was fined £10.5 million earlier this year for tricking customers into paying more than necessary by making them think they were on the cheapest tariff. Scottish Power was fined £8.5 million this month, for misleading doorstep and telephone sales, in the very same week they put up their prices by an average of nearly 9%.

When energy was privatised it was claimed customers would get a better deal. But each year, price rises are several times inflation, matched only by executives' bonuses and shareholders' dividends.

The Tories, Liberals and Labour, all see 'fairer' competition and better regulation as the solution. But every year there is a suspicion that suppliers have acted like a cartel to fix prices and every time, an invest-



Ed Miliband - talking tough on energy prices but doing little

tigation by the toothless regulator, Ofgem, clears them of collusion.

Regulation and competition has failed to protect customers under every government since privatisation, including the last Labour government, who's energy secretary was? That's right, Ed Miliband!

At the end of the day, you can't control what you don't own and the only way to relieve working class families of the pressure of deciding to either heat their homes or feed themselves, is to take the energy companies into common ownership, under democratic workers' control, as part of a socialist plan of energy production and the wider economy.

Domestic dual energy prices average annual bill

Oct 2012	£1,250
Oct 2013	£1,320

Wholesale gas prices average annual bill

Oct 2012	£600
Oct 2013	£610

'Big Six' profit margin per household

Oct 2012	£45
Oct 2013	£95

Source: Ofgem

The 'Big Six' collectively made profits of £3.7 billion in 2012

TV Review

Brand new revolution?

Suzanne Beishon

Russell Brand has not covered himself in glory throughout his career so far: from the extreme womanising and sexist attitudes, the presenting of rubbish TV shows to the just plain annoying.

So when I saw the Russell Brand v Paxman interview doing the rounds on various social media sites I was extremely sceptical. Watching however, I was open-mouthed. In between the quick jibes and quite cleverly worked silliness, Brand unleashed an absolutely damning indictment of capitalism and the inequality and misery it means for millions. And, in the face of Paxman's crude interviewing, a call for revolution.

Paxman was reduced to weakly trying to undermine Brand for his never having voted, pour scorn on belief in revolution and question his right to even having an opinion on politics at all.

Brand tore Paxman's lines of argument apart, explaining how the pre-

sent system leaves the majority of the population disengaged through a lack of real representation, and the inevitability of an eventual explosion of anger against the capitalist system.



Brand - thinking radical

Millions have viewed the interview online. The New Statesman edition that Brand edited and con-

tains his 4,500-word passionate editorial on revolution is flying off the shelves. It's clear his anger and feisty way of putting forward the idea of an alternative has really captured people's attention (whatever they may think about his well-acknowledged attitudes on other issues). People's experience of capitalism means increasing numbers are open to these ideas.

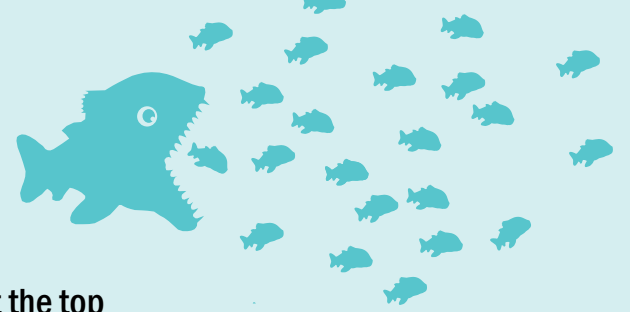
Paxman kept insisting that Brand was not qualified to comment on politics. This is what the government does too, in trying to make us feel we don't have the right to a voice or a say.

Paxman was left utterly exposed as the capitalist media pawn that he is, left speechless by the quick-witted comedian who seems to be moving in the right direction.

I've already re-watched the video three times. Now I'm looking forward to Socialism 2013 where we can discuss and debate all the ideas needed to make socialist change happen.

Come to socialism 2013, see www.socialism2013.org

Them...



Tough at the top

Most workers given a P45 are lucky to get a week's statutory redundancy pay for every year employed. But not if you're an MP who was given the elbow in the last cabinet reshuffle. All departing ministers are entitled to three months' severance pay if they do not get another cabinet post within three weeks. This means that each Tory and Lib Dem MP involved will get up to £17,000 tax free, on top of their parliamentary salary; plus expenses, plus outside consultancy fees, plus...

Creative accountancy

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt's attempt to blame 'health tourism' for wrecking the National Health Service (NHS) instead of the government's cuts and privatisation policies has hit the rocks.

According to research by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and University of York, 18 NHS Trusts generated £42 million of income in 2010 from overseas patients. So much then for Hunt's much publicised claim that 'health tourists' are costing the NHS £1.4 billion.

As the Socialist (issue 784) pointed out, Hunt's real aim is to establish a (massively expensive) system of charging in the NHS that will later be applied to us all.

Filthy rich? Pay up!

The Tories love sending vans round London telling immigrants to go home. Why don't they send vans round Belgravia and the City telling the rich to pay their taxes - £120 billion every year is dodged? They could say: "Are you filthy rich? Pay your taxes or face arrest!"

Thanks to Ken Douglas

Double Dutch

Who would order a "Dutch Sandwich" or a "Double Irish"? Any number of giant multinational

companies, as they are the pub grub names describing the tax avoidance scams of corporations.

These tax avoidance scams involve channelling mega-profits through Irish or Netherlands registered companies to zero corporate tax havens like Bermuda.

Despite all the hype from US President Obama and UK Prime Minister Cameron at June's G8 Summit about 'getting tough' on tax avoidance, these gaping loopholes will remain open after lobbying by corporations.

Meanwhile the UK government, again after intensive corporate lobbying, will allow high street names like BHS, Maplin, Pret, etc, to avoid £500 million in taxes by using the "quoted Eurobond exemption" loophole.

Payments by results

The banks who 'advised' the government on the bargain basement sell-off of Royal Mail were paid handsomely. And then paid again. And again.

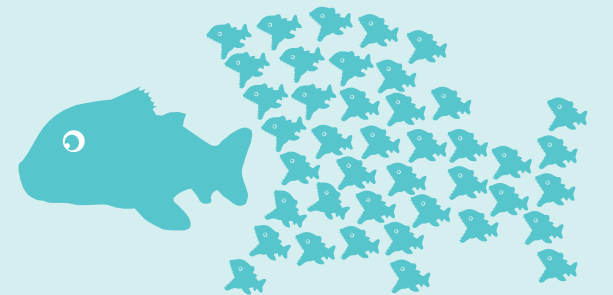
Firstly they received £17 million in fees for their advice. They were also allocated 13 million shares. These shares have since shown a profit of £29 million as the share price rose by over two-thirds to 555p. Some people might wonder in whose interest these advisers were advising?

Automatic care

Are 15-minute care visits to elderly people long enough? The short answer is, of course, no. But Worcestershire county council are to consider ending such visits and replacing them with "assistive technology". Telehealth systems will monitor vital signs (if you can remember how to use them or where you put the instructions), and are linked to a call alarm. In addition, telecare will remind you to take your medication or detects when you fall, by which time you have already fallen over. Forget Big Society, meet Big Technology

Thanks to Pete McNally

...& Us



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

What we did

While doing a 'join the socialists' stall in Leytonstone, east London, a bus driver beckoned me onto the bus while it was stopped at traffic lights. He clearly wanted one of our leaflets, explaining why people should join the Socialist Party, so I stepped onto the bus and gave him one. As I turned to get off he said "give them to everyone on the bus"! So I leafleted the bottom deck and told everyone that the driver wanted them to have the leaflet. Everyone took them and one person said he was already a supporter.

Sarah Wrack, Waltham Forest Socialist Party



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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University workers fight back

A Socialist Party member in University and College Union (UCU)

31 October will be a day of coordinated strike action by UCU, Unison and Unite members working in universities. This is the first UK-wide joint action between these Higher Education unions, demonstrating the anger that their members feel about the employers' insulting 1% pay increase.

Even pro-capitalist commentator Will Hutton, writing in the Observer notes that: "The real wages of academics have fallen by 13% since 2008, one of the largest sustained wage cuts any profession has suffered since the Second World War."

This is despite the scandalously high fees charged to students, which have subsidised lavish pay at the upper echelons of university management while ordinary teaching, research, and support staff struggle.

We want a publicly funded system of Higher Education, free at the point of use and paying a fair wage to its workers. In addition to real-terms pay cuts, casualisation of all



UCU members joining in the action to defend pension photo Paul Mattsson

jobs is rife in the sector, including use of fixed-term, hourly-paid and even the now-infamous zero-hour contracts. This job insecurity together with management bullying and excessive workloads will also motivate UCU members to under-

take a 'work to contract' following the strike day.

Many student organisations, including official student unions, have offered support. It will be vital to build on these links and make clear to students that this industrial

action strengthens their fight for free education, particularly if exam marking ends up being affected.

Already propaganda about the USS pension scheme has tried to pit students against staff – in fact this scheme is healthy by any reasonable measure, and a bizarre accounting practice is being used to claim students will end up 'bailing out' their lecturers' pensions.

Nothing could be further from the truth, but this and similar falsehoods will be peddled by the ConDem government and their media chums if the dispute continues.

A serious fighting strategy could see a victory in the form of a significantly improved pay offer. But ultimately the dispute has arisen from the politics and experience of austerity.

We need to make links with other unions – HE workers already look to the dispute involving the teachers' unions NUT and NASUWT and the call for a one-day general strike against austerity is gaining ground. Socialists in Higher Education unions will fight to make it a reality.

See also socialiststudents.org.uk for how students can support this action.

Teachers: No national action this term

Martin Powell-Davies

A member of the NUT executive and candidate for NUT vice-president

When the NUT Executive met last week, teachers were expecting a date for national strike action in November to be confirmed. Now, no national strike will take place this term.

The official reason for this decision is that Michael Gove is "willing to discuss a basis for genuine talks on the unions' trade disputes". However, even if that were true, it would have been far better to have announced a firm date for strike action, so Gove knew what to expect once it became clear that he wasn't offering serious negotiations.

But Gove has already made his position clear. His letters to the unions insist that the "direction of travel" on raising pensions ages to 68 and imposing performance-related pay is "fixed". He only wants to talk "about the implementation of these changes".

The real reason that action was called off this term is because the NASUWT executive wanted a postponement and a majority on the NUT executive would not support striking without them. In response, NUT and NASUWT members need to meet jointly in every school and demand that escalating national strike action is put back in place in the New Year and that no unacceptable deals are struck in any talks

with Gove.

That's also why a minority of ten members of the NUT national executive supported my objection to the officers' recommendations calling for the NUT to proceed with strike action on 27 November. Of course joint action with the NASUWT would have had a greater effect but we're in danger of having no serious campaign of action at all from either union.

This setback has the potential to be a lot more serious than just a few months' delay in calling national action. It sends a signal to both Gove and to teachers that perhaps unions are not serious about winning this dispute. If we are, we should have been making plans to escalate our action after Christmas, perhaps to

a two-day national strike. Instead, teachers are offered only the possibility of a one-day national strike around the beginning of February followed by further regional strikes.

That's not a serious escalation and, if we're not careful, teachers will start to question whether it's worth losing pay to support such drawn-out action. The bitter reality facing classroom teachers means that they are willing to sacrifice a great deal to defeat Gove's attacks – but only if they think their leaders are leading a serious battle.

NUT members can show their anger at the postponement of action by voting POWELL-DAVIES 1 in the election for national vice-president that opens this week.

Probation workers strike against privatisation

Chas Berry

Chair, Kent National Association of Probation Officers (Napo)

As probation workers prepare to strike on 5 and 6 November, confidence is growing that privatisation can be defeated. Pressure is mounting on Justice Secretary Chris Grayling that plans to transfer most work to private companies by October next year are beginning to unravel. Industrial action by Napo now threatens to bring them to a grinding halt.

When Grayling launched his so-called Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda in May it was with the swagger of a man who thought he could ride roughshod over parliament, probation workers and all professional opinion. Invoking powers introduced by New Labour in 2007 he expected to dissolve the probation service by edict with little opposition.

He now faces an almost 'perfect storm' of Parliamentary revolt, industrial militancy and a possible judicial review over his abuse of power. On top of this, two of his largest potential bidders, Serco and G4S, are in crisis after the res-

ignation of senior staff over fraud allegations.

A groundswell of opinion is beginning to form against Grayling, and his Offender Rehabilitation Bill is expected to receive a rough ride through its second Commons reading. We cannot rely on Westminster to safeguard our future, however, and to its credit Napo recognises that its members will play the key role in deciding whether probation remains as a fully integrated public service.

The strike takes place over two days in the same week that postal workers and firefighters take action and at the same time as expected nationwide protests against austerity. Prison officers may also show their support through unofficial protests.

All this will have a deep impact upon the consciousness of probation workers, most of whom have never taken industrial action before or been involved in political struggle. Images of Grayling dressed as Guy Fawkes are circulating widely and a number of effigies are expected to go up in smoke overnight. On 5 November many will question who the real criminals in our society are.

No offshoring Shared Services!



On the wet picket line at Benton Park View photo Elaine Brunskill

Elaine Brunskill

PCS members who work in Shared Services, providing common services for government departments, are being threatened with privatisation on 1 November. They were on strike on 25 October. Despite atrocious weather in the north-east, picket lines at Benton Park View and Defra Alnwick were upbeat and well supported.

Steria, the company involved, has confirmed that if the transfer goes ahead it will sack staff, close sites and offshore much of the work. At Benton Park View Michael Bennett, a PCS rep, explained that: "One in five of us could be out of a job. At times like this, with an economic crisis, it's a worry not knowing if you'll have a job or not."

The privateering company Steria was on-site on the day of the strike. DWP group president Fran Heath-

cote, said that: "Steria could be in no doubt about the strength of feeling of PCS members, the vast majority of whom stayed away from work. Members are determined to protect their jobs, terms and conditions and prevent jobs going overseas".

Regional secretary Simon Elliot pointed out: "We hope to send them a strong message that most of their potential staff won't be at work today, that we disapprove of their takeover of this work and are very much opposed to the privatisation and off-shoring of shared services."

The picket line showed they were well supported by other PCS members. Fran Heathcote pointed out: "PCS has already won struggles which have protected staff at Siemens and prevented offshoring at Hewlett Packard, and we will fight just as hard for our shared services members".

All trade union reps spoke in a personal capacity

In brief

Postal workers rally



photo Paul Mattsson

There is a national rally for striking Communication Workers Union (CWU) members in Royal Mail on Monday 4 November at 12 noon in the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, London SW1P 3EE. The 24-hour strike, over pay, jobs and the effects of privatisation involves CWU members in Royal Mail and Parcelforce. There was a 78% vote in favour of strike action.

No witch-hunt in GMB

Keith Henderson, a former regional organiser of the GMB union was dismissed from the GMB last December. Keith has always believed that the real reason for his dismissal was because of his socialist beliefs.

Now an Employment Tribunal Judgment has said that a substantial part of the reasoning behind Keith's dismissal was because of his philosophical belief in left-wing democratic socialism and was an effective cause of his dismissal.

John McDonnell MP has written to GMB general secretary Paul Kenny to express his concern about Keith's dismissal and to call for his re-instatement.

Keith's problems seem to stem from the joint action in November 2011 when he organised a lively picket outside parliament.

John McDonnell makes the point: "The atmosphere on the picket line was good natured and in the best traditions of the trade union movement of solidarity."

"Many Labour MPs supported the strike and rightfully respected the picket lines. This appears to have upset some in the office of the Labour leader."

Keith has also been prevented from standing as a Labour councillor.

• Please protest to Paul Kenny, GMB general secretary: Paul.Kenny@gmb.org.uk to urge Keith's reinstatement and an end to witch-hunts against socialists in the GMB.

Website

For more workplace and industrial news, see www.socialistparty.org.uk Please send reports to editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Bail out hospitals, not bankers!

Simon Stevens was an adviser to former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair on beginning the privatisation process in the NHS. He is now an executive for a private healthcare company in the US. He was recently appointed as the new chief executive of the NHS. Stevens has very generously agreed to take a £20,000 pay cut – meaning he'll 'only' be earning £189,000 a year. Meanwhile, health workers have been told that

they won't receive the measly 1% pay rise they had been promised and services are under threat of cuts and privatisation across the country. The bosses and politicians try to justify these attacks as being because of 'failing' hospitals – but they don't mention that the biggest failures happen after privatisation. There hasn't even been an inquiry at the BMI Mount Alvernia hospital in Guildford, despite the Care Quality Commission

finding that "medical, surgical and some nursing practices were so poor that people were put at significant risk. This risk was, on some occasions, life threatening." We need a national campaign including a strike of all health workers to defend our NHS. Many important local campaigns are developing which could pave the way to this if the correct lead is given by the health unions.

Waltham Forest Unison Health meeting

Waltham Forest Socialist Party members

The fight is on to spread the campaign to save hospital services in East London.

Barts Health Trust has announced £77.5 million of cuts, including downbanding of many staff and downgrading of wards to reduce staffing ratios. Following a sham consultation, announcements of job cuts and other attacks are expected imminently.

Whipps Cross Hospital workers, led by their union Waltham Forest Unison Health, have taken the lead with an initial public meeting of 100, a gate protest of 200, a demo of 6-700 and an indicative ballot in which 97% of Unison members voted to be balloted for strike action. Meetings have taken place all over the hospital.

Unison leadership

Scandalously the London Unison region has blocked support for this campaign.

Their claimed reason is that the cuts and downbanding will happen all across Barts Health Trust - at Newham General, the Royal London, the London Chest, Mile End and Barts as well as Whipps Cross - and that the other two Unison branches in the Trust are not campaigning.

Any union leadership worth its salt, however, would send organisers into these hospitals to help organise and drive for action across the Trust.

In reality the region is leaning on these two branches against Whipps

Cross in order to force through acceptance of severe cuts. Otherwise why not merge the branches to aid an effective campaign?

Whipps branch secretary Len Hockey has contacted the other two branches, and many workers at the other hospitals have taken part in protests. Activists are fighting for the right to debate the cuts and plan a campaign of action, including strike action.

Plans discussed

At a second public meeting called by Waltham Forest Unison Health branch on 23 October, the message was clear: we will pile the pressure on the region, including organising a lobby of the union HQ. We demand a ballot across the Trust!

This meeting heard inspiring examples of other campaigns, such

We will pile the pressure on the region. We demand a ballot across the Trust!

as Lewisham, and especially from Adrian O'Malley, Unison health branch secretary in Mid-Yorkshire Trust, where nine days of strike action against downbanding have achieved some success.

The meeting agreed that community campaigning is important, and this, in the view of the Socialist Party, should be led by the workers in



photo Paul Mattsson

the hospital themselves. Ideas were suggested such as mass community leafleting, door-to-door work, and innovative protests such as at the offices of culprit private companies.

The meeting also discussed the wider picture of the historic dismantling and privatisation of the NHS. Everyone agreed that a central demand is to cancel PFI - bail out hospitals, not bankers!

One contributor said: "PFI is like going to Wonga for money to build a hospital!"

As one Socialist Party member, Mike, explained from the floor: "In the first years of the NHS there has never been a more economical way of delivering a health service devised anywhere in the world."

"All the changes since then have cost more with less outcomes. Their

only rationale has been for profit. But we know what a private health service will mean. If you can't afford Waitrose, you have to go to Lidl!"

The meeting discussed the need for the health unions to take national action, for a 24-hour general strike, and Chris Moore, speaking for Stroud Against the Cuts, called on health campaigners to stand election candidates against the cuts.

Breaking news!
The Court of Appeal has ruled that health secretary Jeremy Hunt did not have the power to force through cuts at Lewisham Hospital in south London.
See socialistparty.org.uk for more details and analysis of the campaign to save Lewisham hospital

Campaign launched against downbanding in Swindon

Health worker

A big dispute has developed at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon, the biggest hospital in Wiltshire. Two weeks ago management announced that they wanted to force over 70 band six theatre nurses to reapply for 25 posts; the rest would be downbanded to a band five - meaning a pay cut of 15% to 20%.

Many of the affected workers were in the RCN (Royal College of Nursing) but came to the meeting we organised and in just eight days over 30 left RCN to join Unison on the basis that we were going to fight.

Workers are refusing to sign papers saying they wish to apply for the band six jobs despite management saying they will automatically be downgraded after a notice period.

At our meetings we have talked about the likely need to take industrial action which I am confident

would be overwhelmingly supported. These workers realise that they are in a powerful position. The Trust realises that any attempt to implement these changes will be met with strike action.

Struggle needed

What's most impressive about the nurses is how quickly they have organised themselves - within their teams and then linking together. Within a week their mood has completely changed - they are now much more confident. We have demanded that the Trust withdraw the downbanding or face action.

However this Trust was one of the leaders of the South West NHS Pay Cartel and in the last few days has tried to bully staff, and furthermore are reportedly talking about disciplining workers.

If we can win this we could transform the situation throughout the hospital and show that only through militant struggle can we succeed.



photo Suzanne Beishon

Attacks on NHS pay will damage services

Unison health member in Salford

Like many employees of the NHS, I reacted with horror when I heard of Jeremy Hunt's plans to scrap our promised 1% pay rise and use the money to restructure our pay. His plan is to scrap the increments we receive every 12 months within the Agenda for Change bands.

When the public reacted with outrage at the high pay and bonuses that bankers were given we were told that this is what the taxpayer needs to spend to get the best people for the job. So why is it that the same doesn't apply to getting the best people for the job of caring for us when we are most vulnerable and saving our lives?

The aftermath of the scandal at Stafford hospital sparked a public inquiry which resulted in the Francis report being published and the Keogh report after. Both showed a need for adequate nursing staff

levels within our hospitals.

Any further pay cuts to frontline staff may well put people off from going into nursing. Providing high quality care and meeting the current demands of our service users can be challenging enough. But if staff have the added worry of not being able to meet basic bills at the end of the month due to pay freezes and cuts, will care improve? I think not.

NHS staff are financially worse off under this coalition government. There are fewer nurses now than there were in 2010. Fewer people are enrolling on nursing degrees. Workers are having to pay more into their pensions, will have to work longer and will get less pension.

I find it truly shocking that bankers of 'nationalised' banks get pay rises and bigger bonuses while NHS workers face yet another barbaric attack on pay and conditions.

20 years of privatised train robbery

November marks 20 years since John Major's Tory government gave the go-ahead to splitting up and selling off British Rail. In this feature, a former MP and councillor Dave Nellist shows why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stands for the renationalisation of the railways. A train driver shows the impact of privatisation upon rail workers but also that trade unions are key to limiting the damage done by privatised rail firms. The final article shows how Scrooge-like, vicious employers can be forced to change their tune when low-paid workers join a trade union and fight back.

Renationalise rail!

Dave Nellist
Trade Unionist and Socialist coalition national chair

On 5 November it will be exactly 20 years since the Act of Parliament which privatised rail. And that privatisation has been a disaster for passengers and workers alike.

For passengers, privatisation has brought an upward spiral of prices, to probably now the highest in Europe. In a debate in the House of Commons this summer, MPs heard that a 24-mile commute into Paris costs about £924 a year, into Berlin £700, and into Madrid £654. A similar commute into London, however, costs £3,268 a year!

For workers, the recommendations of the McNulty Report (yet another of those Labour ideas welcomed and accelerated by the Tories) threatening the loss of tens of thousands of front-line workers such as train guards, station and ticket office staff - to make the railways more 'profitable' - hangs over them like the Sword of Damocles.

For the private rail owners, however, privatisation has clearly been a success.

According to one report this summer train operators have been able to manipulate the franchise licensing system so that they effectively pay dividends to shareholders direct from public subsidy. The report, from Manchester University and others, found "between 1997 and 2012 on the West Coast Mainline Virgin Trains paid out a total of £500 million in dividends and received a direct subsidy of £2.5 billion".

In addition, the report argues, train operating companies have benefited over the last 20 years from a 50% cut in track access charges levied by Network Rail - effectively a further massive indirect state subsidy to private profit. Not only do the privately owned train companies not pay the real cost of operating the infrastructure, but Network Rail now has an accumulated debt of £30 billion, borrowed privately but publicly guaranteed, continuing to provide those companies with the infrastructure on which to make their profits.

Three party consensus

It's a licence to print money, which has the support of all establishment parties. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), however, unashamedly champions public ownership. It's part of our core policies - that defines the socialist alternative we offer at elections.

In the current debate about re-privatisation of the East Coast line, New Labour may be relaxed (in opposition) about individual Labour MPs depending the current public ownership of that franchise but they do not extend that logic to renationalisation of the rest of the network. TUSC does.



Kick out the fat cats! photo Paul Mattsson

New Labour's accommodation with big business ideas, such as privatisation and the market, is reinforced by all the political pressure on it being from above and from the right. TUSC standing candidates widely at election time, strongly campaigning for public ownership, can help redress that debate. That's one of the reasons two successive RMT transport workers' union conferences have backed their union's full involvement in TUSC.

Travel should be a social right, like education or health. To achieve that needs the public ownership of the

transport industry which provides it.

The railways should be renationalised under a new, democratic form of working class control and management, using the experience and expertise of rail workers and passengers to run trains as a public service not, as now, as a big business cash cow.

In the council elections next year TUSC will have the largest number of candidates of any party pledged to public ownership in general, and the re-nationalisation of the rail industry in particular. Our target is 625 candidates: could you be one?



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

Unions at forefront of defending rail safety

A train driver speaks out

At the time of privatisation the Tories claimed it was the wonder cure for the railways, the best thing since sliced bread. When the promised improvements failed to materialise - and instead we saw the fatal rail crashes including Southall, Paddington and Hatfield - they conceded that it was a flawed, rushed privatisation. Now it is back to the original claims.

In a speech to the Association of Train Operating Companies, the Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin extolled the success of privatisation, citing growing investment, more journeys and better punctuality.

He said nothing about the billions of pounds given in subsidies, the hundreds of millions of pounds leaving the industry in profits for private firms, the hundreds of staff who spend their time not running the railway but shifting the blame for delays to someone else, the decline of train-building capacity, and the franchisees who have given the keys back because they failed to make a big enough profit.

Nor did he mention the massive expansion in the numbers of senior managers and directors who warm their seats for a few years before moving on. Each senior appointment is announced in glowing terms, 'has years of experience' or 'a record of achievement', until the inevitable and sometimes rather terse message of their departure to 'pursue other interests' or because 'the position failed to suit requirements'.

One head of drivers left after only 12 weeks. No long service award apparently. But they always seem to pop up somewhere else, a magic roundabout for managers while the lower ranks are stuck on the treadmill.

Even in a single speech, McLoughlin cannot be consistent. He claims other countries are following the Tory lead, in creating separate operators for train and track, then lauds Southwest Trains and Network Rail for creating a single management team in a joint venture!

The impact of privatisation has been felt in every aspect of the driver's job. From a single workforce with a standard set of pay and conditions, we now have over 30 train companies with varied rates of pay and terms.

Within companies newly qualified drivers do not get the full rate for the job for one or two years, meaning they do the worst work for the lowest pay.

Between companies there is competition for drivers, benefiting our pay but costing the industry as a whole more.

Passenger train drivers can work ten hour shifts, freight drivers eleven hours. Four hours driving without the

chance to go to the loo are the norm.

We are specified 12-hours rest between shifts, but rail workers often no longer live near their depot so travel to and from work can cut this.

There is no doubt drivers are more productive, but as a result we get messed about with. We can see our start time for work varied by hours if

Keep East Coast public!

Despite giving £208 million back to the public purse in one year alone, the Con-Dem government are determined to get the East Coast mainline re-privatised. Why invest profits back in public infrastructure when it can go to hedge funds instead?

East Coast went into public hands in 2009 after National Express gave up the line as it cost too much to run.

One of the bidders for the 2015 line giveaway is channel tunnel operator Eurostar, which has said it will bring back third class seats!

Ironically, while Eurostar operates as a private business, 55% of the company belongs to French publicly-owned railway SNCF, 40% to the British Department of Transport, and the other 5% to the Belgian state railway. So determined are the Tories to show the success of the market, it seems they'd rather have a fake privatisation than none at all! However the public aren't buying it. Like with Royal Mail, polls consistently show that a minimum of 70% want the rail network to be in public hands.

we are 'spare'. So you can start a week on an early shift and be moved later in the week.

In 2012, a person working for Devon and Cornwall Railways drove a freight train past a red signal at Stafford. The matter would not even have been investigated without repeated requests.

What was found? The person was: 'a senior manager at Amtrain, on a zero-hours contract... who was not conversant with the traction... [was on] a route card he had never been tested on... [and] did not realise he was doing 100mph.' Drivers have been threatened with the sack or demotion for far less.

Yes our members deserve a decent standard of living, but we also seek to protect ourselves and the public from cowboy operators whose only aim is profit. The rail trade unions are at the forefront of defending proper safety standards and exposing the failures of privatisation.

London RMT: Vote John Reid for council of executives

Socialist Party member John Reid, currently London regional secretary of the transport union RMT, is standing for election to the union's executive. John says: "I will fight alongside members to defend jobs, conditions and pensions

and to ensure all our members in every grade are treated equally whether they be a supervisor or a cleaner or whether they are station staff or train staff."
See John's leaflet at
votejohnreid4rmtexec.wordpress.com

Tyne and Wear Metro cleaners

Strike action gets results!

At the start of October, Churchill cleaners working on Tyne and Wear Metro won an important victory in their long running battle for decent wages and conditions.

The problems faced by these workers have their roots in privatisation. Disgracefully, it was local Labour councils who privatised the Metro system and handed over the operation to DB Regio (German state owned railway), who in turn subcontracted cleaning to 'private rubbish company' Churchill.

The harsh reality of privatisation and contracting out quickly reared its ugly head. This group of workers was expected to work on minimum wage, with no sick pay, no pension scheme, and unlike other Metro workers, no staff travel concession.

A cleaner who complained that his shift had been understaffed was fired for supposedly bringing the company's name into disrepute. At one stage Churchill even had the gall to describe a 0% pay offer as generous!

While the pay and conditions of Churchill cleaners were being battered, Churchill's profits doubled over five years, making nearly £7 million from the exploitation of its workforce. Something had to be done.

RMT transport workers' union relief regional organiser and Northern TUC executive RMT rep **Craig Johnston** tells the story of this historic victory.

About two years ago, Churchill decided to save more money to boost its profits. On the minimum wage, the only way the company could squeeze them further was to scrap paid meal breaks.

Only a few of the 60 or so cleaners were RMT members. At the time I was a newly elected relief organiser for the north east. Churchill started one-to-one consultations. Union members were entitled to be accompanied by a rep - so I attended.

The arrogance of the company was unbelievable. When I asked a question I was told we weren't there to negotiate, the company didn't recognise trade unions. They were a minimum wage, statutory sick pay employer and the contract needed to save money. I wasn't even given a chair at one meeting.

It was the start of a two-year campaign to force the company to respect their employees and treat them better. Just over a fortnight ago we achieved much of what we set out to achieve.

From the first report I sent to the



'Women in their 70s stood alongside lads and lasses in their 20s' photo Newcastle SP

RMT executive the union gave the cleaners solid support, including from general secretary Bob Crow.

Thanks to a small team of committed activists led by Stuart Roberts, within weeks the overwhelming majority of cleaners were in the union. Churchill scrapped the plan to remove paid meal breaks and we applied for statutory recognition. In response the company wrote to staff asking, as they were so low paid, could they really afford to pay the £1 nominal membership fee! The RMT executive had agreed for them!

The company's anti-union scaremongering backfired in a spectacular way. We soon had the membership to force formal recognition so obtained a voluntary recognition agreement.

By now improvised union notice boards were appearing in the cleaners' mess rooms. Workers were wearing union badges, baseball caps and union ties.

Increasing confidence

The confidence of workers was increasing. Effective representation at disciplinary hearings could mean the difference between keeping your job and losing it.

Reps were elected from and by the workforce. Stuart Roberts was elected Senior Rep. The RMT's education centre at Doncaster provided rep training.

The next thing was to submit a sub-

stantial pay claim. The company offered no real improvement. Members voted 100% for strike action.

Day strikes turned into two-day, a week and then two weeks - 33 days in total, over an 18-month period. The overwhelming majority held firm. The union helped with hardship payments. Women in their 70s - who had never before been in a union and worked to supplement their pension - stood alongside lads and lasses in their late teens and early 20s on picket lines and protests.

The cleaners attended the Newcastle May Day March and Durham Miners Gala and various protests against council cuts, fighting broader battles as well as their own personal fight.

We received great solidarity. The Northern TUC, PCS, Unison, GMB, FBUI, bakers' union, CWU and UCU all headed for the picket lines to pledge support. Innovative campaigning included striking cleaners going onto the Metro with songs and music.

We wanted not only to heap pressure on poverty paying Churchill, but also Nexus, the Labour-controlled transport authority responsible for outsourcing. Nexus had offered the cleaners to-and-from work transport passes, but only if they didn't strike!

Councillors on the authority were sent empty 2012 Christmas hampers to represent the scrooge employers. Improvised soup kitchens were set up outside Nexus headquarters and meetings.

The Tyne and Wear passengers group also gave support. Some local Labour MPs were supportive, but others did nothing at all.

But it was the sheer determination of the workers and the RMT that resulted in victory. They won an employment tribunal decision with the union's solicitors that meant time-and-a-half for Sunday working, and double-time and compensation leave for bank holidays.

After the two-week strike, the company invited the union back for talks - the settlement a staggering 20% over four years (with accumulation it's actually more) and a clear road map to get more than a living wage.

The message is clear: get organised, get in a union, stay strong and united - then win.



Craig has also thanked the Socialist Party for the support given to the Metro cleaners' dispute

Opposing the privatisation of the Metro in 2009 photo Norman Hall

Building the fightback - building the Socialist Party

Socialist Party branches across England and Wales have been carrying out recruitment weeks of action, concentrating their weekly stalls and meetings on asking people to join the Socialist Party, as opposed to a particular campaigning issue. Here are some reports from the week, to go alongside the reports in issue 767.

See socialistparty.org.uk/main/contact for details of Socialist Party meetings in your area

Southampton

Southampton Socialist Party held a meeting as a follow on to our 'join the socialists' stall of the previous weekend.

Phil, who is one of our newer members, explained what had prompted him to join the Socialist Party. He

gave a heartfelt speech about his anger regarding the inequalities he saw in society and the appalling treatment being meted out to those in receipt of benefits.

An outline of what we do was given which ranged from our role in helping to build the National Shop Stewards Network and leading the call for a 24-hour general strike, to our successful involvement in local campaigns and in particular our support for the two Southampton 'rebel' councillors, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas and their refusal to vote for cuts. This led on to the importance of standing anti-cuts electoral candidates under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. After this introduction, everyone joined in a lively and enthusiastic discussion.

Three young people, Charlie, Georgia and Rory, attended their first meeting. What better way to end an excellent evening than to hear that all three of them wanted to find out more about socialism and had decided to attend the Socialism 2013 weekend.

Jane Ward

Leicester

Over the past two weeks Leicester Socialist Party has recruited three new members, with four more people in discussions about joining.

This has been helped by hard work done during and since the universities' fresher fairs.

We also started a Friday campaigning stall, in addition to our Saturday stall, in an area where public sector workers come out at lunchtime. This has proved really successful and we've met several people who have shown interest in joining, two of which have already attended a meeting.

Last Saturday we tried a 'join the socialists' stall, which two of our new members took part in. Three 'join' cards were filled in with eleven copies of the Socialist sold.

We've also been instrumental in gaining a new member in the South West. Fighting the cuts came up in a Leicester member's phone discussion with a relative. We sent the relative a copy of the Socialist; they contacted the regional organiser and have now joined. It just goes to show that you never know where the next SP member will turn up!



Newcastle

A previous attempt at a 'join the socialists' stall was postponed due to bad weather, so on Saturday 26 October Newcastle Socialist Party members were eager to replicate the success of other branches. Alongside papers, we were all armed with 'join' leaflets and recruitment cards. Also, our stall looked very smart. We were raring to go. From the onset there was a definite buzz about the stall. Some of us used petitions, others called to passers-by: "Join the fightback! Join the socialists!" Most importantly, all of us were getting stuck in. Two join cards were filled in, and another person gave a £5 donation. Another remarked that she often signed our petition. When asked if she had considered joining us she said no - but she would now give it some serious thought.

On a picket line last week, in driving rain, alongside interviewing strikers for our reports, we also asked if they'd considered joining the Socialist Party.

One said he'd seen us supporting their strikes on numerous occasions, was impressed by our commitment, and although he'd never thought about it before would consider joining. He bought a paper, took a recruitment card and details of our website. Another said she'd been impressed that we always showed up on picket lines, and had thought about joining us. She bought a paper and has said she'd try and get along to public meetings, and may join us in the future.

The week highlighted that workers are looking towards us - we have to always ensure they know we want them to join!

Elaine Brunskill

Support the Socialism 2013 appeal

The Socialist Party is asking all our members and supporters to make a donation to the Socialism 2013 appeal. Your financial support will enable the Socialist Party to maintain our campaigning on two great questions facing the working class: the need for a 24-hour general strike to bring together all workers fighting the attacks of the Con-Dems and for a new mass workers' party that can put forward a political alternative to austerity.

A proportion of the money we raise will go to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) special appeal to assist the pioneering

work that our members internationally are engaged in.

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

You can make your donation at the rally, through your local Socialist Party branch or by phoning 020 8988 8777. Alternatively, use the form below or go to socialistparty.org.uk/donate, labelling your donation 'Socialism 2013 appeal'.



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By Geoff Jones, Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party

Published by Socialist Party Wales

£4 or £2 each for bulk orders. Available at Socialism 2013.

Land of Whose Fathers? takes the reader from the very start of the industrial revolution in Wales right up to the turn of the 21st century in bite sized pieces and will certainly whet the appetite for deeper study. It also brings into perspective the inception to the decline of the Labour Party as a party of the working class.

Branch orders and more details can be obtained from Dave Warren on 07747436440 or dave.warren9@btinternet.com



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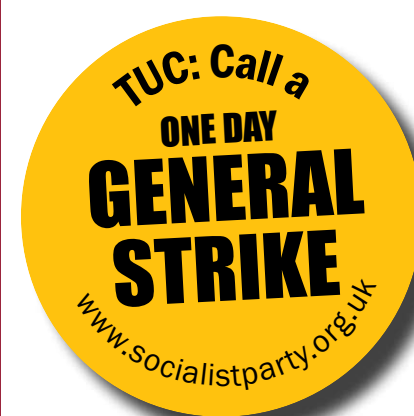
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Hackney and Islington TUSC film showing:

Riot from Wrong

Rio Cinema, Hackney, London
9 November, 1.30pm

'Are riots inevitable under capitalism?'

Discussion will follow the film.

Speakers include Carol Duggan, aunt of Mark Duggan whose killing by London police ignited the 2011 riots

Brazil: "Rio, a showcase for the world"

Contradictions between prosperous Brazil and precarious conditions bring potential for struggle

Mariana Cristina

LSR (CWI in Brazil), Rio de Janeiro

After the massive mobilisations that took place all over Brazil in June, the struggles did not cease. There were land occupations in the countryside and the student and youth mobilisations and struggles in the cities for free transport. Significantly the unions convened, in July and August, two unified national actions of 24 hours including stoppages, strikes and the blocking of major highways.

Workers have also carried out all-out strikes over wages and working conditions. The main strikes were among postal workers, the banks at national level, education professionals in several states, as well as many other sectors.

Right now, the oil workers, are fighting against the privatisation of the Libras oil field. They are engaged in the most important national strike in this sector since the Cardoso government sent the army to repress the workers' occupations of the refineries in the great strike of 1995.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro education workers have been on strike for more than two months. They have been confronting the governor and the mayor of the city with massive demonstrations and have tremendous popular support. It is the biggest strike in the education sector in the last 20 years. More than 80% of the sector is paralysed.

In state schools, the main demands include the right of teachers to work in only one school, a reduction in the number of students per class, a wage increase of 19%, the guarantee of one-third of the workload being allocated for extra-curricular activities, the election of directors and the end of a form of payment by results.

Teachers' strikes

In this struggle, education workers who are members of LSR (CWI in Brazil) have initiated and led the union activists' organisation, Luta Educadora. This won a majority in the workers' assemblies against the proposal to end the strike advocated by the board of the union on numerous occasions.

Although the education union SEPE, is led by the left (sections of the PSOL and PSTU parties), there is a strong bureaucracy within it. These are the same people and political groups who have run the organisation for 20 years, and are in reality very detached from the rank and file.

Councillors of the city of Rio approved a career development plan that does not correspond to the interests of education professionals. This was despite thousands of people protesting against it outside of the council offices. The police, in trying to disperse the protesters and ensure that the session of the council chamber was not interrupted, used a constant and abundant flood of tear gas. But within minutes of the effects of the gas decreasing, the workers would return and continue to resist.

The struggle of the teachers



Luciano Barboza, teacher and member of LSR, addressing an assembly in Rio on 15 October

caught the ruling class by surprise. Since the strike began, the participation and the support among the general population has increased massively. Recent surveys indicated that 86% of the population agree with the strike in education. Actions have become more frequent and even more massive, bringing more than 20,000 people onto the streets every week - reaching 50,000 on 7 October. Police repression, aimed at criminalising protesters and dispersing the struggle, has only intensified the solidarity and strength of the movement.

On 15 October, officially 'teachers' day', over 100,000 people - youth and different sections of workers - were united in defence of education, taking over Rio Branco Avenue from start to end.

The pressure of the strike and the popular support has pushed the judiciary to take a stand against the cuts in the teachers' wages. The court also overturned the revocation of the license of the union SEPE, initiated by the government.

The protest on 15 October, was once again confronted with police repression in the centre of Rio de Janeiro. The police dismantled the camp which had been permanently in front of the City Council for weeks.

Repression

Around 200 people were arrested, chosen at random to serve as an example. They were illegally taken to neighbourhoods distant from the centre and held in different locations, making access to lawyers more difficult. All were framed through a newly-created law to combat organised crime. The new law, passed in September in the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro, toughens punishment for protesters and provides much higher penalties for 'crimes' such as the use of masks in street protests.

Bruno Liberato, a member of the Estudante em Construção - an organisation built by youth activists from LSR - was arrested on that day and only released 24 hours later.

Search warrants and arrests were issued against activists. Several computers were seized from the houses of activists. This criminalisation of social movements and of



Police on one of the demonstrations

poverty is an old policy pursued by the Governor, Sergio Cabral. We also saw this in the case of an assistant bricklayer, Amarildo, tortured and murdered by 13 policemen in a so-called Pacification Police Unit in the favela of Rocinha.

Cabral was one of the governors elected with the highest votes in the country in the last election (he was re-elected with 66% of the vote), but now he is the governor with the lowest approval rating - only 12%. He has been exposed, by favouring big businesses and entrepreneurs such as Eike Batista; by his abuses of power such as the use of a public helicopter to transport his family. He is also known for violent and authoritarian excesses and the scrapping of public education and health.

Political crisis

All these attacks on the population made by the Cabral government also served as a trigger for the June struggles. These extended into July, August and up until now. He has been pushed up against the wall and forced to reverse some of his previous policies.

The City Council building of Rio was occupied for weeks by protesters to demand the actual functioning of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on public transport. Demonstrations demanding the ousting of Cabral were organised

on a daily basis, including 'Occupy Cabral' - an encampment outside his house.

The political crisis facing the Cabral government and the military police is worsening, especially after the increased crackdown on protesters. The governor's response to the struggles has been repression in order to intimidate the youth into not organising. Heavy police weaponry, hundreds of young people being tried for "conspiracy", persecution and sequestration of leaders - adds up to a clear stance of criminalising social movements.

Prospects for struggle

The struggles that took place during the Confederations Cup of 2013, and the days of struggle initiated in June, were an anticipation of what will occur during the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. These mega-events will accentuate the contradictions between the illusions of a "great and prosperous Brazil" and the reality of the precarious quality of life of the working class and the poor.

This contradiction brings the potential for further struggles. The repression of demonstrations during the World Cup is likely to be even greater. What we are seeing today in Rio de Janeiro will be extended to the whole country in the next period.

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



Ireland: Victimising the vulnerable

This is an extract from a speech by Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) TD Joe Higgins in the Irish Parliament:

"It has been a terrible week for social protection in Ireland. This Social Welfare Bill and the budget make swinging economic attacks on the elderly with its swinging snatching back of tens of thousands of medical cards; on the young with its savage slashing of their jobseeker's allowance; on pregnant women with the callous slashing of their maternity benefit; among many other attacks. And as we discuss social protection, today the Irish state stands ashamed in front of the world. A situation where a bigoted busybody sends a bigoted and ignorant Facebook message to a journalist, to the effect that because a child in a Roma family has blonde hair and blue eyes and "it's a big problem with missing kids, the Roma robbing them to get child benefit in Europe". And in foot of this journalist, Gardaí and HSE, two powerful state agencies, swallow the assumption that is based on the most abysmal and ignorance and racial stereotyping to the effect that it is impossible for a Roma person to be blonde and blue eyed, and remove that child from its home in Tallaght, County Dublin (and apparently a similar situation in Athlone). It is pathetic for the Taoiseach to claim that he believes this was done on good faith. Good faith, so called, based on the ignorant and bigoted assumptions, is not a basis for child protection policy, it is a mandate for injustice against social minorities. The scandal of the Roma children removed from their homes occurred because of the stereotyping that exists in the establishment of this society."

A video of Joe's full speech can be seen at

www.socialistworld.net

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

Sexism in the music industry exposed

Becci Heagney

Miley Cyrus' Wrecking Ball video and appearance at the Video Music Awards, created a flurry of opinion. The Sun told her to "put it away", the Daily Mail praised her for "showing off her toned stomach" and Sinead O'Connor wrote her an open letter. She talked about the music industry exploiting women to make money, summing it up with, "I've been in the business long enough to know that men are making more money than you are from you getting naked."

Some commentators have argued that this is just liberation. It is true that it has been a positive step forward for women that we do not need to hide our bodies. Particularly through the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which took sexual liberation as one of its main aims, many women gained confidence in being able to express their sexuality.

So there is nothing wrong with women like Miley Cyrus expressing themselves in their music videos, and care needs to be taken not to make the debate about criticising or passing judgement on individuals. But an important question is, who is benefitting? Is it really liberation when all women are expected to fit into a very narrow view of sexuality?

Used by the media

The picture here isn't of women expressing themselves, but women being used by the media and music industries.

Charlotte Church, in her contribution to the Cyrus debate, said: "The culture of demeaning women in pop music is so ingrained as to become routine, from the way we are dealt with by management and labels, to the way we are presented to the public." It isn't just the way women are represented but who is pulling the strings behind the scenes.

The Financial Times found that despite the top 40 best-selling albums last year being roughly equally by male and female acts, that the majority were written and produced by men.



On a recent 'slutwalk' photo Paul Mattsson

The Performing Rights Society, representing songwriters and composers, has only a 13% female membership. Spotify, an online music supplier, found that men are less likely than women to listen to artists of the opposite sex. Research by the British Phonographic Industry found that men make up 65% of the buyers of music and every music genre is listened to by more men than women.

The music industry is controlled by a handful of businesses, who make a fortune through exploiting the talents of women and men and the industry's workers. But the rich bosses, mainly men, decide what they think their mainly male audience wants - and women are used as a means to sell a product and make a profit.

This isn't to say that there aren't successful female artists who are appreciated for their talent but even then they are often judged on their appearance. Like in most other parts of our lives under capitalism, the impression is that there is more

value in the way women look than in anything we say or do.

The music industry reflects how power, money and control are used throughout society. It also shows how capitalism turns everything into a commodity which can be bought and sold. Artistic talent is often restricted in the interests of profit.

Capitalism is supposed to be a system of choice. Instead, pop stars today are encouraged to look and sound the same. Most music in the charts is generic, with no real commentary or protest at what's happening in the world around us and what working class people experience.

No market

Anything different is often considered not to have 'a market' and the artists are refused any help from the big record labels.

The effects of all this on the way that women are often represented in the music industry is glaring. This one-sided view of women

sells because it fits in with how the genders are regarded generally within society - that women are submissive to men, that men are the providers while women are there to be looked at.

At the Video Music Awards, Cyrus 'twerked' with Robin Thicke while wearing a skin-coloured latex bi-

kini along to his song Blurred Lines. Thicke says the song is about the "relationship between men and women" but it is widely interpreted to be about the supposed 'blurred lines' between consensual sex and rape.

In the video, Thicke and his male co-performers are fully clothed while women dance around in their underwear, including one being led on her knees by a dog lead - Thicke sings: "I hate these blurred lines, I know you want it".

The director of Cyrus' Wrecking Ball video is notorious photographer Terry Richardson. He has boasted that his photo shoots have ended with models "performing sex acts" on him and that he is a "powerful guy...dominating all these girls".

But music is also a method of expression and so can be used for protest and rebellion of women, such as the riot grrrl movement in the 1990s and more recently the protest and subsequent jailing of Russian band Pussy Riot.

The discussion around Miley Cyrus' behaviour has opened an important debate at a time when more and more women are making their voices heard against sexism.

Women now need to campaign for their rights in the music industry. But particularly important is tackling sexism, objectification and rape culture - through campaigns like Rape is No Joke - wherever they rear their ugly head and fighting for an alternative to the capitalist system that engenders them.



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Mental health services - fighting privatisation in Salford

Kevin Corran
Salford Socialist Party

Early this year, workers in Salford's Community Mental Health Services were told that Greater Manchester West (GMW) NHS Mental Health Trust, who we were seconded to and managed by, would no longer provide that role.

So, they said, we would probably be outsourced to the private sector.

Support workers knew full well what privatised care often means for staff and service users and were terrified by this prospect.

We couldn't sit back and let it happen. This staff team has 100% union membership with years of experience of fighting cuts.

We also have a close relationship with service users and carers' groups in Salford which were vital in several successful campaigns.

Through the union, we approached our senior managers to call on the council to take back direct management from GMW and give us security as in-house staff. They told us it wasn't possible, but we wouldn't accept that. We said 'savings' could be made by



Lobbying the mental health trust HQ photo Paul Gerrard

placing us under the management of existing council managers instead of spending money on GMW managers.

Our persistence - and our reputation as workers who don't take the

word 'no' particularly well - convinced commissioners within the council (who decide who gets to provide what services) to let us try to find a council-delivered model.

Workshops over three months pulled together the council, GMW, Unison and a service user rep.

Together we came up with a plan that gave us within the union the opportunity to show that our involvement not only protects staff, but also provision of services.

Unfortunately there will be some voluntary redundancies, people who are determined to leave, but no compulsory redundancies, no cuts in pay or terms and conditions, no loss of service to any individual and of course, no privatisation.

In services, one overnight place will close but places will be found for all the residents.

The place will not be closed before they have moved while a new facility is created with more beds in it. In fact the council has pledged more capital investment.

It shows that if you're persistent and organise through the union you can still get vital concessions. The union must make sure that the voice of the workforce, the users and those who have ideas to make the service better are heard.

Linking unionised staff, carers

and service user groups has produced a formidable force to protect services in Salford. It will be a vital component in organising opposition to any more cuts that threaten workers and service-users.

Cuts Can Be Beaten

Read more about the battle to defend mental health support services in Salford in 'Cuts Can Be Beaten - how mental health service users took on Salford Council and won'

£1 or £2 solidarity

On sale at Socialism 2013
or from Paul Gerrard
pgerrard2001@yahoo.
co.uk

Ongoing US spying row reveals new tensions between imperialist powers

Millions of ordinary people internationally routinely spied upon by state agencies

Robert Bechert
Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

Widespread anger across the world, especially in Europe and Latin America, and embarrassment in Washington greeted the news that the US security services and those of its closest allies, particularly Britain, have been spying both on their supposed allies and tens of millions of ordinary people around the world.

Now the Obama administration, faced with mounting anger inside and outside the US, has begun to distance itself from the NSA (National Security Agency). Suddenly Dianne Feinstein, the Democratic chair of the Senate intelligence committee, has announced she is "totally opposed" to spying on allies.

Feinstein claimed that Obama was "not aware" of the bugging of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's mobile phones, but whether this is really true or an attempt at saving face is not clear.

Capitalist state machines are not necessarily controlled by political leaders, they can act as a "state with-

There is a growing popular feeling that unaccountable states are gaining more powers over, and knowledge of, the lives of ordinary people

in a state". Way back in the 1950s the then Republican US president Eisenhower warned of the influence of a "military-industrial complex".

In Britain the former minister Chris Huhne now says that Cabinet ministers and members of the national security council were told nothing about the existence and scale of the vast data-gathering programmes run by British and American intelligence agencies, ministers were in "utter ignorance" of the two biggest covert operations, Prism and Tempora.

Certainly political leaders, including solidly pro-capitalist politicians, are not necessarily told what the "security state" is actually doing. However, the long time it has taken the Obama administration to distance itself from some of

the NSA's activities heightens suspicions that it is only retreating now under pressure.

The fact is that former US defence contractor Edward Snowden's revelations have had an increasing impact. They continue to shine some shafts of light onto the attempts to build 'security states' around the world, the attempt to use 'terrorist threats' as a justification for curtailing democratic rights and the very real tensions that exist between most powers, including so-called allies.

It is perhaps no accident that the US's tapping of Merkel's phone began in the run-up to the 2003 war on Iraq. The then Bush administration, along with Labour's Tony Blair, did not trust either the French or German governments which were opposed to the invasion of Iraq.

It is really no surprise that states are trying to make the maximum use they can of new technologies to increase their powers. The scale of what can now be done is striking; the US National Security Agency is building capacity to process 20 billion "record events" every single day.

Neither is it surprising that states, including allies, spy on each other. As has been repeatedly said since Snowden started releasing documents, at the end of the day each state defends its own interests, ie the interests of its ruling class.

While now apologising for bugging some leaders, Obama has overseen a big growth in US cyber activity, ranging from mass surveillance to increased assassination by unmanned drones.

"Five Eyes"

Public anger in Germany has forced Merkel to publicly acknowledge that the US government was bugging her mobile phone. Initially back in August, as the German election campaign was starting, Merkel's chief of staff dismissed the issue as being "finished" because she feared that such revelations could boost the Pirate party.

Merkel, along with French President Francois Hollande, is using this scandal to demand that Germany and France are let into the US led 'inner circle' of spies, currently called "Five Eyes", that share information and 'promise' not to spy on one another.

The very existence of "Five Eyes" and Britain's closeness to the US is an illustration of how underlying conflicts of interests, potential or current, between states can continue.



The US National Security Agency is building capacity to process 20 billion "record events" every single day

Britain's closeness, the so-called 'special relationship,' with the US stems from the historic decline of British capitalism from the end of the 19th century.

The Second World War cemented this relationship and was the basis for the 1946 intelligence agreement that eventually became the "Five Eyes" group (extended over the following ten years to include Canada, Australia and New Zealand). After the failure of the 1956 Anglo-French Suez invasion, the British ruling class accepted that it could no longer act in a totally independent fashion.

The resulting British dependence on the US has put Cameron in a difficult position as Snowden's leaks continue. More and more evidence is coming out of Britain's role in the US spying operation, like GCHQ's Tempora operation to tap international fibre-optic cables or its own operations against Belgium and Italy.

The British government is desperately trying to cover its own tracks and shut down criticism by endlessly repeating the claim that Snowden's leaks were damaging the fight against terrorism.

Thus Andrew Parker, the MI5 boss, says these leaks have done "enormous damage".

Cameron, speaking just after the news of the bugging of Merkel's phones made international headlines, dismissed all the complaints as "la-di-dah, airy-fairy" criticisms of Britain's "brave" spies as he evaded answering the question of whether the British security services were involved in spying on other European leaders.

These pleas to trust the state are not plausible. One of the reasons for Snowden's actions was that his bosses were lying to the US Congress. No one has forgotten the lies that surrounded the British and US governments' drive towards invading Iraq.

This continual lying and deceit is one reason why the security and military services themselves are not 'secure'. Operatives such as Snowden, Chelsea Manning (formerly known as Bradley Manning) and others, disgusted at what they

see, leak information.

In Britain and internationally there is a growing popular feeling that unaccountable states are gaining more and more powers over, and knowledge of, the lives of ordinary people. There is also widespread disgust at the generous compliance of the telecoms multinationals.

Renewed rivalries

One of the aspects Snowden has exposed is the rivalry between nation states, this is why the US bugged Merkel and other foreign leaders.

This is the reason why, as the Wall Street Journal has reported, that the bugging of some of the 35 foreign leaders the NSA targeted is still continuing.

There has been a fundamental shift in the world situation over the last two decades. To a certain extent the post-1945 division of the world into competing capitalist and non-capitalist sectors provided a 'glue' which held most of the major capitalist powers together.

They felt threatened that a rival system to capitalism existed, notwithstanding that Russia, China, and the eastern Bloc countries were not 'socialist' but were run by totalitarian elites.

However, these states' economies were not capitalist, and their problems were not the ones of capitalist booms and slumps. But, the collapse of these regimes removed a rival social system.

The restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, along with the tremendous growth of the capitalist economy in China, removed a common threat to the capitalist powers and allowed a freer rein to national rivalries between them.

While the integration of production and markets around the world have held back the dramatic worsening of international relations during these first years since the world economic crisis erupted in 2007/8, the rivalries between the competing powers have not gone away.

The US bugging campaign is seen by other countries as part of an attempt to get a stronger hand in trade negotiations. But it is certain that

other countries do the same as they attempt to steal an advantage over one another.

Many in France and Spain have been shocked by stories of tens of millions of phone calls, texts and emails being checked by the NSA just in one month. But the complaints of their governments are hypocritical as their own security services are no better. They have had their own security scandals.

In Germany there are the open questions as to why the security services were unable to track down or stop the NSU underground Nazi grouping that carried out ten murders after 2000 and why security files relating to the NSU were destroyed.

French governments have been prepared to intervene brutally to defend their own capitalist interests, frequently in francophone Africa but also wider afield, including the sinking of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in New Zealand in 1985.

History

For socialists the defence of democratic rights of the mass of people is essential. This includes opposition to increased powers to an unaccountable, and therefore undemocratic, state and its forces.

History has shown that a state machine cannot indefinitely hold back a people rising in struggle. Egypt is a good case in point. The US's modern technology could not prevent the overthrow of its ally Mubarak in 2011. Instead both the Egyptian military and its US ally were forced to retreat and hope that they could exploit the weaknesses of the revolutionary movement to buy time and prepare a counter-blow.

The Egyptian revolution's fate will not be decided by bugging or hacking but by how the mass movement develops, especially whether or not the working people can agree upon a socialist programme which can give them power and break the rule of unaccountable elites and their security forces.

This is why it will not be spies but working people who will have the opportunity to reshape the world.



Socialism TODAY

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ZERO-HOUR CONTRACTS CAN BE BEATEN!

Join the day of action on 5 November



photo Paul Mattsson

Ian Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

The CBI, the organisation representing Britain's bosses, touts zero-hour contracts as the solution to the youth unemployment crisis. Enthusiasts such as ex-Apprentice con-

testant Katie Hopkins have revealed what big business is really thinking – if you're sick, pregnant, or disabled, you don't deserve work.

It is no coincidence that unemployment has (according to official statistics) dropped slightly below two and a half million when 5.5 million are employed on zero-hour contracts. You can be on one of these

contracts and receive no hours whatsoever, week after week, but still not be included in the unemployment statistics - it's a dream come true for establishment politicians!

But zero-hour contracts can be beaten – the recent victory of Hovis bakery workers striking against the use of them shows just that. On 5 November Youth Fight for Jobs, through

our initiative, Sick Of Your Boss?, will organise protests, stunts and occupations against Sports Direct and any zero-hour employer that thinks they can get away with giving us nothing. Join us for the next wave of action to reverse the race to the bottom.

See youthfightforjobs.com for details of what's happening near you and reports of campaigning

Are you sick of your boss?

Enough is enough!

- Give us proper contracts, guaranteed hours and full employment rights
- Pay us enough to live
- Give us decent tea and lunch breaks
- Stop the bosses' 'fire at will' attitude
- We have the right to get organised at work

What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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