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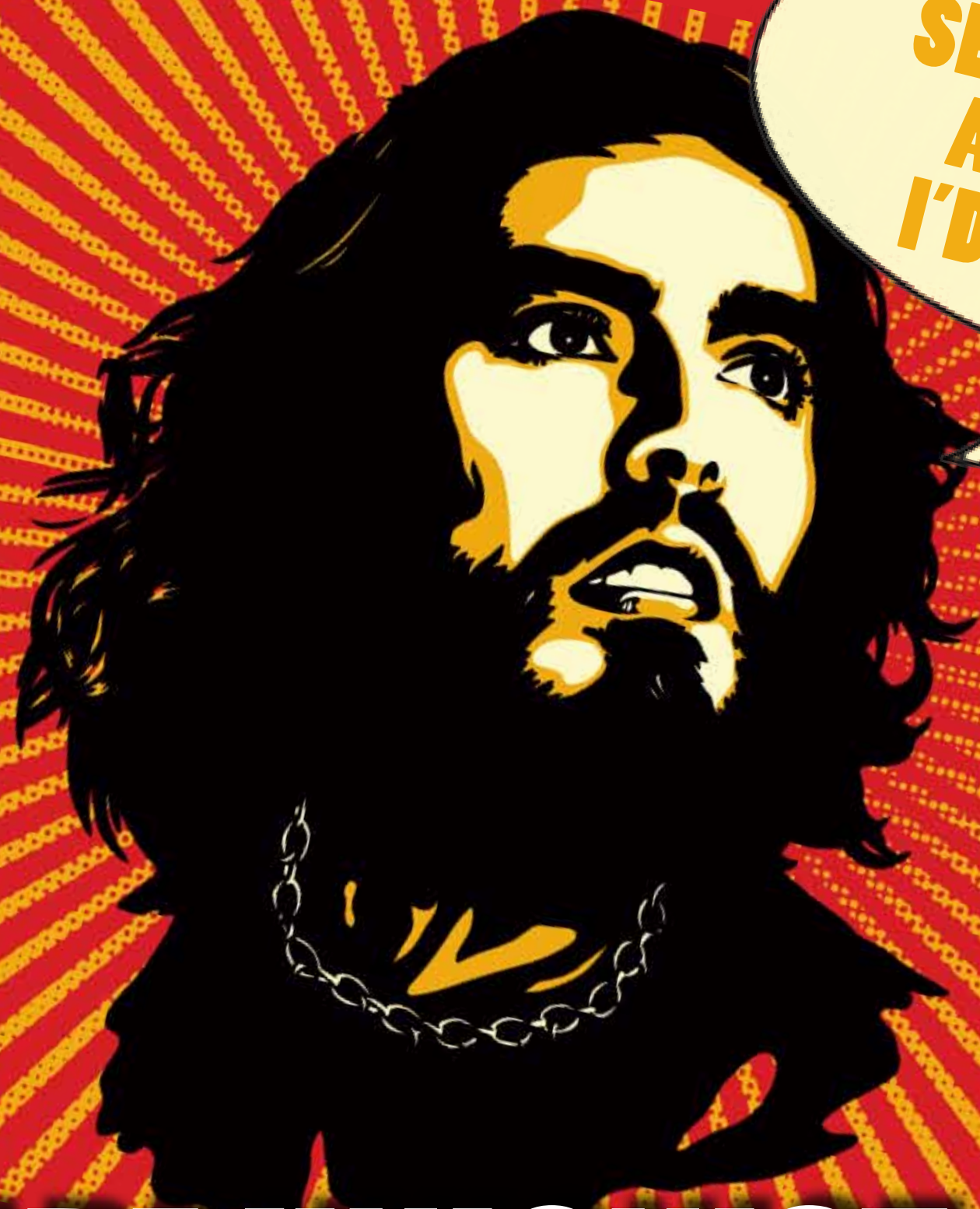
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TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

Dave Nellist
National chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)

In the weeks running up to Christmas, local authorities around the country will be announcing more savage cuts to local services. Already under this Tory-Liberal Coalition some six out of ten councils are either limiting, or planning to limit, home visits to the elderly with care needs to a maximum of 15 minutes.

16% of Sure Start children's centres have closed, and 8% of libraries. Youth clubs, street wardens, in fact many of the services that act as glue to hold together local communities have already gone. And hundreds of thousands of jobs providing those services have been lost as part of the 26% cuts in local authority spending during the lifetime of this parliament. But it's not enough for the Coalition.

George Osborne announced at the Tory Party conference a further 10% cut in local authority funding going into the first year of the next parliament. And Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition loyally agreed to match those cuts pound for pound. Those services could have been, and can be, saved if councillors and councils are

prepared to fight and prepared to say no to the cuts. They have the power to make a difference. They control budgets of billions of pounds. They also have some £19 billion in reserves.

There are isolated examples of that resistance in Southampton, in Warrington, in Hull, in Harrow. There has been an abstention (then resignation) in Lambeth, there's been a resignation in York, another resignation in Barking. There's TUSC's own councillors in Preston, Walsall and Maltby. But compare that to the over 6,000 Labour councillors across this country whose only defence is that they're 'carrying out the cuts with a heavy heart'. That's no consolation to the victims of those cuts up and down Britain.

It's also nothing compared to the history of when socialists led councils. In Poplar, in Tower Hamlets, in 1921, socialists raised unemployment pay rates rather than subsidise richer boroughs in London and were jailed for refusing to obey the government of the day. But while the government ministers who jailed them are forgotten, the Poplar councillors are remembered today because of their maxim: "It's better to break the law than break the poor".

So are the Labour councillors in the tiny town of Claycross. 50 years later, eleven councillors

refused to raise the rents which the Heath Tory government instructed them to do. They instead raised the wages of council workers. They were surcharged. They were barred from office by the Labour Party. They were banned from office by the High Court. But as the chair of housing said: "if we're going, at least we're going with a record".

And just like in that film Spartacus - when the Claycross councillors were banned from office there was a succession of local people coming forward to do the job. That should be the lesson today for any Labour councils or councillors prepared to stand up.

And then the battle in which the forerunner of this party played perhaps its greatest of roles, in Liverpool in the 1980s. 47 brave Labour councillors, one third of them supporters of the Militant newspaper, refused to make Thatcher's cuts. Instead they answered to the real needs of their city - building 5,000 houses, building schools, parks and sports centres, giving employment to thousands of workers.

They were savagely attacked by Neil Kinnock in 1985. He claimed 'a Labour council, a Labour council, was scuttling around the city, handing out redundancy notices'. But no one during the three years of the socialist control of Liverpool

council actually lost their jobs. Where's Neil Kinnock today? Where is he when there are 77 Labour councils who are axing jobs, cutting pay, cutting conditions? Those councils are a disgrace.

So what do we next May when 4,156 seats on 160 councils come up for election? Do we leave the only choice for working people between the parties of the establishment who differ nothing on the direction of austerity but only marginally on the speed with which those cuts should be made? TUSC has decided that working people deserve better. TUSC plans to stand, on 22 May 2014, the largest number of candidates to the left of the establishment parties that ever stood in an election in the history of this country.

Now we've only been going four years and you've all heard the joke before. When I first googled TUSC in 2010 the top result was the Taunton Ukulele Strummers Club. It's not that now. We've stood nearly 600 candidates in the last four years in local and national elections and received over 100,000 votes, and, yes, some of those individual votes were modest.

We know we got less than 1% in Eastleigh and less than 1% in Lincoln. Byelections are the toughest terrain a new political party can fight on. So I want to pay tribute and say thanks to each one of those candidates, whatever the vote they

got, for flying the flag for TUSC in those elections.

It seemed within minutes of getting less than 1% in Eastleigh and Lincoln, left-wing celebrity Owen Jones tweeted joyfully how TUSC was a waste of time. But when a week after Lincoln we got 9.7% in Caerphilly or 27% in Fleetwood or we win a seat just outside Rotherham then Twitter and Facebook are silent from our colleagues on the left.

Part of our problem is general visibility. There are other factors as well. There are general difficulties in the months before a general election. We know you don't win in the three weeks of a byelection except in exceptional circumstances or with very large budgets. You harvest the votes in those three weeks from the seeds you've sown in the months before that campaign.

Visibility is a problem. The only national TV interview we've had in four years of existence has been two minutes and 14 seconds with Andrew Neil on the Daily Politics show in the 2010 general election. So we need to raise our sights and stand sufficient candidates so the BBC in particular, and the media in general, can't ignore us. That's 15% of seats in an election, the benchmark for BBC 'fair coverage'.

Next May that means 625 contests, four times as many as TUSC has ever stood in pre-

vious council elections. The work for that has begun. Meetings in Plymouth, and all the way to Sheffield. Committees established on Merseyside and elsewhere. Visits to trade union branches and community organisations. We think we've got already prospective candidates for a third to a half of seats. But we need more.

We need to find ways of discussing this. That means discussing with the trade unions whose representatives sit on the TUSC steering committee. It also must involve the anti-bedroom tax groups, the anti-cuts groups and others. That's how we can ensure that, in every town and every city where there are elections next May, Labour can't hide behind its synthetic opposition to austerity cuts, and a real socialist alternative is on offer.

We're not even half way through the plans of the programme of austerity that the capitalist class has for working people in this country to save their banks and their profit system. Osborne at the Tory conference said seven more years to the beginning of the 2020s for his plans for cuts.

In reality they're using the excuse of austerity to rewrite the map of social provision in Britain, to reverse the gains in the public supply of education, health, social and welfare services

in the post-war period. And there's no challenge from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. That's years more of cuts in pensions, more years of young people on the scrapheap of unemployment, or stuck in dead-end jobs or saddled with £50,000 pounds of student debt. But it doesn't have to be that way.

This is still the sixth richest country on the planet, but what we have isn't fairly distributed. Labour and Tory governments since 2008 have committed £141 billion to repairing the damage to the banking system caused by 2008's financial crash. Over the same period from 2008 to today the top 1,000 individuals in this country have seen their wealth rise by £138 billion. Their lives are enriched by austerity while millions of our folk live in a street with a food bank at the end of it.

If the division of wealth in Britain was only the same as it was a generation ago the average wage would be £7,000 a year higher than it is today. The gap between the rich and the rest wouldn't be accelerating. There's a single narrative in British politics today: their wealth has to be paid for by our austerity, our youth clubs, our libraries, our elderly care, our health and education. TUSC intends to challenge that with a socialist alternative.

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

Help us find the candidates for next year. This is based on the speech that Dave gave on 3 November at the closing rally of the Socialism 2013 weekend event. See www.socialistparty.org.uk for video and audio recordings and reports

WE NEED YOU TO STAND AGAINST CUTS ● www.tusc.org.uk



the Socialist

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Issue 789

Price: £1 (Solidarity: £2)

Stunning election victory in Seattle

90,000

VOTES FOR

SOCIALIST

CHANGE



Hannah Sell

Four and a half thousand miles away, in Seattle USA, the possibility of building a mass electoral voice for working class people has been glimpsed. This is in the most powerful capitalist country in the world, with much less of a history of a strong socialist movement than in Britain. Yet Kshama Sawant has been elected as a council member for Seattle on behalf of Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party). At the time of writing Kshama has won over 90,000 votes for socialism.

In her interview in this week's Socialist she declares: "I've seen a

lot of comments saying that there's something unique about Seattle. Of course there are always things that are different from one situation to another but... given the crisis of capitalism... there is absolutely no question that there are opportunities. And if it can happen in the belly of the beast there is no reason why it can't be done elsewhere. But it's not automatic which is why we need to consciously build our forces."

Here in Britain, at election time, four in ten people say they choose 'none of the above'. This is a record level of disillusionment with the major capitalist parties. No surprise. Cameron has proudly declared that the Tories plan permanent austerity. They intend that all the misery of the last two and a

half years - pay cuts, decimation of public services, the bedroom tax, queues outside food banks, choosing between heating and eating - will continue forever.

Nor is Labour fundamentally different. While many workers will vote Labour at a general election in order to try and get rid of the Con-Dems, it is not in the hope of getting a government that will stand up for the 99%. On the contrary, Labour leaders Miliband and Balls have made it clear that 'the next Labour government will make cuts too'.

Labour local authorities across the country are implementing the Con-Dem cuts. Individual Labour councillors who vote against cuts face suspension or expulsion from

the party for their 'crime'. Rachel Reeves, the shadow welfare minister, has declared that Labour will be tougher on welfare than the current government!

The need for a mass party that stands for the majority - the working class - has never been so urgent. In the local elections on 22 May 2014 the Socialist Party in England and Wales will be taking part in a major electoral challenge to austerity as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Join us to campaign, vote and think about being a candidate, for TUSC.

But it's not just about elections. Kshama was successful because she stood in solidarity with campaigns for decent wages and con-

ditions for workers in Seattle. She constantly made clear that she is a socialist who fights for a fundamentally different type of society.

Capitalism is a system that works for the super-rich 1%, based on the exploitation and misery of millions of working people. The victory in Seattle reflects the fact that ordinary people, in the US and beyond, have had enough. We need to fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism, based on democratic planning to meet the needs and desires of the majority of the population and of the planet.

See an interview with Kshama Sawant on pages 6 and 7
See more about the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and how you can get involved at tusc.org.uk



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Fight the Tory witch-hunt against Unite

Tory Prime Minister David Cameron has ordered an investigation into Unite's use of 'leverage' when trade union members are defending jobs and conditions. 'Leverage' is the name for a detailed and high-profile campaign designed to apply pressure to employers and their clients. Socialist Party members and the National Shop Stewards Network have been proud to participate in many of Unite's leverage protests.

Leverage has often been effective, particularly when it backs up strike action. In 2011-12 the Sparks, construction electricians, defeated an attempt to cut their wages by 35%. Leverage supplemented the unofficial and planned official strike action of the workers.

Last year it was key to getting Honda convenor Paddy Brennan's suspension lifted, and this year exposing the blacklists helped sacked construction electrician Frank Morris get his job back on Crossrail. It was also a major factor in sacked MMP workers winning a decent redundancy pay-off.

The BBC reported that Con-Dem axe-man Francis Maude said "protest is fine" but it should not be allowed to move over "into intimidation and clearly inappropriate activity," with the management being treated as "the enemy". This is utter Tory hypocrisy.

Working class people who have spent years and even decades fighting injustice – over blacklisting, the Shrewsbury Pickets, the miners at Orgrave and the families of the dead and maimed at Hillsborough, in the aftermath of Grangemouth – will be disgusted that Cameron is rushing out an inquiry into this legitimate and peaceful leverage strategy. In a feeble effort to distance himself from the Tories, Vince Cable has insisted that the Lib Dems only supported the move because the probe will also look at the practices of employers.

But while Unite has been put into the spotlight by ministers and the increasingly virulent union-baiting press, there is no mention of an investigation into the real bully-boy Jim Ratcliffe of Grangemouth company Ineos who put a loaded gun to the head of thousands

of workers and blackmailed a workforce and a community, even a nation. No, he actually gets £134 million in government grants and loan guarantees and even £40 million off the plant's fuel bills!

Cabinet Office Minister Maude gave the game away when he stated: "This forms part of our long-term plan to ensure Britain remains competitive and to secure an economic recovery for hard-working people." For 'competitive,' read continuing to drive down the living standards and rights of workers to maintain and expand the profits of big business.

Despite Tory claims over the last couple of decades that the unions are finished, their enormous potential power is still seen by the bosses and their representatives as the major threat. Therefore the Tory view is that, on top of Thatcher's anti-union laws, maintained throughout New Labour's reign, the unions have to be further emasculated.

Grangemouth

This attack unfortunately also shows that the enemies of the labour and trade union movement often have a more realistic appraisal of or concern for the latent strength of the organised working class than the union leaders. They are dimly aware of the seething anger and frustration that exists within large sections of the working class, and also the middle class. This anger will explode at some stage – but it needs the trade union leaders to provide a strategy for effective action.

The bosses and the Tories have been emboldened by the Grangemouth setback. That is the motivation for this 'review'. Ratcliffe had clearly been preparing for years to take on and defeat the workers at Grangemouth. Similar preparation by the workers' movement could have ensured Ratcliffe's defeat.

However, this was not a decisive defeat. Now, many union activists there and throughout the country will be digesting the lessons and considering the type and scale of action necessary to prepare for future struggles of this character. Militant tactics such as occu-



Len McCluskey photo Paul Mattsson

pation can be posed as well as the call for nationalisation.

But the call for a 24-hour general strike would have a huge response. The steady stream of lively and determined local strike action shows that where a lead is given, workers respond. Generalised strike action is the most effective way to shift the balance of forces in society, and could have stayed the hand of Ratcliffe.

Now, in the face of the Con-Dem onslaught, the working class must give its full support to Unite and its members. If any measures are taken against Unite or the union movement in general, there should be solidarity across the trade unions in the same spirit as the

mass action in 1972 that freed the Pentonville dockers. Then, in the face of mass rank and file strikes forcing the TUC to call a general strike, the Tory government of Ted Heath backed down.

Labour conference

One of Cameron's main motives in initiating the investigation is probably to put pressure on Labour and Ed Miliband. After all, the inquiry is scheduled to report around the time of Labour's special spring conference. That conference forms part of Labour's own attack on trade unions.

Called in the wake of Falkirk, where Labour brought in the police to investigate Unite, this conference is to decide on the Collins Review into the union link with Labour. It will recommend further weakening of the unions' collective voice in the party, if not its elimination.

Unfortunately, Unite general secretary Len McCluskey has appeared to be prepared to comply with Miliband's proposals. This strategy leaves working class people politically defenceless in the face of the austerity offensive. As a result Unite members are grappling with how they can secure a political voice.

On Labour, as he has admitted, Len is increasingly out of kilter with many Unite members, particularly those who live and work in areas with Labour-run councils who are passing on all Osborne's brutal cuts. The Observer reported this weekend that the price of Miliband and Balls' acceptance of Tory austerity is a further £40 billion of cuts that they will have to implement if elected. No wonder that they are not committed to repeal the anti-union laws!

The seven million trade unionists need a party that is not only not embarrassed to be linked with the unions, but has the defence of union rights and the commitment to fight all cuts emblazoned on its banner. The building of such a party, which the initiative of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an important preparatory step towards, is even more urgent in the light of this developing witch-hunt.

Unite sector conferences Union delegates seek strategy for resistance

Kevin Parslow

Unite 1228 branch secretary
(personal capacity)

Unite the Union held its biennial sector conferences from 11 to 14 November. They took place in the midst of attacks on the union's methods of campaigning from the Tories, the capitalist press and the Labour Party.

General secretary Len McCluskey said that the union "would not be retreating from the leverage campaign or peaceful protest" that had come under attack in the aftermath of the Grangemouth setback.

He would not "cow this union or its leadership" to the likes of the Daily Mail. Delegates were however warned that such big business mouthpieces were in attendance and would be looking to any incident or quote to stir trouble against Unite.

But delegates were not deterred from looking for answers to the important questions they face. Socialist Party members were to the fore. Should the union be bolder against

all its opponents? Health delegate Andy Ford asked when coordinated action with other unions would be organised.

Len admitted that the TUC coordinating committee was not working. He said unions wanted to publicise their own disputes and felt their case would not be heard on a coordinated strike day.

But Unite is the biggest union in the country and if it gave a lead in calling for a 24-hour general strike the impact on workers in other unions would be enormous.

In answer to a question on Unite's political strategy construction delegate Dave Walsh was told the union "does not exist to bring the government down"; it is working to get Labour elected in 2015. Len said the union was not prepared to be passive and would support protests, although he was guarded as to what that and other comments meant.

Local government delegate Danny Hogan raised the grim prospect of another 144,000 jobs going in his sector even if a Labour government is elected in 2015. In response Len said the union would have to wait

and see if it is successful in changing the Labour Party.

But an increasing number of delegates are questioning the political strategy of the union following the suspensions of councillors for fighting cuts and particularly the Falkirk events and the failure to get Unite members selected as parliamentary candidates.

Radicalism

Len did send a message to Ed Miliband: Labour needs a radical programme or it will be defeated. If Labour loses the next election, the union will have to revisit its political strategy.

But any suggestion of a radical programme from Labour was absent as a series of shadow ministers spoke to the individual sectors.

Local Government and Communities shadow minister Hilary Benn only promised Not for Profit sector delegates a redistribution of money from 'rich' to poor councils, as if so-called rich areas had no poverty problems at all.

These members, working in or-

ganisations that increasingly have to deal with the effects of austerity while having grants cut, were so angry they bombarded Benn with a series of questions, inadequately answered.

There is demand for a bold strategy reflected in this incident and resolutions passed in the local government and health sectors calling for strike action.

An attendance of 20 at the So-

cialist Party fringe meeting to hear speeches from National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams and Unite Housing branch secretary Suzanne Muna also illustrates this. Angry delegates came to hear socialist explanations for the Grangemouth setback and a real alternative to New Labour. Increasingly, Unite members will turn to socialist ideas that will push Unite towards fighting policies and a break with Labour.



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Birmingham children's services - a victim of cuts

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham city council's Children's Services Department faces the real threat of being taken over and possibly privatised by the hated government education minister Michel Gove if the upcoming Ofsted inspection fails to find significant improvements.

Earlier this year a similar partial outsourcing of Doncaster council's children's services was made by Gove involving private companies Impower and Penna.

The department has been judged to be failing for the last four years and has been branded a 'national disgrace' by chief Ofsted inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw in the light of high profile tragedies such as Khyra Ishaq in 2008 and Keanu Williams in 2011, as well as 23 serious case reviews.

The major problem has not been 'incompetent and uncaring' social workers but relentless cuts leading to staff shortages. Currently there are 108 child protection social work vacancies of which 42 aren't being covered by agency staff, and a third of social work supervisor posts are vacant. Last month alone 21 experienced social workers left to be replaced by 14 inexperienced ones.

The average caseload is 29 per social worker and the city has 1,000 active child protection cases. Attacks such as those from Ofsted and the public demonising of the department makes recruiting staff to fill existing vacancies more difficult, working in Birmingham is now seen as a black mark on a social worker's CV.

The department has had a succession of three restructures and four directors in the last five years. Frequent changes of senior management and the loss of staff in the last re-structuring have led to a failure to prioritise recruiting and retaining staff.

Leaked emails describe a dys-



photo Paul Mattsson

If the service is underfunded, future disasters are inevitable

functional department in meltdown and a breakdown of trust between senior managers and frontline social workers.

This year a quarter of all of Birmingham's enormous spending cuts affected children's services, including the closure of five children's homes. But that didn't stop the council spending £109,625 on Impower consultants to improve children's social services in one week in August (equivalent to about three social workers for a year).

Pressures

As poverty increases so will the pressure on social services which makes the council's commitment to only ring-fencing the children's services budget for 2014-15 woefully inadequate. Ring-fencing a budget in future years without allowing for inflation is still a cut.

Gove has shown that his ignorance of social services matches his ignorance of education. Privatisation clearly is no alternative as any

private provider would look to make a profit first and care for children second.

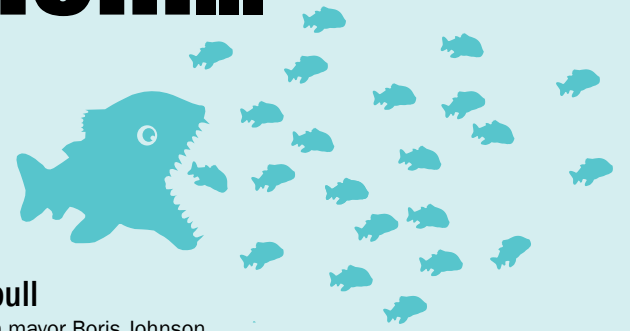
It's hard to see how profit can be made from intensive long-term and costly interventions in any case. Moreover, if the service is underfunded, future disasters are inevitable.

Birmingham's children's services have failed under both Tory and Con-Dem administrations.

Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, Khalid Mahmood, rightly described the privatisation threat as politically motivated but then went on to say: "If they are going to do it (privatise) they should just do it instead of making leaks and threats". The current state of affairs is directly linked to Con-Dem cuts and Labour's refusal to prioritise local services over bankers' bailouts.

A new workers' party prepared to draw up a needs budget to protect vital services can't come too soon for Birmingham's vulnerable children. It could literally be a matter of life and death.

Them...



Boris's bull

Tory London mayor Boris Johnson is standing up for minorities, "from the homeless to Irish travellers to ex-gang members... and the very, very rich"!

"We should stop bashing the rich. On the contrary... we should be offering them humble and hearty thanks," he trumpeted.

It's not clear which part of Boris's anatomy uttered these words in a recent Daily Telegraph interview but it probably wasn't his mouth!

To justify this nonsense Boris cites the contribution the super-rich make in taxes, conveniently forgetting to mention their tax avoidance practices using a myriad of legal loopholes which his party refuses to close. Johnson deliberately nurtures his public persona of an 'establishment outsider', in order to boost his electoral standing. In reality he is a die-hard Tory reactionary, happy to perpetuate a socially divisive, exploitative capitalist system.

Fat cats

Perhaps it was the news that bosses at the 100 top FTSE companies have seen their earnings increase by an average 14% in 2012-13 (while workers' pay has only increased by 0.7%), that prompted Boris to defend the status quo.

- Average pay for a director of a FTSE 100 firm is £3.3 million
- Top bosses' pay is growing 20 times faster than that of the average worker
- Over the past ten years, the median total earnings of a FTSE 100 chief executive has gone up by 243%

Empty stomachs

As the super-rich get ever richer, shocking new figures have been released showing that hospital admissions of people suffering from malnutrition in the UK shot up from 3,161 in 2008-09 to 5,499 in 2012. This 57% increase coincides with a dramatic rise in the cost of living and the huge increase in the number of households seeking assistance from food charities. The number of people suffering rickets - a traditional 'poverty disease' caused by a vitamin D deficiency - has also leapt from 561 cases in 2008-09 to 702 last year.

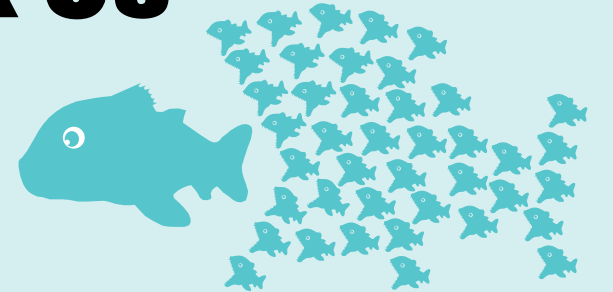
Permanent austerity

While starving people were being treated in hospital, Tory PM David Cameron and fellow city bigwigs were stuffing their gullets at the Lord Mayor's banquet in London. The message to his fellow millionaires was the need for a government of 'permanent austerity' ie cuts in spending on public services and welfare... forever!

It's magic

Now you see it, now you don't. But the disappearance of ten years of online Tory party leaders' speeches wasn't caused by a wave of a magician's wand but apparently by someone in the nasty party pressing a delete key. All evidence of the party's pledges made between 2000 and 2010, when in opposition, has disappeared from the Tories' website. These included protecting the NHS, retaining Sure Start centres, pursuing a green agenda for industry, scrapping mega-expensive PFI schemes...

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Labour MPs absent in bedroom tax vote

Richard Neville
Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation press officer

On 12 November the Labour Party put forward an opposition day motion in the Commons calling for the immediate ending of the bedroom tax, any costs to be covered by reversing tax cuts for the wealthiest.

For six hours the Commons debate heard tales of the suffering imposed on working class communities despite being laughed at by Tory MPs. No cabinet ministers were present.

Welfare minister Iain Duncan Smith, on a junket to Paris, missed the debate and vote. This coward couldn't even bring himself to defend his policy, which brings such misery to hundreds of thousands of people, 80% of whom are disabled in Scotland.

Many Labour MPs also didn't bother to show and voice their op-

position to the bedroom tax.

Bin the Bedroom tax Renfrewshire, in which Socialist Party activists play a vital role in forcing concessions from the local council for tenants, are shocked that Douglas Alexander, MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire South, did not show up for the debate proposed by his own party.

It is claimed that since there was an MP from each party on the same delegation as Douglas Alexander, the vote was not affected. But if that was so what was the point in Labour having a six-hour debate.

If he can't be bothered to go to Westminster to fight for Renfrewshire residents facing a choice this winter of heating, eating or keeping a roof over their head, then what do we pay him his hugely inflated salary for?

We need political representation for the working class at all levels of government. Socialist Party activist Jamie Coccozza is standing in the

Shettleston byelection in Glasgow as part of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to try and gain that voice for our class. But we need more people like him, who are sick of austerity, cuts and the constant assault on our pay and living conditions, to stand up and be counted.

Now that we're told the bedroom tax is here to stay until at least 2015, those opposing it will be forced to act. The Labour Party must instruct all its councils to refuse to implement it and use their reserves and borrowing powers to remove the bedroom tax liability from affected tenants.

The Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation must continue to assemble its anti-eviction army, ordinary people, who are willing to engage in a campaign of civil disobedience, in order to protect people in their homes.

See page 5 for more

What we saw



Martin Powell-Davies photo Senan

Tory tweet recognises the real opposition to Michael Gove's wrecking policies in education!

Tory education news
@toryeducation

"Now this guy understands better what's going on!
electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk.
Commies understand politics"

Glasgow strike builds momentum

Pupil Support Assistants (PSA) staff organised by Glasgow City Unison took a third day of industrial action on 14 November. This was in their dispute with the Labour council over changes to conditions, including being forced to carry out medical duties.

1,000 workers took strike action across the city on 31 October. This was followed with a one-day strike in schools in the north east of the city and on 14 November southside schools had large picket lines. The union branch has rallied hundreds of chanting workers outside the council on each strike day.

Unison strikers were joined by 150 members of the GMB at the rally on 14 November. Other Unison members in the schools, including janitors and admin staff refused to cross PSA picket lines.

PSA workers in the north west of the city were on strike on 19 November. The feeling of members is that action should be organised city-wide, if the Labour council continue to be intransigent.

Strikers at Hazelwood School in Bellahouston told the Socialist: "Our action has put huge pressure on the council and we are now circulating a petition to parents. We are not intimidated by the threatening letters from council managers."

The strike has mobilised anger over a whole number of issues and has given the mainly female workforce a chance to fight back against an administration which has implemented £200 million of cuts.

Glasgow Unison education convenor Carol Ball, speaking at the rally, highlighted the impressive participation of workers in the dispute, with the members' mass meeting being jam-packed. The rally also heard from Unison branch secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member Brian Smith who pledged the branch's complete and continued support for further action.

Strikers from Bellahouston and Govanhill schools also spoke, reporting on the solidity of the strike action and giving graphic examples of the dangers to Glasgow's children if the council's agenda is implemented.

Determined to fight on

Following the solid national FBU strikes on 1 and 4 November, firefighters struck again on 13 November, for four hours, as the latest stage in their battle against attacks on pensions. Here are some of the reports from the picket lines.

The 20 FBU pickets at the Hartcliffe Way station in Bristol were both determined and reconciled to the fact that with management playing hardball, an escalation of strike action is inevitable and necessary.

With Bristol city council last week announcing a further £90 million cut to its budget and 1,000 job losses, everyone agreed that coordinated fightback action was needed.

Using colourful language some workers asked what the TUC was playing at in not initiating it. "I bet they would be keener if it was their pensions being slashed", was one of the more printable comments.

Fred summed up the workers' determination to secure decent conditions: "I'm here freezing my balls off today, so that when I'm a pensioner I'm not left freezing my balls off in an unheated house because my pension is rubbish."

Robin Clapp

Southampton

One worker at the Thornhill station said: "I am here because I will not give up without a fight. Our pensions are our deferred pay that we have contributed to, it's not a benefit".

The support given by the passing public was very obvious with lots of tooting of horns and thumbs raised. A passing cyclist stopped to talk to the pickets and praised them in their action.

Declan Clune



Firefighters put the closed sign up in east London photo Ian Pattison

East London

One firefighter at Silvertown commented: "My old man's 62 - and I know he couldn't be a firefighter now. They'll use it to find people not fit for the job then cut their pension."

"And they're privatising what they can in London - the fire engines are now owned by Asset Co and

the training centres are now run by Babcocks".

Pickets at Bethnal Green fire station were also determined, talking about how to build public support and involve newer union members more in the strike.

Eleven firefighters signed up to support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Naomi Byron and Bob Severn

UPS workers resist bad working conditions

Unite members working at the UPS Parcels depot in Camden, north London, will be on strike on 22 November. Workers have had enough of being forced to work overtime, impossible workloads and bullying.

The Camden depot is the biggest UPS depot in Europe and 91% of the 120 drivers and loaders in Unite voted for strike action.

In its drive to maximise profits, the company uses threats of disciplinary action to force workers to continue working beyond contractual hours until all deliveries

are made. Workers who go back to the depot with missed deliveries face disciplinary action in what is a "three counts and you're out" policy. Now a Unite shop steward has been suspended.

The same policy applies to drivers involved in 'avoidable' accidents on the road. The company admits that the definition of 'avoidable' can involve a parked van with no driver in it!

Union members have been threatened with disciplinary action if they vote to strike. Sometimes the

company puts on a breakfast or offers 'lunch with the boss', yet during meetings and in response to Unite examples of workers with caring responsibilities and the difficulties of long hours and forced overtime, a manager stated: "You cannot be a carer and work for UPS".

The campaign is spreading, depots in Barking, Feltham and Dartford will also now be considering strike action. And transport union RMT is also balloting its members.

Send messages of support to onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org

Portsmouth: 'Save the yards, nationalise'

Chris Pickett

Portsmouth TUC, personal capacity

The fight to save jobs at Portsmouth dockyards continued on 16 November with 300 trade unionists giving support and solidarity to dockyard workers and members of Unite and the GMB. They were joined by delegations from the RMT, PCS, and Unison as well as banners from the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and Portsmouth TUSC.

Socialist Party members started up the chant: "We don't believe Cameron's lies, save the yards, nationalise!", which was taken up by the rest of the march.

A rally at the end of the demonstration heard from speakers including Mick Tosh, Portsmouth TUC and RMT Wessex regional organiser who reminded everyone of the battles of the past: "Take the lessons from the Clyde and the 1970s, occupy the dockyards to defend jobs!"

Rob Williams, national chair of the NSSN gave a message of support from the NSSN and outlined the case for nationalisation and the opportunity to link the fight in



Many trade unionists joined the demo photo Dave Carr

the dockyards with other growing disputes. He said: "With the huge anger of ordinary people against the attacks on our jobs and living standards, I think such a struggle

would have huge support. I've seen the support given to the teachers, lecturers, firefighters and probation officers over the last few weeks. People will support fellow workers

fighting back. We believe we should all fight together - time for a 24-hour general strike."

The city is seething at the impact of the news with a steady stream of people queuing to sign the Socialist Party petition calling for nationalisation. We got a great response when we pointed out that the banks had been saved by nationalisation, why not the dockyards? The campaign will continue this weekend taking the message to Pompey fans at Fratton Park.

There is an urgent need to mobilise the anger here in Portsmouth with the campaigns in Scotland and for the unions to call a national demonstration in London to march on the BAE HQ and the defence ministry.

This could build the confidence of workers that the support exists to build a serious fight to save all jobs through a campaign of industrial action.

Socialist councillors Don Thomas and Keith Morrell, who spoke at the rally, are moving a resolution in support of the BAE workers at a forthcoming Southampton council meeting.

In brief

Blacklisting

There is a TUC day of action on blacklisting on 20 November. The battle against blacklisting in the construction industry is also a battle for trade union organisation and for good standards of health and safety.

The recent death of Richard Laco at the Francis Crick Institute site in London illustrates this. The site contractors there have been exposed as blacklisters and have tried to keep trade union and safety reps from their sites. There will be events across the country to expose and protest at blacklisting, including in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Cardiff.

Crown Post Offices

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members working in Crown post offices will be on strike for half a day from 2.30pm on 20 November over closures and pay. Staff in post office supply will also be on strike for a full day at the same time.

Managers in the supply chain who are members of Unite will also strike.

The Post Office wants to close or franchise out 75 Crown offices and cut 1,500 jobs.

Staff voted by 88% for action and this is their 13th strike. CWU members in the supply chain voted to strike by 76%.

NUT elections

Teaching unions NUT and NASUWT have issued a joint press release confirming that 'plans remain in place for a national strike in England and Wales no later than 13 February 2014 in the event of insufficient progress through negotiation'. But a date for a national strike needs to be confirmed as soon as possible - along with a plan for further escalating action against all the Con-Dem attacks. That's why Martin Powell-Davies, candidate in the NUT vice-presidential election is calling for:

- Get every school out on a united one-day national strike.
- Call on other unions - like firefighters, postal workers, civil servants - to strike alongside us.
- Build joint NUT/NASUWT school committees to keep up the pressure for joint action.
- Continue action next term; if Gove won't step back, we should step up to a two-day strike.

RMT election

Socialist Party member John Reid is standing for election to the transport union RMT's council of executives. He is fighting on a programme of defending jobs, pay, conditions and pensions in the face of government attacks. John is currently the regional secretary of RMT.

John is calling for ticket offices to be kept open, for a supervisor on every station, a £12 an hour minimum wage for cleaners. He is also saying no to the use of agencies - bring all regular work back in-house.

The election runs until 2 December.

Website

For more industrial and trade union reports, see the Socialist Party's website: www.socialistparty.org.uk

Bedroom tax: Words are cheap - we need action now!

Karen Fletcher
Barnsley campaigner

On 12 November I was part of the lobby that met in the House of Commons prior to the vote on Labour's motion to scrap the bedroom tax. Since I got involved in the campaign in April I have attended many meetings and rallies. But here the anger was directed at the time it took Labour leader Ed Miliband to pledge to repeal the bedroom tax.

Initially the only thing Labour had to say was that the tax isn't very nice. I think we worked that out for ourselves.

Words are cheap - actions are what we need. In Barnsley we have over 5,000 signatures on our petition but none of them belong to a single local MP. My MP is proud of making two speeches at anti-bedroom tax events in his constituency. Two in six months.

There was also a great deal of anger at the fact that Labour has had nothing to say about Labour councils rushing to evict tenants. Labour should tell their councils to stop doing Con-Dem dirty work.

I was particularly annoyed by statements made by two MPs. One said that he was enjoying the campaign. I'm glad he's enjoying himself because I am not. There is nothing I



One of the many anti-bedroom tax protests photo SP Scotland

would like more than not to need to do what I do. I don't want to have to get up at 4.30am so that I can be in Westminster for 9.30am.

The second comment was actually thanks for coming to support 'us'. Wrong, wrong, wrong. They should be supporting the anti-bedroom tax campaigners. Labour are the ones who are late to the party. The only reason that any of us were in that room was because of the strength of the campaign. Labour has been

shamed into action by a group of people that were attacked because they were expected simply to roll over and take it.

We didn't. We won't. I went to London to make sure that at least my MP did what he promised. The mood was summed up very simply by the activist who said that she would vote Labour in 2015 because they would be the only effective way to get rid of the Coalition: "but do not lie to us, do not let us down and

do not betray us. We will not forgive". 14 days prior to the lobby I had been in court for non-payment of bedroom tax. This is the experience that I wanted to take into that room and to the rally afterwards.

I didn't want sympathy. People need to know what tactics are being used by a so-called Labour council and its Almo. My rent was still being paid by direct debit until 3 May. I received a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession by hand on 23 May. I asked for a payment card three times. It finally showed up after 12 weeks. I asked my Almo for help (because their letters always tell you to) and was told to pay my rent plus a minimum amount or eviction proceedings would continue. Glad they could help.

When I finally got to court on 28 October there were 14 people present for eviction. Two duty solicitors had to deal with 14 clients with varying degrees of complex cases in around five minutes each.

Then it was made clear that to have McKenzie Friends present [lay helpers that anti-poll tax campaigners used widely in the 1980s], we should have applied in writing, two weeks in advance and for a named individual. There were no adjournments allowed for this.

When the judge closed the court to press and public alike on the grounds that personal financial

information was being disclosed, those of us who assumed it would be an open court were incredulous. Just whose personal financial information was the court protecting - mine or the council's?

Finally, all 14 cases were heard in around 90 minutes. In what world is it ever acceptable to take away something so fundamental as your home in so short a time?

In my case the judge didn't even have the decency to look up. But I have a message for Barnsley in particular and the rest of the country in general. I will not be quiet, I will not go away. I am far too angry.

This is the same council that has added nothing to its allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). Out of 780 people that have received DHP, 34 have actually been helped by my Almo. I am guessing that they are going to include me in those figures despite the fact that initially I was turned down for DHP because I could use my Disability Living Allowance.

I wrote my own appeal letter. This is the same council that will 'downsize' fewer people this year than last on current figures. This is a council in the heart of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire'.

This is a Labour council that does not even deserve that name. Any socialist credibility my town ever had has been eradicated along with its pits, steel works and muck stacks.

Sri Lanka Cameron's empty promise of war crimes inquiry

TU Senan
Tamil Solidarity

Prime Minister David Cameron recently shook the blood-stained hand of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. But when Labour leader Ed Miliband criticised him for attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in Sri Lanka he was crying over spilled milk.

Miliband seems to have "set a new record for opportunism" - Labour only really started to talk about Chogm once the meeting was taking place. Worse - it was actually in power when the genocidal slaughter took place in Sri Lanka in 2009.

The hundreds of thousands of Tamil-speaking people who took to the streets in London demanding action were ignored - not a peep while an estimated 70,000 Tamils were being slaughtered. And worse again - just after the massacre it was Labour that agreed to Chogm in Sri Lanka.

Despite accusing Ed Miliband of knowing nothing about foreign affairs, he "barely gets out of Islington", Cameron has nothing to brag about. He claims he helped to 'shine a light' on the Sri Lankan regime by taking the British media with him. And he now threatens to call for a war crimes inquiry.

But there is plenty of evidence proving the war crimes committed by the Rajapaksa regime. The most recent is the Callum Macrae documentary, broadcast by Channel 4 weeks before Chogm.

No one can deny that the prime minister's visit to Sri Lanka brought media attention. But there are no substantial gains for those demanding justice and rights. This 'shine' from his light was short lived.

Cameron did manage to get attention when he proposed a time limit for the regime's promised internal inquiry - and insisted that international action would be required if Rajapaksa has not delivered by March.

This has been one of the key demands of Tamil activists. Though it is a small gesture, yet to be acted upon (if ever), even this little shift was forced by pressure from protests.

No Tory votes

A few months back Tamil Solidarity launched a strong campaign among the Tamil community in Britain with the slogan of 'not a single vote or not a single penny for the Conservatives'. The Conservative party risked closing the door to ever getting the Tamils' vote due to its decision to take part in Chogm.

However, a communication sent around by the PM's press office on 18 November stated that Cameron told Rajapaksa that "if these investigations are not begun properly by March then I will use our position on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to call for an international inquiry".

Does this mean that the time limit for the Sri Lankan government to conduct its sham inquiry has been extended? It's not difficult for the Sri Lankan regime to come out with some sort of inquiry like that of its bogus Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC).

The LLRC recommendations go nowhere near providing justice for Tamils and even then the government has not acted on the recommendations of the body it initiated. Then the 'condemnation' could be limited to a strong resolution in the UNHRC in March.

Tamil Solidarity argued from the



Tamil's protesting outside 10 Downing Street as Chogm opened photo Sarah Wrack

start that the any inquiry should be conducted by a "people's tribunal consisting of representatives accountable to working class and poor people from all communities, chosen by them and observed by international trade union and human rights organisations. Only such a body could be truly free of the influence of the Sri Lankan government and their international collaborators".

While China holds a veto in the UN - and India has a final say in these matters - hope of getting the UN to investigate the Rajapaksa regime is grim. Both these governments funded and supported the genocidal slaughter in 2009 and have helped him to cover up ever since. They also now invest heavily in Sri Lanka.

The real reason behind the western shift towards a critical stance was revealed by Cameron: "How do we advance free trade if we are not

there... How can we do that from 4,000 miles away?"

Western interests in the South Asian region have to compete with increasing Chinese influence. Breaking the Sri Lankan regime is increasingly linked to breaking the Chinese influence. But Tamil Solidarity argues that even the pressure from this contradiction will not push things beyond regime change - or towards an acceptable political solution.

Any genuine attempt to bring justice for Tamils will have to be linked to meeting the national aspirations of the Tamil masses. Building a mass movement of the oppressed Tamils along with other oppressed masses within Sri Lanka, India, in the region and across the world is vital. This should take precedence in every aspect of Tamil activism. Cameron's attempt to divert the Tamil masses into developing illusions in the 'inert' UN is a trap.

Tamils in Britain are affected

massively by the Tory-led attacks on our services and education. The young generation of Tamils who are coming out of universities now find themselves jobless, poor and forced to rely on their parents for support. And all this is taking place while Labour puts up no fight.

None of the main political parties has any genuine interest in defending either poor people in Britain or the oppressed internationally. This is why Tamil Solidarity urges the Tamils to link up with those who fight back. This is why the 'Join a union' campaign was launched and the link with the trade union movement is promoted.

This is also the reason why Tamil Solidarity argues that initiatives such as the RMT union-led Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) should be welcomed and participated in.

Through uniting we will grow in strength - strong enough to challenge the western interests as well as the brutal regional and Sri Lankan governments. Cameron and the whole of the establishment's interests stand diametrically opposed to this strategy.

The defence of Tamils' interests in Sri Lanka is linked to the defence of the class interests of Tamils and other working people in Britain. Cameron exposed this in an indirect way when he said Miliband is "too weak to stand up to Len McCluskey - too weak to stand up for Britain abroad". Len McCluskey is a general secretary of Unite the union.

In other words Cameron was asking the Labour leader to break the backbone of the working class in Britain and at the same time push for free trade interests internationally.

Our fight will not be over until we win all our rights. We will not be trapped by illusory gestures.

VICTORY FOR SOCIALIST IN SEATTLE!

“Earth-shattering consequences” in the US and internationally

Interview

The evening of 15 November will go down in history. Kshama Sawant, candidate of Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist party in the US), was poised to win a seat on the Seattle City Council after her opponent conceded the race. Further counts continued to show Kshama's lead increasing. As we go to print Kshama stands on 93,168 votes. She spoke to Sarah Wrack about the campaign.

Why did you and Socialist Alternative decide to stand in this election?

We ran a campaign last year where I stood for the Washington State House of Representatives against House Speaker Frank Chopp – probably the most powerful legislator in the state.

The reason we thought about running an electoral campaign was our political analysis of the conditions coming out of the Occupy movement. The Occupy movement was very active and then towards the end of 2011 and the start of 2012 it started branching out into offshoots like the Occupy Homes campaign in Minnesota and so on but for the most part it was starting to wind down. The most prominent topic of conversation was the re-election of Barack Obama and that, for people who consider themselves progressive, the priority was to get Obama elected because it would be unthinkable to get Mitt Romney in the White House.

Of course Socialist Alternative is in agreement that the right wing should not be given that opportunity but we are not an alternative to the Republicans and on the whole having two big

business parties, or just two wings of the same big business party, has not worked for the working class of the United States

business parties, or just two wings of the same big business party, has not worked for the working class of the United States.

In fact the Obama administration itself is a good example of how progressive Americans put their faith in the Democrats year after year and then have a string of betrayals to show for it. All the promises that were made on healthcare, on the holding of people at Guantanamo Bay, ending the occupation of Afghanistan and the drone attacks – all of these have been betrayed. In fact drone attacks have shot up, Obama has presided over the highest number of deportations of undocumented migrants. And as a teacher I can tell you that the assault on public education and on teachers' un-



Wanna see Kshama Elected? DONATE, LIKE, and SHARE!

www.VOTESAWANT.ORG

ions has become sharper under Obama's Department of Education.

And so the question for Socialist Alternative was how do we continue to engage people in a political discussion and clarify the need to break from the two big business parties and also to break from capitalism itself. It seemed like an effective strategy to do that would be to run our own campaign and show what a truly independent grassroots campaign looks like.

We ran both campaigns not taking any money from big business and running independent from the Democrats, not seeking the endorsements of the Democratic Party establishment.

Last year we got 29% of the vote which was also quite remarkable – over 20,000 people voted for us. And we fought for our right to say Socialist Alternative Party on the ballot and this year also we were openly running as a Socialist Alternative candidate.

How was the campaign organised?

The first people involved in the campaign were members of Socialist Alternative and our primary focus at the beginning was developing the campaign platform itself. That was thoroughly discussed and debated in the Socialist A branches. We highlighted three points – one was for a \$15 dollar an hour minimum wage which we had been calling for last year as well. This year, seeing as we were running a city-wide election, our demand was \$15 an hour minimum wage city-wide. The second was affordable housing and rent control. And the third was a millionaire tax to fund mass transit and education.

Our campaign said make Seattle affordable for all because a primary issue we were highlighting is that Seattle is a very wealthy city but it's deeply unequal and it's unaffordable for the vast majority of people – especially the growing ranks of low wage workers.

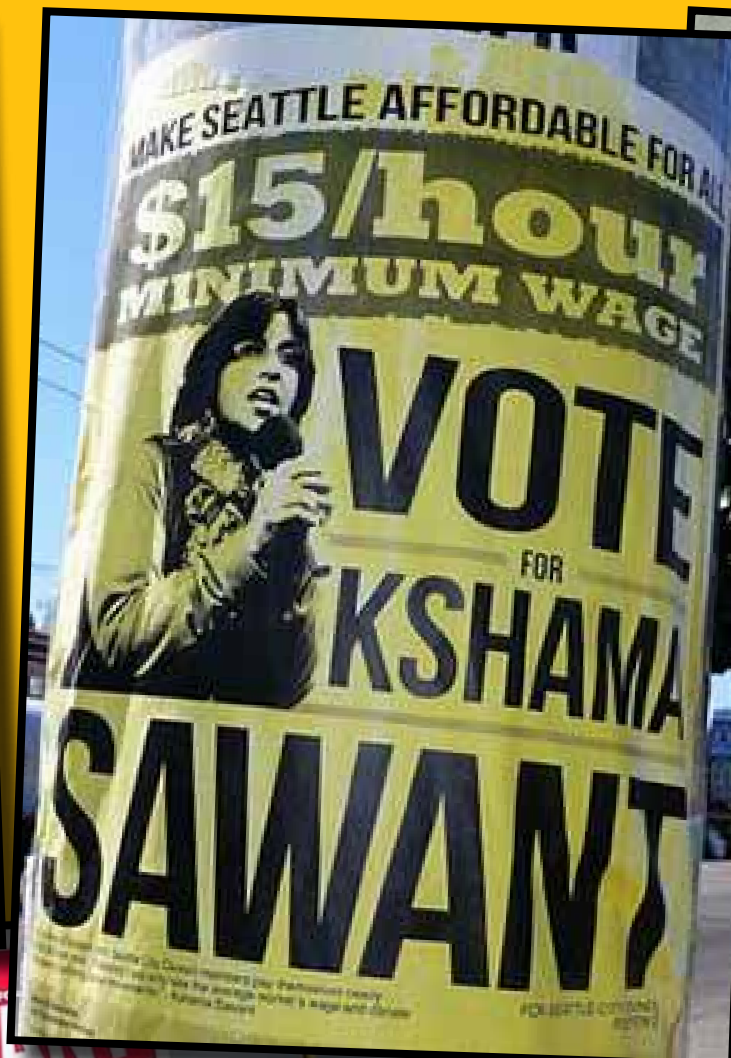
It was clear from the very beginning that these points were really galvanising attention from the working class in Seattle and that helped us to grow our base of volunteers because people were

really excited about the idea of an electoral campaign that's so unlike the business-as-usual corporate politicians.

One thing that really excited people was that we pledged that if we were elected that we would only take the average worker's wage. Seattle City Council members are paid \$120,000 a year which is a very high salary and is second only to the City Council in Los Angeles. Most people didn't know that and when we said we'd only be taking the average worker's salary and giving the rest to build social justice movements, that really caught people's attention.

So through the politics of the campaign we were able to attract a big base of volunteers. We had several people from Socialist Alternative working full time to organise the volunteers. We had a campaign office, we organised staff meetings every day to discuss the tasks – the staff meetings were organised in cooperation with the political leadership bodies.

And so we were really able to pay attention to everything that was happening in the city and take advantage of any potential opportunity to talk about the campaign, to publicise the campaign,



did several banner drops on top of freeways where there's a lot of traffic of people going to work every day, we had big banners that said '\$15 minimum wage, Vote Sawant'.

That really helped us in getting people to vote. For the most part city politics is so out of touch with normal working class life that people don't pay attention

If you like this campaign, if you like that we're fighters, that has everything to do with the fact that we're socialists

to it, it's boring. They see the City Council members as mostly white, wealthier, upper class people who don't really know what's happening on the ground and don't care. So for us the struggle was not only to influence people who usually vote but also to get people who don't usually vote to vote for this campaign.

And we engaged in a dialogue with people – we're Marxists, we don't necessarily think that the electoral arena

is the most favourable to build social movements. However, we can show an example of how that can be done but that requires you to be involved. So I think that was the biggest challenge which we did quite well.

But we cannot talk about our campaign in isolation. We also have to mention that it was happening at the same time that the fast food workers movement has been on the rise. Especially in Seattle they've been quite confident and we've been in solidarity with them. There was also the \$15 an hour ballot initiated in Seatac, which is a neighbouring city to Seattle where the international airport is located. It was specifically for giving \$15 an hour to airport workers. So all of that created a lot of momentum for the campaign.



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How did people respond to the fact that you were openly a socialist?

For most people what stood out was the fact that we were fighting for \$15 an hour.

And what really attracted people was how audacious we were and that's the opposite of the advice that you usually get. There were a lot of people who liked our campaign and have experience in bourgeois politics who would tell us: "you have to tone yourself down, don't criticise the administration so much". I was often asked: "why do you always start any speech by saying 'I'm a member of Socialist Alternative?'"

They wanted to dissociate me from Socialist Alternative because electoral politics is centred around individuals and personalities not on collective organisations, collective effort. But we rejected that completely. Instead we were bold and unrelenting in presenting our politics and making clear that if you like this campaign, if you like that we're fighters, then that has everything to do with the fact that we're socialists.

A lot of people didn't care so much about the label, they cared about the issues and the campaign. But there is a layer of people for whom it was really part of it. There were people who said, well if that's a socialist campaign and I agree

with everything, then maybe I'm a socialist, maybe I need to talk to Socialist Alternative. We have had people join Socialist Alternative or explore joining because they agreed with what we were saying and their confidence was raised by how boldly we were fighting for the campaign.

What are your plans now?

First of all today [17 November] we are having a big rally to bring everyone who worked on the campaign and who is excited about our victory to celebrate it but also provide a sense of the way forward – what is it that needs to happen from here?

We want to talk about not only our campaign and what we'll do in City Council but also, what is the significance of this? What is the significance of a revolutionary socialist being elected to the City Council of a major city in the United States? That has real (in many ways earth-shattering) consequences for the left in general, especially in the US but also internationally because it should make the left sit up and think, well if this is possible then what more could be possible?

The reason we're getting national and international media focus is not that we won a City Council seat – ordinarily nobody would care that somebody won a City Council seat. What's striking is that an open socialist won the seat, that the campaign did not take any money from big business and did not rely on the Dem-

If it can happen in the belly of the beast there is no reason why it can't be done elsewhere

ocratic Party apparatus to win. We need the left to draw on these lessons and realise that there is an opening to build movements and to build a viable anti-capitalist, anti-corporate, working class alternative to the two big business parties.

In the City Council, our first priority is to push for the \$15 an hour minimum wage. Specifically we will be drafting an ordinance to present to the City Council. But we also have no illusions that it's going to be easy. Big business is going to resist tooth and nail because Seattle is a major city and if we get \$15 here it will have a domino effect for other cities. So we need to continue building mass support for the demand.

One of the things we're going to work towards is having a big rally – our target is to bring 10,000 people but we'll see how it goes – at least bring thousands of people to a rally early next year in support of \$15 an hour.

I've seen a lot of comments saying that there's something unique about Seattle. Of course there are always things that are different from one situation to another but I think it's important for the left everywhere to realise that given the crisis of capitalism, especially in Europe given the extent to which austerity politics has been carried out, there is absolutely no question that there are opportunities. And if it can happen in the belly of the beast there is no reason why it can't be done elsewhere. But it's not automatic which is why we need to consciously build our forces.

In the news

A sample of the press coverage of Kshama's result:

the Stranger

Seattle elects a socialist to City Council!

Between Conlin's apparent defeat at the hands of a socialist and the landslide win for district elections, "the world has been turned upside down on the second floor" one city hall insider told me.

The New York Times

Socialist Candidate Takes Lead in Seattle Race

City Council races are technically non-partisan in Seattle. Sawant, however, made sure people knew she was running as a Socialist.

The Seattle Times

Conlin conceded saying 'I am proud of what we have done together'

Conlin said, "Certainly I'm surprised and disappointed ... I felt that we ran a strong campaign and she obviously ran a stronger one."

The Washington Post

Socialist candidate takes lead in City Council race in left-leaning Seattle as count continues

During her campaign, she condemned economic inequality, contending that some people aren't benefiting from the city's declining jobless rate, ongoing recovery from the recession, and downtown building boom.

Socialist Wins Seat on Seattle City Council

Her win for the at-large council position marks the first time a socialist will hold a city-wide post in roughly 100 years, according to the city's archivist.



On social media

A sample of the comments from Facebook and Twitter:

Dave Nellist
History is made: Democrat cedes to socialist in #Seattle. Congratulations to Councillor Kshama Sawant #cwi #tusc

John McInally
Congratulations from all Socialist Party & @PCSLLeftUnity members in PCS to Kshama & all US comrades. A voice for the 99% #victoryinSeattle

Matt Wrack
Quite remarkable election in #Seattle Challenging Tweedledee and Tweedledum politics that is the norm

Emily Kelly
Amazing news @VoteSawant- Socialist Kshama Sawant takes historic lead over Conlin in Seattle council race

Nancy Taaffe
It looks like the lady has won!!! @VoteSawant ...and what a victory...for all of us...everywhere. #socialism. #CWI #NSSN #TUSC

Sascha Stanic
Victory in Seattle! Congratulations to Kshama Sawant and all US comrades with the CWI (and the international helpers!!!). This is just the beginning!!!

Follow @VoteSawant on Twitter
Like the Vote Sawant page on Facebook

Why I joined the Socialist Party: 'Labour is indistinguishable from the Tories'

Fred Shirley

15 year old South West Socialist Party member

I have recently left the Labour Party and joined the Socialist Party. I joined Labour because I confused my hatred of the Tories with the hope that Labour would one day stand up for working people.

Labour grew out of the trade unions, to represent the interests of working class people. But the right of centre views that have prevailed since Tony Blair signalled the beginning of the end for 'real Labour', have not changed since 'red' Ed became leader.

Britain currently suffers the worst standard of living crisis since Queen Victoria sat on the throne. Yet Labour refuses to reverse most of the Con-Dems cuts, instead building its entire manifesto on the freezing of energy prices, when they

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shouldn't just be frozen but the energy companies nationalised.

We must break from the 'free market' consensus established by Thatcher, endorsed by the Labour Party, which has turned into "Blatcherism".

Ed Miliband praised Margaret Thatcher for "creating an era of aspiration in the 1980s".

Ed Balls, the shadow chancellor, "accepts" that Labour would have to use the Con-Dems' 2015-16 cuts plans "as the basis for its own cuts

'Con-Dems make vulnerable pay for crisis'

I've been a member of the Socialist Party in Sheffield for approximately five years. This is a tale of two cultures.

Part of the Con-Dem government's solution to the global financial crisis is to create another homeless crisis. As always, the vulnerable are left to pay.

Atos are systematically hounding and investigating those who they claim are 'milking' the welfare state. Every gain that working class people and socialists fought for,

like public services and the welfare state, is constantly under threat by this Tory-Lib Dem government.

I have a mental health condition. Rules for the bedroom tax - which affects me - are so complicated that those with a disability are often unable to tell fact from fiction. Since the privatisation of existing council stock, virtually no new council property has been built for over 30 years. The bedroom tax doesn't solve this.

Tim Jones

programme", including a cut in the state pension.

The Tories want to make out Ed Miliband's a "Marxist". But his policies aren't Marxist, they're blue-Labour. Miliband has supported "capitalism with a human face".

There is no such thing!

Capitalism will always feed the mouths of the few and not the many, so that's why we need a real, democratic socialist party, not a right-wing capitalist party under the veil of Labour.

Portsmouth: 30 students debate to vote or not to vote?

Sam Barnes

Portsmouth Socialist Students

More than 30 people attended the 12 November Socialist Students discussion at the University of Portsmouth over the impact of Russell Brand expressing socialist views in his interview with Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman and his articles in the New Statesman.

The discussion focused on whether people agreed with what Brand had to say and if his statements would help promote socialist ideas. Of course, the attendance of over 30 people at the debate indicates the impact Brand has had.

We had advertised the debate, the first public event organised by the Socialist Students society this year, by displaying posters in most im-

portant buildings on campus. The meeting was also promoted on the Portsmouth Socialist Students and Political Union (debating) societies' Facebook pages.

Towards the start of the debate, many supported Brand but others said that he was only trying to promote his own work.

National committee

The Socialist Party's national committee met on 16 and 17 November. There were discussions on Europe, Britain, the use of social media, building the Socialist Party and a review of Socialism 2013. Socialist Party branches should arrange to get a report from a national committee member in their area.

There was also, at first, much agreement with the idea that there's no one worth voting for. But many speakers who supported Brand because he promoted socialism also thought Brand was short-sighted in saying he didn't vote.

After the anti-austerity alternative of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition was put forward, more people thought voting could be worthwhile. There was a lot of discussion and interest in TUSC after the meeting.

Students in attendance made clear their feelings about apathy by young people towards politics. By the end of the meeting, there was almost unanimous agreement that Brand had played a positive role in the prompting of interest and further research not only into socialist ideas but politics in general.

RUSSELL BRAND: MAKING SENSE OR MAKING NEWSNIGHT?

18.00-19.30
TUESDAY 12TH NOV.
PORTLAND BUILDING
ROOM 2.21
HOSTED BY
socialist STUDENTS

EMAIL: SOCIALISTSTUDENTS@UPSU.NET

The Portsmouth Socialist Students poster used to advertise the meeting across the university

Socialist Students is a democratic campaigning organisation with groups in universities and colleges throughout Britain.
Find out more at socialiststudents.org.uk

TUSC byelection candidates: opposing all cuts

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is contesting eight byelections over the next few weeks.

The Hatfield town council byelection on 21 November, for the South ward, is being fought for TUSC by retired teacher, and recently resigned Labour Party member, Roy Jenkins.

The Lambeth byelection on 28 November, for the London borough's Vassall ward, follows the resignation of Labour councillor Kingsley Abrams, a member of the Unite national executive committee.

Kingsley was suspended from the Lambeth Labour group in 2012 for opposing cuts being implemented by the Labour-controlled council.

He has now resigned. TUSC candidate Steve Nally's record in fighting the Tories stretches back to being national secretary of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation in the early 1990s.

In the first week of December six wards will be contested by TUSC in five different councils. There are two byelections in Cardiff, with the Splott electoral division being fought for TUSC by Katrine Williams, chair of PCS Wales, and the Riverside seat by socialist student Joel Beer.

In Manchester the TUSC banner will be carried by another PCS union activist, Alex Davidson, a member of the union's North West

regional committee, standing in Ancoats and Clayton. In Liverpool, TUSC is fighting the Riverside byelection, following the resignation of Paul Brant, the council's deputy mayor and finance chief. TUSC's candidate is John Marston, a former Labour Party election agent during the 1980s struggle of the Liverpool 47 councillors.

In the Shettleston ward in Glasgow, TUSC's candidate is the underground driver and anti-bedroom tax activist, Jamie Coccozza.

TUSC will be also represented on 5 December by an 18-year old sixth-form student, Aidan O'Toole, contesting the Arbury ward on Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council.

If there is a byelection in your area and you're prepared to stand as a TUSC candidate, see www.tusc.org.uk/candidates.php or contact info@tusc.org.uk

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

Pat Cross: 1935-2013

It's with great sadness I have to announce that Daphne (aka Pat) Cross passed away peacefully on Tuesday 12 November 2013 at 12.30pm.

Daphne joined Militant Labour in 1996 and, although disabled, managed to attend branch and public meetings. Also, on election days, she would ferry people in her car to and from polling stations in Braunstone, Leicester.

An amazing mother, comrade and friend, shall be so sadly missed. RIP Daphne (Pat) Cross, 31 December 1935 - 12 November 2013.

Karl Cross, Daphne's son

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	October-December 2013	Deadline 6 January 2014
West Midlands	2,100	1,906	████████████████████	████████████████████
Wales	2,300	2,015	████████████████████	████████████████████
East Midlands	1,600	1,342	████████████████████	████████████████████
Eastern	1,200	980	████████████████████	████████████████████
South West	1,400	1,021	████████████████████	████████████████████
London	6,100	4,184	████████████████████	████████████████████
Yorkshire	2,900	1,883	████████████████████	████████████████████
North West	1,200	635	████████████████████	████████████████████
Northern	600	310	████████████████████	████████████████████
South East	750	228	████████████████████	████████████████████
Southern	1,200	334	████████████████████	████████████████████
England & Wales	3,650	2,111	████████████████████	████████████████████
TOTAL	25,000	16,952	████████████████████	████████████████████

Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan destruction aggravated by capitalism

Thousands killed and 13 million affected by strongest storm ever

Dikang
Socialist Action (CWI in Hong Kong)

Typhoon Haiyan ('Yolanda' in the Philippines) has caused destruction on a massive scale. This storm was three times more powerful than Hurricane Katrina, which killed 1,400 people in the United States in 2005.

Winds that ripped into the eastern Philippines on 7 November were as fast as a bullet train – up to 275 kilometres per hour. The energy generated by this massive storm was ten times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Most deaths have been caused by surging seawater, some waves reportedly as high as a two-storey building, flattening houses and drowning hundreds of people.

The confirmed death toll is 3,631 so far, and the government has lowered earlier estimates of 10,000 fatalities, but the true scale of the disaster may not be known for weeks. More than eleven million people are affected and around 673,000 displaced according to the UN.

The scale of the humanitarian disaster – with shortages of food, drink and shelter – is colossal. The risk of outbreaks of disease is high, with corpses strewn everywhere and contaminated water supplies. Health experts say 12,000 babies, whose health will be at risk, will be born in the disaster zone in the coming month.

The Philippines, with its 7,107 islands, is the most disaster prone country in the world. It is hit by around 20 typhoons every year, as a result of its geography, surrounded by great expanses of warm water that fuel the build-up of tropical storms. Typhoon Bopha killed more than 1,100 people last year. In October, the island of Bohol was struck by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that claimed 222 lives, the deadliest in the Philippines for a quarter of a century.

Response

The areas worst hit by Haiyan are the islands of Samar and Leyte. In Leyte's capital city of Tacloban there are reports of corpses hanging from trees and piled in heaps in the streets. Some towns in Leyte province have been almost completely destroyed.

There has been widespread searching for food in shops. Clashes between security forces and armed groups has begun. The President, Benigno Aquino III, has hinted that martial law may be declared in the province.



There is a colossal humanitarian disaster in the aftermath of the typhoon

The ruling elite, as in all such catastrophes, tries to win public support and deflect criticism by appealing for unity in the face of adversity. There are many heroic examples of ordinary people helping each other, as in other disasters, which is a natural human instinct. At the same time, political and economic mismanagement and the capitalist elite's plundering of resources have clearly magnified the scale of this disaster.

Aggravating factors

Poverty, poor quality construction and inadequate infrastructure have all made matters worse. Man-made climate change is said to increase the ferocity of cyclones and other extreme weather phenomena, although this is harder to quantify. The country's remote provinces have too few roads, which hampers relief efforts. The Philippines has the lowest proportion of paved roads in the whole of south-east Asia. It also ranks bottom for electrification.

The makeshift nature of many houses had no chance against such a force of nature while pictures show solid mansions of the rich still standing. A third of Tacloban city's homes were made of wood, and one in seven had grass roofs. The city's population has tripled to 221,000

people in the past four decades, but infrastructure and investment have been neglected. The mayor of Tacloban, Albert Romualdez, is the nephew of Imelda Marcos – the late dictator's widow.

This is the legacy of imperialism and capitalism in the Philippines, with capitalist global agencies like the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation steering the country's economic policy for decades, allowing a small super-wealthy elite to monopolise its resources.

The Filipino capitalists are well known as the most corrupt in the region. The issue of so-called 'pork barrel' politics has recently triggered big protests in the country. Many of the country's former presidents (such as Marcos, but not only him) were notoriously corrupt. An investigation is currently ongoing into several senators and former congressmen for stealing public funds through a system of phoney NGOs in order to extend their power bases.

This means that although the economy is currently growing faster than China's, with quarterly GDP growth of 7.8%, the benefits never reach the most needy. This is the law of capitalism!

The Haiyan disaster has of course caused millions of anxious phone calls from the legion of overseas Filipino migrant workers, whose remittances are the main buffer between their families at home and absolute poverty. They number over ten million – more than 10% of the country's population.

The US

US imperialism, which lost its military bases in the Philippines in the early 1990s, has been quick to jump into this crisis. The Pentagon has ordered several navy ships from Japan and Hong Kong into the disaster zone including the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

This seems like a show of force rather than real assistance. The US military, which two years ago un-

veiled a military 'pivot' to Asia, is hoping to derive strategic advantage from the disaster at the expense of the Chinese regime, which has clashed with Aquino's government over disputed 'territories' (actually rocks) in the South China Sea (called the West Philippines Sea by the Philippines government). Really these disputes are about oil and energy reserves.

The US is pushing for a new military treaty with the Philippines, which could see its troops re-stationed there, and this is a major factor behind its response to the Haiyan disaster.

It is clear that, due to climate change, more destructive outbreaks of extreme weather can be expected. Global warming caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide and other gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and oceans which fuels the formation of cyclones. Rising sea levels increase the risk of flooding putting tens of millions more people at risk especially in Asia.

Climate change

Haiyan struck just days before the Warsaw Climate Conference got underway, the latest in a string of UN climate meetings that have mostly ended as complete and embarrassing failures. "What my country is going through as a result of this extreme climate event is madness; the climate crisis is madness," said Yeb Sano, the chief representative of the Philippines at the conference.

He stunned other delegates by announcing a hunger strike, until there is "meaningful progress" towards a climate deal. If he is serious, he should start planning his funeral, because unfortunately the leaders of world capitalism are not capable of finding a real solution – they would need to abolish their toxic economic system.

That is not on the cards, and therefore the task falls to the rest of us, the mass of ordinary working people, to build a mass socialist movement to rescue the planet from capitalism.

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

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



Russia: Day of Action on 16 November in support of healthcare workers

But union leaders launch attack on CWI member

CWI reporters, Moscow



Chile: Presidential elections reflect move into a new era

Preparing for a new Bachelet government, Marcel Claude and the building of a new force for workers and youth

Danny Byrne, CWI and Celso Calfullan, Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI in Chile)

Celso Calfullan, of Socialismo Revolucionario won over 16,500 votes in the elections to the Santiago's regional council, one of the strongest performing candidates of the 'Todos a la Moneda' movement which was built around the Presidential campaign of Marcel Claude. Patricio Guzmán, also from SR-CIT won 13,000 votes in the race for Senator in Santiago Oriente. These campaigns will have served to strengthen the left and workers' movement in preparation for a new government of crisis led by Bachelet. **Check the website for further details and analysis of the results in Chile**

Typhoons are heated by warm surface waters. But they usually churn up cooler waters in the ocean depths and this chokes off further development. But as Haiyan swept towards the Philippines, the deep ocean waters were an astonishing 4-5°C warmer than usual. This extra warmth fed the monster typhoon's rapid development.

But why were the waters so warm to such a depth? Part of the reason is global warming. Like a sports player on steroids who outperforms their opponents, the weather will be hitting the ball out of the park more and more frequently. Everyone knows that a steroid-enhanced performance gives an unfair advantage, even if no specific victory can be directly attributed to steroid use. In the same way, all weather events are today affected to some degree by a climate on steroids, since there is more energy in the earth's weather system.

As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change correctly predicts, more extreme weather like Typhoon Haiyan is coming our way. The World Meteorological Organisation said recently that 2013 is currently the seventh warmest since records began in 1850. Tacloban is a vision of our future under capitalism. Our choice is socialism or environmental destruction.

Pete Mason

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Shaun of the rich

Shaun Woodward MP isn't running for parliament again in 2015. I won't miss him. Shaun Woodward is the epitome of everything wrong with the Labour Party. How can this ex-Tory MP, for what is now David Cameron's constituency, accurately represent the people of St Helens? He's the only man in St Helens to have a butler, owns seven houses and is married to the heir of the Sainsbury fortune. Perhaps now the Labour Party will choose a working class candidate to represent this working class town, rather than parachuting in a career politician, though I won't be holding out much hope. Now it is time to abandon the Labour Party and its neoliberal dogma in favour of a new mass party of the working class.

Sean Marsh, St Helens Socialist Party

Planet's wealth wasted

BAE Systems seems more interested in giving money to shareholders than investing in jobs and retaining shipbuilding in Portsmouth but they are only doing what every big capitalist company does. The Socialist's excellent centre page article on the energy industry revealed that five of the 'Big Six' energy companies return at least 55% of their profits to shareholders. Vodafone announced a £6 million investment into upgrading their European network from their £86 billion windfall from selling their shares in a joint venture with Verizon Communications in the US. But they plan to give at least 71% of that money back to shareholders. BT aims to increase dividends by 15% a year while holding pay down, cutting jobs and ruining careers.

All capitalists are concerned about making money. Taking decisions to improve the performance of a business are rarely even considered. So-called 'activist investors' like Carl Icahn demand bigger and bigger payouts to shareholders usually at the expense of investment. Capitalism is now dominated by parasites only interested in increasing the fortunes they already can't spend.

The time has come for socialism to use the planet's wealth for the good of all humanity, not a handful of obscenely rich and greedy parasites.

Clive Walder

The other 47

Swansea's two MPs, Geraint Davies and Sian James, were among 47 Labour MPs who didn't vote on their party's motion to immediately scrap the Bedroom Tax. They should tell us why they could not attend a vote on an issue so crucial to thousands of families in the city, some of them potentially facing eviction due to not being able to pay bedroom tax.

Labour MPs may have been 'paired' with Tory MPs. 'Pairing' allows MPs from opposite parties to agree that if one can't attend a debate, the other also agrees not to attend. But this is purely a voluntary agreement. And pairing is not used for important political issues.

Labour's no-show suggests that this debate was more about posturing at the start of an election campaign rather than ending the misery of the bedroom tax. Labour MPs who didn't vote in the bedroom tax debate may have put themselves at the head of the list for an electoral challenge by Trade Union-

ist and Socialist Coalition candidates at the general election.

Ronnie Job, Swansea Socialist Party
For info' about the real 47 in Liverpool see www.Liverpool47.org

Rich threats

A Forbes Magazine article calls for Kshama Sawant and by implication all Socialist teachers to be sacked.



Kshama Sawant

The headline is explicit: "Why Is Seattle Socialist Kshama Sawant Allowed To Teach Economics?" and the article ridicules economics in general and socialist ideas in particular.

The ruling class has no interest in democracy if it gets in the way of their profits. Little things like freedom of speech and free expression will just have to go if they are inconvenient. Kshama Sawant's victory in Seattle city council gave encouragement for socialists around the world. Her campaign promised to donate that part of her salary as a City Council person which exceeded the average salary in Seattle. This particular policy has career politicians spitting blood because it exposes their hypocrisy.

No wonder Forbes, who describe themselves as "the tool of capitalism" have been provoked into this disgusting hate campaign.

Derek McMillan

Murphy's ghostbusters

Salford Socialist Party's branch meeting on the 1913 Dublin Lockout was based on the excellent book by Irish Socialists 'Let Us Rise!'

This is how the arch-villain of the piece, William Murphy, who owned Dublin United Tramways and started the lockout ran the company:

All new recruits were taken on as temporary workers. The six-week training period was unpaid. A uniform was provided but workers had to pay for it out of their wages over 20 weeks. Each worker had to pay half a crown (£12 in today's money) for 'a licence to operate a tramcar' and 6d (over £2) for a copy of the company rule book.

I thought: 'Good job the unions got rid of all those oppressive rules'. But then I remembered.

Today we have young people tied permanently to zero-hour contracts or working as interns for nothing. Some social care workers have to buy their own uniforms and aren't paid for travelling between clients.

City Link delivery drivers are expected to pay for the privilege of working by leasing their vans from the company.

The capitalists are hell-bent on taking us back 100 years. Murphy's ghost still haunts us. Join the socialists and banish the ghosts of capitalism.

Paul Gerrard

JFK assassination: Who gained?

Andy Ford reviews *The Dark Side of Lyndon Baines Johnson* by Joachim Joesten



The Kennedys arrive in Texas

On the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Kennedy we will again see endless discussion of the grassy knoll, Lee Harvey Oswald's multiple identities and the cine-film of the event made by Abraham Zapruder. In the words of one author it is an endless regression of claim and counter-claim.

But there is a much simpler way to look at the assassination, ask Cui Bono? (Who benefited?). Joachim Joesten was one of the first to examine the assassination's mystery from this perspective.

In referenced detail Joesten firstly describes how Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) seemingly got into the senate through fraud in the 1948 Texas election.

LBJ used the help of a local political boss and convicted criminal, George Parr, who controlled impoverished Mexicans' votes in some of the state's border counties. The votes recorded there were an improbable 10,547 for LBJ to a mere 368 for his opponent. This was sufficient to clinch Johnson's election by 87 votes out of a million cast, although after confrontations, destroyed evidence and suspect court cases.

Immense wealth

Joesten shows the roots of Johnson's immense wealth, his close links with right-wing Texan oil interests and the mysterious machinations leading to him being offered, and accepting, the vice-presidential slot on the President Kennedy (JFK) ticket at the Los Angeles Democratic Party convention, despite the Johnson camp's vitriolic attacks on Kennedy's politics and character.

Johnson's wealth (he was the

richest president ever at that time) was based on a monopoly of TV coverage and advertising in Austin, Texas, a monopoly protected by the regulator, the Federal Communications Commission.

A political opponent sardonically said that Johnson must be the "greatest businessman ever" to amass a personal fortune of \$14 million while on the public payroll. Much of Johnson's election funding came from Texan aviation interests - and Johnson switched the space programme, which at one time consumed up to 5% of US GDP - from California to Houston, Texas.

The biggest scandal was the Bobby Baker case, still on-going at the time of JFK's assassination. Baker, an early LBJ protégé, was official Secretary to the Majority leader, while his wife worked in the office of the Senate's internal security.

This might be why LBJ was told that Baker 'knew where the bodies are buried', although one of LBJ's aides called him an "unabashed lackey, a bootlicker." He was so influential, he was called the '101st Senator'.

Baker seems to have been running interlinking scams - lobbying, alterations to legislation, appointments to Senate committees, stock tips, junkets and prostitution - with consequent blackmail.

He made a fortune from controlling a vending machine firm that got preferential access to defence bases and other government facilities. Baker's 'business dealings' seemed to have more than its share of mysterious deaths and suicides, and the firm had at least some association with the Mafia.

The most explosive part of Baker's web was his provision of call girls to senators and lobbyists in reward for their services rendered; but then in

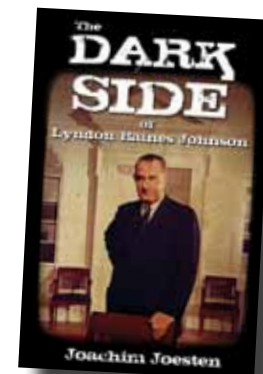
a special twist, to blackmail them for further corrupt favours and influence. Baker even seems to have helped set up 'party houses' in Washington suburbs to pursue this strategy.

The investigation into all this was in full swing when Kennedy was gunned down. Subsequently, as Vice-President LBJ emerged as President, the investigation flagged, back pedalled and whitewashed, and the full facts, especially those connecting Bobby Baker to LBJ, never came out.

The Dark Side of Lyndon Baines Johnson lifts the lid on the 'Great Society' and US democracy at the height of the post-war boom. American capitalism was intertwined with the state at all levels, and the corrupt network of lobbyists this spawned was the link between big business and politicians, with a dose of organised crime along the way.

Lyndon Johnson was perhaps the leader of this 'Lobbyland' and when we ask - "Who benefited?" - it was most probably LBJ, Bobby Baker and the interests they championed in Washington - the mafia, aviation corporations, and the oil industry and its right-wing owners.

A good read, it costs £2.71 on Kindle and £10 as a book.

**We need a real energy bill revolution**

Jon Dale

Soaring prices of gas and electricity make the onset of winter a season of dread. So I was pleased to come across a campaign called Energy Bill Revolution - that sounds just what we need. "Sign our petition and join the revolution," they say.

Launched in 2012, the campaign highlights that: "More fuel poverty means more people living in cold homes, further damaging the health of vulnerable members of society, including children, older people, and people with disabilities and illnesses."

Their website has many facts

to show the scale of fuel poverty and its effects. They call on the government to use the £4 billion carbon tax to make homes energy-efficient, leading to lower bills and creating 200,000 jobs.

The Energy Bill Revolution Alliance includes the TUC and trade unions Unite, Unison, GMB, PCS, FBU, UCU and the National Union of Students. Many charities are also involved.

But incredibly so are SSE, npower, E-on - the same energy companies hiking up their bills! How hypocritical of them to claim to support: "The only permanent solution to drive down energy bills and end fuel poverty."

Carillion, a construction com-

pany in the spotlight of the anti-blacklisting campaign being fought by Unite and GMB members is also a signatory. Asda, part of the notoriously anti-union Walmart corporation, is there too.

Energy Bill Revolution is a public relations shield to these profiteering corporations, who weep crocodile tears about fuel poverty but are the cause of it.

Union members should call on their unions to stop backing this poney campaign and instead campaign for renationalisation of the energy industry, with compensation only on the basis of need and under democratic workers' control and management. That could start a real energy bill revolution.

Students must 'fight for the right to fight'

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national
organiser

Footage published on the Guardian website provides categorical evidence that police use paid informants to target peaceful protest groups and student activists.

In the videos, a student (wearing a secret camera) is offered money for attending political meetings and is asked to report on 'names, numbers and plans'. This comes just months after revelations detailing systematic surveillance of anti-racist campaigns such as Youth against Racism in Europe, during the 1990s.

Attacks on the right to protest sit alongside hugely repressive anti-trade union laws. These are being used by employers and the government to make organising legal strike action increasingly difficult.

The video evidence came to light on 15 November just two days after students at the University of London were violently blocked from entering their university's Senate House by the police. Up to 200 protesters had gathered to march against the shutting down of the University of London Union (ULU), which represents over 120,000 students.

Not content with the threatened removal of university-wide student democracy, management also used police to guard all (locked-down) entrances to the building from which it governs.

The ULU president was arrested,

ostensibly for failing to inform the police about the exact route of the demonstration.

On the protest, students were manhandled by police officers, hit, and in one instance dragged along the ground. Astonishingly, one student is still facing charges of criminal damage for allegedly chalking the words, 'sick pay, pensions, holidays now' on university property - in support of the cleaners' '3 cosas' campaign.

2010 protests

Many students will not be strangers to such repression. In 2010, the protests that erupted against the tripling of tuition fees were met with a violent police response and the 'collective punishment' of kettling.

In some cases protesters were held en masse, for up to ten hours, in freezing temperatures. Tactics like these are specifically designed to intimidate protesters, and limit the effectiveness of demonstrations.

And it's no wonder that Prime Minister Cameron and Co are nervous. As he declares the virtue of permanent austerity - while sipping champagne at a no-expenses-spared banquet - millions of people are suffering under it. Those are the people Cameron fears the most.

Mass movements have shaken the globe and toppled dictators - all in very recent history. Even the ultra-privileged, out of touch Tories are faintly aware of the danger that the developing fightback can pose to them and their class.



The student protests in 2010 faced heavy police oppression photo Senan

University vice-chancellors, paid six figure salaries to implement a neoliberal, business like model for higher education, are similarly worried about the anger present on their campuses.

But repression can, in the long run, also increase the burning anger that brings people to the streets.

Alongside the fight against austerity, we must also campaign to defend and extend our democratic

rights - our right to resist. As the crushing weight of austerity falls on the shoulders of workers, students and young people we have to unite, and we have to fight for the right to fight!

Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance launched

The Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance (COPS) is a group of organisations, individuals and lawyers acting for or advising organisations and individuals who know - or have reason to suspect - they have been the targets of undercover policing.

COPS has been set up following the revelation in June 2013, by the Guardian newspaper and the Channel 4 Dispatches programme, of the extent of undercover policing by the Metropolitan Police Special Demonstration Squad.

The following open letter has been published by COPS.

We the undersigned are a mixture of individuals, organisations and lawyers affected by undercover police operations or representing people who believe that they have been the targets of undercover policing.

In June this year the public reacted with shock and outrage to revelations that undercover police surveillance was used against members of Stephen Lawrence's family, to find 'dirt' that could discredit them.

This is yet another revelation about the nature and extent of secret policing in Britain, showing decades-long spying on and interference with political movements and campaigns. In addition to efforts to spy upon or smear people such as the Lawrence family who have lost loved ones, particular disgust has been expressed at the gross intrusion of undercover officers forming intimate sexual relationships with some of those upon whom they were spying; at the use of the identities of dead children to obtain cover; and at police links with the blacklisting of

trade union members. It has also become apparent that many criminal convictions have been rendered unsafe as a result of misconduct by the police and prosecutors.

We have no faith in Operation Herne nor any of the up to 16 often secret, internal police or prosecutor reviews. They are not sufficiently transparent, robust or independent to satisfy public concern and they do not come close to addressing all of the issues raised.

The public is entitled to know what has been going on in their name and paid for by their taxes. We therefore call for an independent public inquiry into all the revelations that undercover policing has been used against political protest and campaigns. This inquiry must have full powers to compel police officers to give evidence. Such political policing has no place in a democratic society and a mechanism must be found to ensure that such unjustified conduct does not continue into the future.

- Tamsin Allen, Mike Schwarz, Bindmans Solicitors
- Lois Austin
- Raju Bhatt, Bhatt Murphy Solicitors
- Blacklist Support Group
- Ruth Bunday, Harrison Bunday Solicitors
- Jules Carey, Marian Ellingworth, Tuckers Solicitors
- Louise Christian, Christian Khan Solicitors
- Deborah Coles and Helen Shaw, Co-Directors
- Inquest
- Claire Dissington, Anti-Nazi League
- Estelle du Boulay, director, Newham Monitoring Project
- Suresh Grover, The Monitoring Group

- Liz Davies, chair, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers
- Imran Khan, Imran Khan & Partners Solicitors
- Anna Mazzola, consultant solicitor, Bindmans Solicitors
- Frank Smith, blacklisted trade unionist
- Socialist Party
- Michelle Stanistreet, General Secretary, National Union of Journalists
- Harriet Wistrich, Birnberg Peirce Solicitors,
- Belinda Harvey, Helen Steel and six others in legal action against undercover relationships
- Youth Against Racism in Europe

Exeter: 1,000 march against racist EDL

Sean Brogan
Exeter Socialist Party

Over 1,000 counter-demonstrators marched against a so-called 'national mobilisation' of the racist English Defence League (EDL). Community groups, organised under the banner of 'Exeter Together', called the march. Exeter Socialist Party participated in the organisation of it, along with trade unions, UAE, the Labour Party and faith organisations.

In one of the biggest local demonstrations for many years, which included many youth, the strength of feeling that exists in Exeter against these racist hooligans was clear.

The EDL at the same time were gathering in a local pub, spilling out into the street shouting racist remarks at locals. Their 'national' mobilisation consisted of approximately 200 - outnumbered by 250 police including a mounted unit from South Wales. They marched to a park to hear anti-Muslim speeches of 'no going back to the dark era' followed by a bad rendering of 'God save the Queen'.

A dozen anti-EDL 'black block'

hooded followers assembled nearby, but the police prevented them from getting anywhere near the racist rally.

The Western Morning News later reported that the police made arrests for drunkenness and the carrying of offensive weapons, and suggested that it was the EDL that had behaved in this way.

Exeter Socialist Party had a stall at the counter-demonstration and we have organised a follow-up public meeting. There were well meaning anti-EDL contributions at the counter rally but the main organisers never intended to try to actually stop the EDL march. The political message was muted to avoid recognition that social conditions give rise to such far-right organisations.

Capitalism, with its failures of one million youth unemployed, low wages and homelessness, gives these groups a chance to promote racist ideas, which can attract some people in the absence of a trade union led, united alternative.

Socialists must give a lead in explaining why groups like the EDL exist and the necessity of putting forward a socialist alternative, and driving them off the streets.



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Peter Taafe writes

● **US shutdown**
New cuts loom

● **Student movement**
Three years on from the mass protests

Drive the profit vultures out of our NHS



The Socialist Party fights for:

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

Dave Reid

The vultures are no longer circling our National Health Service (NHS). They have swooped in and are tearing it apart. Billions of pounds in profits are being bled from the NHS by private healthcare companies, contractors and drug companies.

Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group and Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group have both been reported to Monitor, the health regulator, by private health company Spire, for not sending enough NHS patients to Spire's private hospital in Fylde.

Instead, Blackpool's GPs have been treating some patients themselves and depriving Spire of its guaranteed revenue stream in

neurology and orthopaedics.

The facts that using this primary care is best for patients and saves the NHS money matter not one jot to Spire, which is solely concerned with its bottom line.

While NHS trusts and health boards struggle with cuts in funding by laying-off nurses, doctors and vital ancillary workers, billions of pounds are being bled out of the NHS by private profiteers.

And any attempt to keep services in-house by the NHS in England is being thwarted by referrals to Monitor, which is charged with preventing "anti-competitive behaviour" in the NHS.

The private health companies have prepared squads of competition lawyers to force Clinical Commissioning Groups to spend scarce NHS funds on their companies.

Even collaboration between services in different Trusts is being banned as "anti-competitive".

And while benefiting from public health spending, the private health companies resent making any contribution towards it – they are very 'tax efficient'.

Owned by private equity group Cinven, Spire made an operating profit of £130 million in 2012 but avoided paying any tax on it because it declared a loss after repaying loans to another company also owned by Cinven!

The NHS is caught in a triple whammy by all three pro-capitalist parties. The Tories and Liberal Democrats created a systematic privatisation of the NHS when the Health and Social Care Act was passed. Three-quarters of new NHS services have been tendered out to

private healthcare companies.

Labour has promised to repeal the act but not to end private competition in the NHS.

A Labour government would not end the purchaser-provider split and bring Foundation Trusts back into a publicly owned NHS; so the health service will still be liable to competition law and at the mercy of the competition lawyers.

And in Wales, Labour is showing the Tories the way to close A&E units by cutting them down to just four or five for the whole of South Wales.

The Welsh Labour government has backed Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in sacking over 300 nurses and other health workers to balance the books even though waiting lists are getting longer and longer.

What we stand for

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

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

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in 45 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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