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WE NEED A REAL LIVING WAGE!



photo Pete Mason

We need a pay rise! The sums just don't add up. We're told there's a recovery but it feels more like a robbery.

The profits of the 'big six' energy companies are up 75% this year while the UK is second only to Estonia among European countries for the number of people struggling to pay their energy bills.

No one would consider having a roof over your head a luxury. But research found that 31% of people paying a mortgage or rent spend more than a third of their disposable income each month doing so.

Workers are increasingly finding their wages are out of step with the

rising cost of living. Pay packets are down 7% since the 2008 crash and it'll take until 2017 for them to return to the pre-crash level, according to the TUC.

It's of little wonder then that over 500,000 people queue at food banks as the gap between the money and the end of the month grows. An ever increasing number of people forced to rely on food banks are in work.

This situation is a disaster. It means, for example, that a third of children in Liverpool are growing up in poverty in the sixth richest country on the planet.

It's time to take action!

Nick Parker, a trade union activist, says:

"Workers need action over continual wage freezes. Lecturers and support staff in higher education, for example, will be taking strike action on 3 December over a below inflation, 1% pay offer - a 13% pay cut in real terms since 2008. In further education lecturers will also be striking on the same day over a derisory 0.7% pay offer.

Other workers are in dispute too. Probation officers are tackling the government over privatisation of the service and cuts. Firefighters are resisting attacks to their pen-

sions, with many also citing station closures and cuts as a source of major anger.

Socialists believe that working class people should join trade unions immediately if they aren't already members, as we are all the more powerful when organised together.

And when members of different unions are all in dispute, every possible step should be taken to ensure that strike action is coordinated to maximise its strength.

That's why we call on the TUC to name the date for a 24-hour general strike against the government's

austerity measures and employers' attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions.

The leaders of the three main parties - whatever their rhetoric - all support capitalist austerity dumped on the backs of workers, and are all implacably hostile to workers when they take strike action.

Socialists, on the other hand, say that strikes are in fact one of the most powerful weapons at our disposal.

We can turn the tide on 'the race to the bottom'. It won't be easy, but they don't call it the class struggle for nothing."



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No recovery for Britain's young people

The supporters of capitalism might be calling the feeble growth in the economy a "recovery" but Britain's young people are still left reeling. University graduates, for example, have seen their chances of getting a job worsen every year, and there's still no sign of any improvement.

The proportion of graduates out of work increased by over 10% last year - to almost double the rate before the crisis. There were on average 50 applicants competing for every graduate job in September. That's not good news for anyone.

As graduates are blocked from jobs which would enable them to use the skills that they'd developed in university, they are increasingly taking jobs which previously would have been open to those without a degree.

The policies of the main parties will worsen the situation. Both Labour and the Tories have signed up to make £40 billion worth of further cuts if they win the next election, meaning massive job losses. That's a blow aimed directly at the hopes of young people, since, according to the Office of National Statistics, 40% of graduates get their first job in the public sector.

There's no escape outside of university either. If anything, the crash has made the situation facing young people who take a different path even bleaker: almost half of those who left school at 16 without five A*-C grades at GCSEs are now so-called Neets - they have no job, and are not in education or training. Contrary to David Cameron's claims, these people aren't "choosing the dole".

According to the government's own figures, there are five times more jobseekers than there are jobs to go around. It's as simple as that.

Neither Tory plans to end benefits completely for the under-25s nor Labour's promise to be "tougher on benefit claimants than the Tories" will create the jobs these people need in order to get on in life.

Unemployment isn't caused by the unemployed: it's a product of this failed, capitalist system, which has left a generation with nowhere to go. Even some of the more serious strategists of the capitalist class are starting to worry about the social consequences.

Explosion of anger

And so they should. All the conditions are laid for an explosion of anger that could make either the tuition fees protests of 2010 or the summer riots of 2011 pale by comparison.

It's even worse than the official unemployment statistics show. Jobs have been lost on the same catastrophic scale as the 1980s, but the proliferation of super-exploited precarious jobs such as zero-hour contracts has massaged the figures.

This means that alongside a million officially unemployed youth there are millions more who are under-employed. They are sick of their boss holding over them the threat of no hours next week. They fear that if they object to their exploitation in any way, they won't have enough hours. They risk being unable to pay their bills unless they do half their man-

agers' job on top of their own, work hours of unpaid overtime or put up with unsafe working conditions without complaint.

The anger of students blocked from getting on, and the frustration of the working poor is joined by the rage felt by those locked out of work completely and forced onto benefits, who are then demonised by the press and hounded by the sanctions regime (over 40% of those hit by penalties last year were under 25).

Under the hammer blows of these attacks, young people are being forced closer and closer together. Wages have fallen every month for the last four years, but graduate pay has fallen the fastest. Graduate salaries fell 3.4% last year - faster than the 2% real terms pay cut that was the average.

Half of recent UK graduates are in any case now in jobs which don't require a degree, says the ONS. But even those who do manage to find a graduate job are discovering that their pay and conditions aren't that different. They've lost 12% of the pay pre-crisis graduates could claim, while owing 60% more student debt.

Boom and bust

The crisis has squeezed the middle class into the working class, and not just in the short-term. A Guardian editorial said that even if there is continuous growth, this year's graduates would not catch up with their pre-crisis peers for another 15 years.

The 2007-8 economic crash demonstrat-

ed that capitalism is and always will be a system of destructive cycles of boom and bust, which periodically wreck the lives of ordinary people.

Given the political, economic and social instability that exists, 15 years without a crisis is ruled out. There is currently weak growth in the British economy, but that is based mostly on another housing bubble and a rise in consumer spending not backed by increases in wages.

Despite the promises, manufacturing is weaker than ever and none of the major imbalances in the economy have been corrected: Osborne's "march of the makers" never materialised. The recession hasn't finished with us yet, but it's not clear where the next blow will come from.

A collapse at the Co-operative Bank or another institution could trigger another credit crunch; 100,000 more firms will go bust as soon as interest rates rise, said one think-tank; the "recovery" in the eurozone is faltering, recording just 0.1% growth last quarter. Any of these factors could trigger another collapse.

What is also ruled out is a lengthy period without a response from Britain's youth, currently being ground under capitalism's heel. The conditions are incendiary, but explosions can be either destructive or productive: what is missing is an engine - a mass workers' political party and a trade union leadership that points the way out of the crisis through action - which could harness the spark of anger in Britain's youth and turn fire into motion.

Nothing achieved by UN climate talks

Contrary to the misleading upbeat media reports, the United Nations climate change conference in Warsaw, which was meant to agree binding reductions in CO2 emissions, effectively ended in failure. John Sharpe writes.

A study due to be published in the journal *Climate Change* details the cumulative global emissions of industrial carbon dioxide and methane between 1751 and 2010 which amounts to 914 gigatonnes of CO2 emissions (see box right).

Climate change scientists and campaigners have welcomed the study and hope it will help the current round of talks make progress.

The UN climate change panel, the IPCC, calculated in September that at current rates the "carbon budget" would be exhausted in 30 years. This is the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted without causing 2°C of global warming.

Only weeks after Typhoon Haiyan swept through the Philippines causing devastation, recent UN climate talks in Warsaw delivered a weak compromise agreement that has only put the main questions off until sometime in the future. Even the most optimistic commentators have been left with grave doubts that enough can be done. Several hundred environmental campaigners walked out in disgust at the lack of progress.

Al Gore, climate change campaigner and former US vice-president, believes the report shows that it is not just down to governments to act. "Those who are historically responsible for polluting our atmosphere have a clear obligation to be part of the solution", he told the *Guardian*.

This is, at best, naïve and disingenuous. In his own words, it is

trying to reallocate "the blame" by allowing governments to hold their hands in the air and claim "not us gov".

The whole point is that the governments wrangling over the UN talks are precisely beholden to the 'dirty 90', they act on behalf of and promote the interests of these massive multinationals and national elites.

There is no way forward under capitalism. The inability and unwillingness of delegates to reach a global agreement to avert catastrophic climate change, once again underscored the limitations of the nation state within the capitalist profit system. It leaves private and state owned fossil fuel companies free to continue pumping damaging amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This is a practice concomitant with capitalism since its inception.

Solving these problems means taking the economic and political power out of the hands of the dirty 90, the other major corporations, and the establishment political parties who do their bidding.

Replacing the chaotic capitalist system with a democratic socialist planned economy is also necessary. This must involve the full participation of workers, service providers and consumers. Only then can the needs of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment be met.

Climate train to Warsaw: see www.socialistworld.net/doc/6566



Only weeks after Typhoon Haiyan swept through the Philippines causing devastation, UN climate talks in Warsaw delivered a weak compromise

CLIMATE CHANGE BY NUMBERS

90 companies have produced two-thirds of greenhouse gases produced since the industrial revolution. Half of these emissions were produced during the last 25 years

83 are oil, gas and coal companies along with seven cement makers. 50 are giant multinationals, mainly oil firms like BP, Chevron, Exxon and Royal Dutch Shell but also coal miners such as British Coal Corp, Peabody Energy and BHP Billiton

31 are state owned including Saudi Arabia's Saudi Aramco, Russia's Gazprom and Norway's Statoil. There are also nine state owned coal producers in Poland, China, the former Soviet Union and North Korea

30% of emissions were produced by 20 companies. Many of the firms have vast reserves of fossil fuels which, if used, would greatly increase the dangers of global warming

Flower power - downfall of a banking boss

Roger Bannister

If the much repeated cliché that the British Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism is true then it must have got more than it bargained for with the Reverend Paul Flowers.

The traditional image of the stern, moral, teetotal 19th century campaigner is far removed from this latter day Methodist, mired in scandals involving sex, illegal drugs and dubious expense claims.

Flowers' story reminds us that the bankers who brought the UK economy to the brink of disaster have been allowed to carry on in post, and to continue to draw fat bonuses, effectively paid for from the public purse, and funded by working class people via the Con-Dem government's austerity policies.

Given the latest allegations against RBS profiting from bankrupting small companies, the hypocrisy with which the capitalist press and the Tories have jumped on this story is incredible.

But because of the traditional links between the Cooperative movement and the Labour Party, Flowers is subjected to intense scrutiny and pilloried in the press. Who knows what dirt could be dug up on any other top banker if treated in a like manner?

However, the rise of a person like Flowers in both the Labour Party and the Cooperative movement is an indication of how far both organisations have moved from their working class roots.

The Cooperative movement is based on its retail and banking wings, from which is funded the Cooperative Party. By agreement with Labour, it stands 26 Labour/Cooperative candidates in each general election.



The Co-op is light years removed from its working class roots

Flowers was always a Labour Party right winger, even at university in Bristol in the early 1970s, when left-wing politics were common among students. He joined the university Labour Club, but did not attend meetings because of its left wing leadership, (run at the time by Andy Bevan, a supporter of the Militant Tendency, forerunner to the Socialist Party).

After university he combined his position as a Methodist minister with a steady climb through the Labour and Cooperative machineries, albeit not without its occasional setbacks. He 1987 he failed to secure the Labour Party nomination in Coventry by opposing Militant supporting MP Dave Nellist. In the subsequent election Dave retained the seat.

But the Cooperative movement today is little like the vision of its 19th century 'pioneering' founders who were anxious to break away from the grip of their bosses who employed them and owned the shops that sold them poor, adulterated products at high prices.

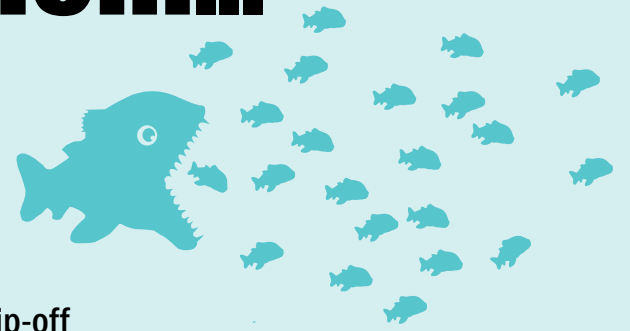
The 21st century Co-op bank's attempt to ape corporate capitalism collapsed under £1.5 billion of debt, and resulted in its takeover this year by US hedge fund asset strippers. This shows the limits of the cooperative ideal within capitalist society.

Its cooperative structures have

become increasingly weakened over the years, producing a massive, largely unaccountable, highly paid bureaucracy (Flowers received in excess of £130,000 a year as chair of the Co-op Bank).

It now benefits from the government's privatisation programme, with agencies that advise local councils on how to "mutualise" public services, promoting this as the soft side of privatisation. Right-wing Labour councils are particularly keen on this approach, sacrificing services and workers' jobs because they are unwilling to fight to defend them.

Them...



Energy rip-off

Millions of hard-pressed households have just had their energy bills ratcheted-up to stratospheric levels by the 'big six' companies, accompanied by apologetic letters saying their 'hands are tied' due to government taxes, transportation costs, etc. However, this disingenuous drive has been blown apart by the publication of their latest profit figures from Ofgem, the toothless 'industry regulator'. It shows that the big six' profits have risen from £30 to £105 per household - over a 300% increase in three years! Never mind Labour's limited price freeze, nationalise them now!

Talking crap

Deleted from the Tory party's website are David Cameron's 'vote blue, go green' speeches when in opposition. But the PM is only being consistent as he recently told aides to "get rid of all the green crap" from energy bills. Any suggestion that big Dave is submitting to the demands of the big six energy giants is just socialist paranoia.

Below minimum

The minimum wage of £6.31 for adults isn't a living wage but some employers aren't even paying this statutory requirement. In the privately run social care sector, HM Revenue and Customs inspectors found that, in 183 investigations, 48% of employers had paid workers below the national minimum wage. Some £338,835 in back pay is owed to 2,443 workers. But this is the tip of an iceberg. Out of around one million care workers, an estimated 220,000 are paid less than the minimum wage. The head of the Low Pay Commis-

sion told the Guardian that cuts in council funding had left rising numbers of care firms with 'little option' but to break the law by paying below the minimum wage. The only 'option' is to organise workers to fight for a decent living wage.

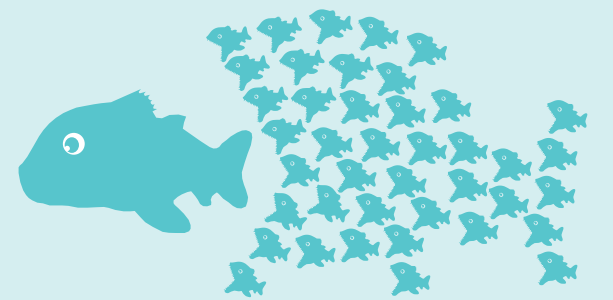
Taxing issue

Christmas, so the adverts constantly remind us, is a time for giving. But for tax avoiding companies and rich individuals it appears to be all year long - at the expense of charities and the public. Offsetting tax through the government's Gift Aid scheme is, according to the National Audit Office, actually costing the public purse a hefty £940 million a year. At the same time the total sum received by charities, £1.04 billion, actually fell by £20 million since 2000. As the saying goes, charity begins at home!

Targeting the vulnerable

Seriously ill patients, including people suffering cancer, are being threatened with the loss of benefits under new government rules. Not content with imposing the hated bedroom tax and driving through the unworkable universal benefit scheme, welfare minister Iain Duncan Smith is reportedly keen to scrap work-related activity benefits (Wrag) and push claimants onto Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Wrag is designed to assist 550,000 people with illnesses providing that they participate in training or practice interviews. However, if pushed onto JSA they would be subject to benefit sanctions if their illness results in them not attending enough work interviews. Yet again, vulnerable people are being made to pay for the government's austerity.

...& Us



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

UK governments approved secret mass surveillance O Tempora! O mores!

David Semple

"The key question is what was authorised and what was not authorised," said Richard Ottaway, Tory MP and veteran of the Intelligence and Security Committee, over the revelation that from 2007, British intelligence officials agreed to allow the US National Security Agency (NSA) the right to spy on the mobile, email, fax and internet data of British citizens.

Earlier damaging allegations have revealed how far the US targeted supposedly allied nations and their leaders, but the full extent of the surveillance operation in the UK is yet to be revealed. The actions of the NSA, and the 2007 memo, exposed by ex-NSA operative Edward Snowden, hint that the signatories to the UK/USA secret treaty of 1946 were spying on each other's citizens and sharing the results.

This allowed them to duck the re-

strictive requirements for spying on their own citizens.

The 2007 memo was circulated around the UK's GCHQ and the NSA, but members of the Commons' Intelligence and Security Committee, which was supposed to have oversight of such actions, have refused to comment on what they did or didn't know. The Labour foreign secretaries during the period, Jack Straw and Margaret Beckett, have rebuffed queries from the press.

As earlier revelations about the Tempora programme indicate, however, the Labour government was involved up to the hilt in the development of programmes that would intercept British internet traffic. The Prism programme was a US arrangement to pay tech companies millions of dollars for their cooperation in surveillance. Tempora was a UK version, tapping fibre optic cables.

Meanwhile, all of these actions

are being conducted under legislation passed by the Labour government. When the partner of leading anti-surveillance journalist Glenn Greenwald visited the UK in August 2013, he was detained by police for nine hours, and had documents seized, under Section 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Tempora is legal under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

The Tory government is extending these powers, eg through making the secret use in court of such intelligence legal under the Justice and Security Act 2013.

As with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the main political parties are the servants of British and American imperialism. They will not voluntarily surrender any tool that will help them jockey for global position and so serve the interests of their capitalist class. What should preoccupy us is just how quickly these tools will be turned against domestic opponents of capitalism.

What we saw

Video of Kshama Sawant, winning Socialist Alternative city council candidate for Seattle, addressing Boeing aerospace workers during the election campaign

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEj-Fn3gd30>

"Re-tool Boeing to produce mass transit instead of destructive war machines"



End the pay freeze

A united fight in post-16 education

A Socialist Party member in UCU

On 3 December university and college workers will be taking action. This strike day involves UCU, Unison and Unite members working in universities who struck on 31 October, now joined by further education (FE) members of UCU in England and higher education (HE) members of EIS in Scotland.

In HE, the employers' organisation UCEA returned to negotiations with the unions, but did not improve on the initial pay offer of 1% that triggered the dispute. Rattled by the 31 October strike, they have asked the individual employers to impose 1%. University workers are fully aware, however, that their employers have multi-million-pound surpluses and reserves while staff incomes have fallen by 13% in real terms since 2008.

FE staff have similarly experienced a 15% real-terms pay cut in the last four years, and have just rejected their employers' offer of



On strike in Bristol in October photo Matt Carey

a 0.7% increase – that is, another below-inflation rise – with over 70%

voting to strike. This doubtless reflects the anger union members feel

when research shows that over half the lecturers in FE work ten hours' unpaid overtime during an average week, for dwindling pay.

Many student unions and the NUS nationally have passed resolutions in favour of the action (see page 5), with Socialist Students and other campaigning groups building support. Ultimately our interests are all the same – for a public, fully-funded education system, free at the point of use and democratically run.

This background makes the coordinated national strike action particularly positive – the more unions that can be brought out together, the greater chance of success. At the same time, it is important for each dispute to have a strategy and to keep its own momentum.

Industrially, we need to work to build for a 24-hour general strike against austerity; and politically, trade unionists and students need to consider the question of an alternative to the three parties of austerity. Education is being under attack – we need to fight to defend it!

In brief

One Housing success

After a long dispute involving eleven days of strike action members at One Housing Group have voted to accept a significantly improved management offer. 61% voted to accept management's proposals on a 72% turnout.

Through the dispute management have made a series of improvements to their offer; most recently they have agreed to pay a bonus to supported housing workers previously excluded and a package of other improvements. The outcome of this dispute sends out a clear message that fighting back gets results and a warning to management in the sector that workers in supported housing are no longer prepared to accept whatever employers force on them.

The Unite housing branch repeats its thanks to members and to other union branches who generously contributed to the hardship fund. We also congratulate Unite members at One Housing who stood firm.

Unite committed itself to campaigning for a national agreement in the sector at last week's conference.

Paul Kershaw

NUT election: Support for national action call

Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies recently stood in the election for vice-president of the National Union of Teachers. He polled the second-highest number of first-preference votes but eventually finished third in the final count. It is now important to make sure Martin is re-elected to the NUT executive in the election next term. For more see: electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk/

This is edited from Martin's blog: "I am happy that my vote, even if not enough to win, showed such a strong level of support for my stand and for the national action that we have been campaigning for.

Without the backing of any of the major 'blocs' in the Union, and without any other candidate calling for a transfer to me, to poll 7,665 first-preference votes is a real success.

That support could be glimpsed from the 38 nominations that I received to stand in the first place,

and from the supportive comments from teachers unknown to me posted on Facebook and Twitter.

One simply said, "if Gove doesn't like him, that's good enough for my vote".

The support from Lanac, the Local Associations National Action Campaign, was key to me standing in the first place.

Above all, my support was built on the underlying anger of classroom teachers at Gove's attacks and I hope that they saw me as a candidate who was serious about organising the action necessary to stop them.

We now urgently need to reinstate our national action. We face an onslaught from a government determined to steal back all the gains of the past.

This election is just one moment in a continuing movement that we have to build if we are to stop those attacks."

Fight the London Underground cuts!

John Reid, transport union RMT London regional secretary, is standing for election to the union's national executive, the Council of Executives. Here he responds to the announcement of massive cuts to staffing on London Underground (LU).



London Underground is attacking jobs and services photo Paul Mattsson

Hidden in the small print of the announcement of all-night running of the Tube in London were details of savage attacks on the jobs and conditions of staff.

Every ticket office will close, despite the fact that 71% of Londoners want them to remain open. London Underground argues that only 3% of journeys are started at ticket offices.

But over one billion journeys (set to rise to 1.5 billion by the end of the decade) are made a year. 3% is getting on for 600,000 journeys a week.

The 753 net job losses will further de-staff already seriously understaffed stations. This will hamper the service, particularly to disabled and vulnerable passengers. Within hours of the announcement there was a large demonstration by disabled groups outside Kings Cross

station.

Staff will have to reapply for their jobs and face downgrading with only three years protection of earnings. This is to pay for government cuts of £270 million in stations alone, out of a total cuts package of £4.2 billion by 2021.

This will mean cuts in every area of LU, including trains, with driverless trains on the horizon.

We are willing to discuss 24-hour opening at the weekend, as long as jobs and pay are safeguarded for all staff. 24-hour opening should mean more jobs not fewer.

We will build an alliance with other LU unions TSSA and Aslef, whose members also face savage cuts.

Already we have agreed with TSSA for unity and a total rejection of LU's proposals. We will build links with tube user groups and

other community groups.

Our reward for delivering a world-class service is 753 job losses, ticket offices closed and wages slashed. That is why we will ballot for strike action, the only language that LU understands.

LU pays a fortune to contractors for cleaning and maintenance that could be done for a fraction of the cost in-house. This would provide better security and conditions for staff who work for contractors and would save millions of pounds for LU.

Open the books. Let the unions see what is being paid out – we are in favour of some cuts, let us slash the wages of the bosses of LU, some who are paid £400,000 – £600,000 a year.

The RMT have just announced the strike ballot, which will close in January.

More privatisation problems

Chas Berry

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

Secretary of State Chris Grayling's plans to privatise large parts of the criminal justice system suffered a severe blow last week with the announcement that three prisons in South Yorkshire set for private takeover will now remain in public hands. The decision is a humiliating climb-down for Grayling, whose preferred bidder Serco was ruled out while fraud investigations continue over claims that it overcharged the government for electronically tagging offenders. This meant that contracts could not be delivered on time and have therefore reverted to public control.

The climb-down should give heart to workers across the justice sector who are fighting cuts, privatisation and the degrading of their terms and conditions. For probation staff in Napo, who took strike action on 5 and 6 November and are now

'working to rule', it is a signal that it can disrupt and ultimately defeat the government's plans to sell off up to 80% of its services to companies such as Serco and G4S.

Grayling's aggressive Transforming Rehabilitation timetable is already in jeopardy and further action aimed at frustrating privatisation preparations can force a similar U-turn.

As the probation dispute enters a critical stage it is encouraging that Unison, representing significant numbers of admin and lower paid staff most at risk of privatisation, are now in dispute with the Ministry of Justice alongside Napo.

With Grayling unlikely to agree to shelve his plans while matters are referred to Acas, Unison members may at last get the chance to vote on whether to take industrial action. The opportunity for coordinated industrial action, including members of the Criminal Bar Association who have announced action against Legal Aid cuts for the New Year, is bound to increase pressure on the beleaguered Justice Secretary.

Will angry youth turn to Labour?

Ian Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

Polly Toynbee's recent Guardian column (22 November) contained a damning criticism of the Con-Dems' treatment of young people. But Polly, a Labour Party member, is deluded if she thinks, as suggested in the article, that the Labour Party will be the ultimate beneficiaries of youth frustration and protest.

Has Polly forgotten the last New Labour government? It was a report initiated by the Labour government of Gordon Brown (a hero in Polly's eyes at the time) that proposed trebling tuition fees in 2010. It was a Labour government, under war-monger Tony Blair, that first introduced tuition fees. And even the current Labour leader, Ed Miliband, has ruled out reversing the fees hike.

Rachel Reeves, newly appointed shadow welfare minister, provoked an angry backlash from trade unionists and organisations including Youth Fight for Jobs when she promised to be "tougher than the Tories" on welfare.

Austerity continued

Miliband has promised if the Labour Party is elected in 2015 that they will continue Con-Dem austerity. What will this mean? That the misery Polly details - one million young people out of work, zero-hour contracts, £9,000 a year university fees, rising homelessness - all this will be continued and exacerbated under a Labour government.

Young people have been politicised and radicalised by six years of economic crisis. The student movement in 2010 gave us a glimpse of the brutal reality of what the Tories

and Lib Dems really stand for and of the true role the police and capitalist media play in society.

Young people have no memory of Labour as a party they can fight back in. Quite aside from standing with us, the Labour Party has purposely put itself in opposition to the big struggles that have erupted in the last few years. Young people were the biggest supporters of the public sector strikes in 2011, which Labour condemned.

International examples

Polly thinks Miliband's vacillating platitudes will win the Labour Party the youth vote. She has to be kidding! Take a look internationally. A feature of all recent youth movements, from Occupy Wall Street to the Spanish Indignados, has not been an openness to 'austerity-lite' Labour Parties, but a rejection of establishment political parties altogether - and rightly so!

Polly should look to Greece where support for the Labour Party's equivalent, Pasok, has plummeted following the severe austerity measures of the Pasok government. In fact Pasok is performing so dismally that many on the left now describe it as an 'ex-Party'!

In 2015 a Labour vote may be seen as the best way to kick out the Con-Dems. But Miliband should be warned - the record-breaking disapproval ratings of the government of François Hollande in France, who has failed to end either austerity or crisis, show what will face a future Labour government of cuts.

Polly and other Labour Party commentators have been quick to attack Russell Brand. But the response to his call for socialist revolution reflects young people's desire



Kshama Sawant's election in Seattle shows the type of fighting programme that will enthuse youth

for fundamental change. Labour has been so vicious because the comedian exposes their complacency and increasing irrelevance.

Some right-wing commentators have been quick to misconstrue what Russell Brand said, particularly when he explained why he didn't vote. In his own words: "a system that serves the planet and the people, I'd vote for that". Polly should take note.

In Seattle, Occupy activist and Socialist Alternative candidate, Kshama Sawant, inspired young people to vote. Standing openly and clearly as a socialist, Kshama, demanding

a \$15 an hour minimum wage, rent control and a tax on millionaires, beat her pro-big business Democrat opponent, winning more than 90,000 votes.

What solution?

Workfare, zero-hour contracts, merciless attacks on benefit claimants as scroungers - all reveal that the three main parties have failed to tackle the youth unemployment crisis. Ask any ordinary person how to fight unemployment, they'll say 'create jobs'.

Polly correctly points out that

young people are being disproportionately affected by the cuts. The Con-Dems have brutally escalated these attacks but they were well underway in 2010 - that's where we were left after 13 years of New Labour's tuition fees, attacks, and privatisation.

Young people and workers deserve our own genuine political alternative. That is why I'm standing as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the 2014 local elections to offer young people like me a real alternative to the Tories and a future worth fighting for.

NUS NEC votes to support education workers strike

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the National Union of Students (NUS) voted "to stand in complete solidarity with workers taking strike action" in the higher and further education strikes on 3 December. Employers must now face education workers and students united as the dispute over pay and equality enters its fourth month.

The successful motion (right) contained a number of mandates for NUS to carry out in the build-up

Emergency motion passed by NUS NEC

NEC Believes

- People who work for our universities, from lecturers to library staff, are taking strike action on 3 December. This is the second day of strike action that has been organised this term by the trade unions UCU, Unison and Unite
- The strike has been called over a 1% pay offer, which represents a real terms wage cut. This comes after many years of declining wages. Academic staff have seen a real-terms pay cut of 13.8% since 2009
- Many of the workers taking part in action will also tell you that their reasons for striking include ever increasing workloads, low pay, casualisation, zero-hour contracts, bullying and discrimination
- Many students are among those who will be striking, including the many thousands who rely on teaching and part-time work to continue their studies
- The strike on 31 October drew wide support from students, many of whom joined rallies and pickets in support of those on strike

NEC further believes

- The issues the strike relates to directly affect students. Underpaid, overworked and undervalued staff are never going to be able to give students the best possible help and support, however dedi-

cated they may be

- This strike is part of both the fight to defend education and to beat back the brutal austerity policies that are seeing jobs destroyed, living standards decimated and the future for the next generation snatched away
- Strikes are the most powerful weapon working people have to fight to change things for the better - they demonstrate the huge potential power of workers
- For students, this strike may be a minor inconvenience in the short-term, but the long-term damage that's being done to education will have far more detrimental effects if it goes unchallenged
- NEC resolves
 - To stand in complete solidarity with workers taking strike action in our universities
 - To produce a leaflet for distribution on campuses, explaining why students should support strikes and attend picket lines to bring support and solidarity
 - To make the campaign to support the strike a top item on the NUS website and use social media networks to publicise it
 - To write to all students unions advising them to host joint public meetings with campus trade unions in the run up to the strike to attempt to raise awareness of the issues

See socialistparty.org.uk for reports from the strike

to the strike. Disgracefully however, the clearest language calling for students not to cross picket lines was removed by Labour students.

It's now vital that we maintain this pressure and use the NUS support to help organise students to turn out on the picket lines and bring solidarity. We should also put pressure on student unions to make sure that the joint meetings between student and trade unions which the motion calls for are carried out.

Socialist Students and NUS NEC member Edmund Schluessel, who proposed the motion, said: "Education workers and students are natural allies. I hope this is the start of a long partnership against austerity and in the fight for an education system free at the point of use."

Referendum victory for York housing campaign



photo York Student Socialists

Jamie Chatfield
Treasurer of York University Student Socialist Society

York Student Socialists celebrated a significant referendum victory recently after months of campaigning on the quality and price of housing in York. Our campaign has focussed on calling for the establishment of a not-for-profit letting agency run by York University Student Union (YUSU) in an attempt to break the power that private agencies have over the off-campus student housing market in York.

We gathered over 800 signatures from students who were enthused and inspired by the ideas we put forward and the motion went to referendum in October. During the allotted week of referendum

campaigning hundreds of posters were put up and thousands of leaflets given out.

The popularity of the campaign is best demonstrated by the fact that no official 'No' campaign against the motion was launched! In the end, the victory was a landslide, with 1,086 students voting in favour of the proposals to 117 against.

The implications of this victory could be massive for students and even long-term residents in the York area. A not-for-profit letting agency could massively reduce the price of rented houses under its control. It could also create a competitive environment that causes both other agencies and university accommodation services to lower their prices.

The campaign continues. See socialiststudents.org.uk for a full version of this article

EUROPE - CENTRE OF CAPITALIST CRISIS

Peter Taaffe
Socialist Party general secretary

Despite capitalist 'experts' predicting that the world economy would by now be experiencing 'escape velocity', capitalism is still in deep crisis. And Europe is most acutely affected.

But, with 'momentum' slowing, these 'experts' have been compelled to change their views. Out of the six largest high-income economies, only the US and Germany were bigger in the second quarter of 2013 than their pre-crisis peaks five years before. Growth rates of 2.7% in the US, 1.7% in Japan, and a mere 0.9% in the eurozone are predicted for 2014.

With the continuation of huge public and private debt - particularly in the big economies - there will be no real, substantial 'recovery'. At the same time, there are growing fears of protectionism once more emerging. Clashes have developed between China and the US on a range of issues, as well as between Europe and the US.

Depressionary features will continue, and will be particularly acute in Europe, which remains the most exposed region economically, socially and politically in the world. The ideologists of the bosses now fear that long-term deflation has begun to set in with 'japanification' of the eurozone.

A repeat of the 'two lost decades' of Japan looms because of the deflationary effects of the euro in general, but also because of the dominant sway within the eurozone of German capitalism.

Through its economic dominance, German capitalism has put the rest of Europe on 'rations'. In the Financial Times, Martin Wolf wrote that Germany's 'huge' trade surplus has been attacked by the US Treasury because it has "hampered rebalancing" of the economy for other eurozone countries and created a 'deflationary bias for the euro area, as well as the world economy.'

Tensions build

'Rebalancing', particularly when deployed by US imperialist spokespersons, means while some cut back on their share of the loot - others benefit. In a chaotic blind system, which is what capitalism is, it is impossible to have a completely 'balanced' system, particularly during a severe crisis.

It may be possible for rival capitalist powers to peacefully share, on the basis of a bigger and bigger growth. But not in a crisis like the one we are passing through. One of the features of the situation in the next period will be increased collisions between the imperialist powers and blocs.

The European working class has exerted colossal energy in trying to combat the attempts of the capitalists to unload full responsibility for this crisis on their shoulders. The Greek working class has staged 31 general strikes since 2010, four of them for 48 hours in duration. They were defeated because of the cowardly actions of the official trade union and labour leaders.

The devastating recent report of the Red Cross states: "Europe is sinking into a protracted period of deepening poverty, mass unemployment, social exclusion, greater inequality and collective despair as a result of austerity policies adopted in response to the debt and currency crisis of the past four years."

This dire economic situation has meant inherent political instability. Since 2010, 12 governments of the eurozone of 17 countries have been defeated in elections,

whether of the right or the left. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is the only leader to buck the trend. But even she did not manage to win an overall majority of the seats in September's election.

Following one of its worst ever election results, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is pressing for a minimum wage as the basis for its participation in a coalition. This reflects the huge pressure from low-paid precarious workers. Unlike most other countries in Europe, Germany does not have a national minimum pay level laid down by law. But 22% of the total workforce are low-paid workers, many in 'mini-jobs' - the largest percentage in the eurozone. German bosses, however, are resisting such pressures.

There is now a 12% gap in real GDP between where Europe is today and where it would have been had the pre-crisis trend continued. This shows the magnitude of the problems confronting the governments of Europe and particularly

EUROPE BY NUMBERS

75% - the increase in the amount of people depending on Red Cross food distribution in 22 of the surveyed countries between 2009 and 2012

120m - the number of Europeans, especially young people living in or at risk of poverty

5.5m - the number of middle class Germans who have fallen into the ranks of the low income earners

600,000 - the number of workers in Germany who do not have enough to live on

13% - the proportion of the population of the Baltic States and Hungary that has left

100% - the increase in the number of 50 to 64-year-olds unemployed between 2008 and 2012

Germany. This is likely to be the new 'normal' for European capitalism.

The euro is a massive deflationary trap, particularly for those suffering economic 'distress' - which, to one degree or another, affects all the countries of the eurozone but particularly those of southern Europe.

Therefore, there will be growing opposition to the euro and also to German capitalist domination - which will be certainly manifested in next year's European elections. This will reveal big and growing opposition to the 'European

project', both from the left but also from the far right, who now have a significant presence in many countries in Europe. This means that the breakup of the euro is still on the cards.

Countries that are running a large 'primary deficit' - most of the countries of southern Europe - and costs of 'servicing government debt' greater than the nominal growth of GDP are on an unsustainable path. The conclusion from this? "Since 2008, the wretched 'PIIGS' (an insulting term for the countries of southern Europe and Ireland) have been caught in such a trap. Anticipating defaults, investors respond by selling their bonds." [Financial Times]

Debts

When liabilities exceed 50% of GDP there is a big risk of a debt crisis. On this measure, many countries in southern Europe are vulnerable; Greece, Ireland and Spain are all in this position, unable to fund liabilities at or above 100% of GDP. So all the efforts of the capitalists to correct the situation have been in vain, as have the unprecedented sacrifices demanded of the peoples in these countries.

The banking crisis continues unabated. As with the crisis in Japan from the early 1990s, European banks are now largely 'zombies', "More dead than alive." [Economist] A credit crunch still persists, particularly for the 'real economy', as opposed to the finance sector, in which the capitalist economists place so many hopes. Loans to non-financial firms contracted in May of this year by 4.1% in Italy, 5% in Portugal and 9.7% in Spain. In a vicious spiral, governments have to worsen their own finances by borrowing to prop up the banks.

In despair at the seeming inaction of European governments, and particularly of Germany, the Economist concludes: "Waiting for zombies to come back to life is a fool's game." This position can-

not hold. Explosions are inevitable, as we have seen in Greece, Spain, Portugal, etc, in the past period. The masses take to the road of struggle, strikes, occupations, even when they feel that their actions will not result in a fundamental change in the situation.

Greece is in its sixth year of economic depression. The Greek working people are on a descending slide into social catastrophe. Rarely has a country in the 'advanced' world demonstrated so clearly the complete disintegration, the blind alley, of capitalism. The economy has contracted by at least 25%, with an expected 4% drop again this year.

Unemployment stands at 1.3 million (30% officially) but is probably a lot higher than that. The public sector has been dismantled, followed by the wholesale privatisation of national assets. It is not just workers but also sections of the middle class who are plunged into poverty and forced to resort to the food banks.

In a movement almost unparalleled in Europe in the post-1945 period, the Greek working class has come out in one heroic action after another. Just when their resistance appeared to be waning, they have discovered new reserves of energy and struggle. This year, at least four general strikes have taken place, as well as mass mobilisations against the attack on the broadcasting media, the ERT. Had they a party and fighting leadership, they could have taken power.

The trade union and labour leaders refused to lead this struggle through to a conclusion, with a programme of taking power through the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy and an appeal for the workers of Spain,

Portugal and Italy to follow their example and begin together to construct a socialist confederation of these four countries, in the first instance. Such a bold step would have electrified the working class and lit a flame in the rest of Europe and throughout the world.

This failure allowed the emergence of the far-right neo-fascists Golden Dawn. From a small base of just 0.29% of the votes in the 2009 general election, it captured 7% in the last general election of 2012. Polls subsequently put its support at 15%.

With encouragement from sections of the police and others on the right, it posed a real threat to immigrants who have been attacked and, on occasion, murdered. It is also now a threat to the left and workers' parties. However, the killing of a left-wing rap artist provoked widespread opposition and the fear of a new, incipient civil war compelled even the government to seek to rein in Golden Dawn.

The arrest of its leaders and subsequent exclusion from parliament indicates that the capitalist class are afraid that Golden Dawn will provoke the working class into action. Already, a new stage of mass action against Golden Dawn has ensued, with Xekinima, the Greek CWI, playing an important role. If this was to escalate then a revived mass movement would threaten the rule of capital itself.

The capitalists will not cede power to Golden Dawn at this stage. When the bosses did hand over power to Mussolini and Hitler, the revolutionary wave after the regimes' collapse threatened the very reign of capital. They may need Golden Dawn and similar far-right organisations as auxiliaries but they are unlikely to give them sole power again. They can play a supporting role to a Bonapartist military coup but even this is not immediately on the cards.

After the historical experience of the Greek workers, a right-wing coup is guaranteed to provoke a revolutionary explosion that could repeat the movement of

the Portuguese workers in 1974, which led to the expropriation of the banks and put most of the wealth in the hands of the state. The big danger, at the present time, is that the anger and frustration of the working class, particularly the youth, directed towards Golden Dawn and their backers could result in the reappearance of left terrorism in Greece.

Xekinima warns the youth that this is not the answer. Only a mass alternative from the working class, particularly a mass revolutionary party with the correct strategy and tactics, can defeat the Greek capitalists and international capital. There are divisions and splits within the left at the present time. Xekinima has correctly sought to unify them as a means of creating a left pole of attraction.

Spain, Portugal, Italy and France all display the symptoms, to one degree or another, of Europe's enduring political, social and economic crisis. Ireland has not recovered from the crisis. The mood of the working class has been set back because of the consistently serious betrayals by the trade union leaders. But mass dissatisfaction will translate into active opposition at a certain stage, which will result in strikes and an increase in social struggle. This will, in turn, have an effect on the trade unions, with the rotten trade union leaders pushed aside and the emergence of more militant layers prepared to fight.

Throughout Europe, the far right has advanced electorally, sometimes significantly, in the past period. In the Netherlands, it is through the far right Party for Freedom (PVV), in Austria the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and also in Scandinavia, including Sweden and Norway.

Sometimes this is matched by a polarisation and strengthening of the left, as with the Socialist Party in the Netherlands. But the main reason for the continued presence and even strengthening of the far right arises from the crisis and the lack of an alternative through mass parties of the left.

Northern Europe has not escaped from the process. The Nordic countries have seen perhaps the most rapid process of privatisation in the whole of Europe. Unemployment in Sweden among youth is over 25% and the neglected estates in the suburbs this year saw an inevitable explosion of anger against authority, including arson attacks on buildings and vehicles and clashes with police.

Preparation

The consciousness of the working class, taken from a world point of view, has not yet caught up with the objective situation. This will not occur in one leap but in a series of battles, over an extensive period. There are bound to be ups and downs, periods when the working class goes on the offensive and other periods when hesitation and doubts take hold. We are passing through a phase like this in Europe at the present time, but in no way does it mean that we cannot seize opportunities that exist.

Socialists have to recruit and build now in order to face the even greater storms that will undoubtedly take place because of the incapacity of capitalism to solve the problems which are piling up.

France - a case study

After just 18 months in power, President François Hollande has recorded the lowest opinion poll ratings of any French president, just 20%. This, of course, arises from the deteriorating economic situation that he inherited when he came to power, which his actions have compounded. Standard & Poor has just downgraded France's credit rating once more. Hollande is being ground between the millstones of the working class on one side and the French capitalists on the other.

Hollande has not been able to carry through substantial cuts in government expenditure because he is terrified of a head-on confrontation with the French working class. Public expenditure presently stands at 57% of gross domestic product, which is the highest in the eurozone. Instead, he has resorted to tax increases which have brought protests down on his head from the rich, predictably, but also from farmers and truck drivers in Brittany and across the country protesting against an 'eco-tax' and forcing its suspension.

The government was also forced to step back from proposed higher levies on popular individual savings products. He was threatened with a strike by France's top football clubs, protesting against the 75% tax levied on incomes of more than £1 million. At the same time, these tax increases compound the problems of the French economy; by cutting spending power they cut the market.

Le Pen's Front Nationale (FN) stands at over 20% in the opinion polls, its highest ever rating, and could come first in next year's European elections. This is the first time the FN has led in a national poll. A significant section of this support comes from disaffected working class voters. Significantly, Le Pen's party has toned down its more openly fascist features in favour of 'real socialism', saying of the Socialist Party: "It may be in power, but they are in hock to Europe and the banks."

This article is based on an extract from the document that has been produced by the International Secretariat of the CWI for discussion at the forthcoming meeting of the International Executive Committee of the CWI (IEC). Following this meeting a full report of discussions and the final document agreed by the IEC will be published on socialistworld.net

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

TUSC byelection candidates show cuts aren't necessary

Cardiff

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing in two 5 December Cardiff byelections, called following resignations. The two wards, Riverside and Splott, are areas where TUSC supporters have already been involved in campaigning against cuts.

In Riverside our candidate Joel Beer has organised opposition to the bedroom tax as well as against £50 million cuts planned by Cardiff county council. Last year community campaigns sprang up across the city to defend services from council cuts.

In Splott, TUSC supporters, including candidate Katrine Williams, have been involved in the community campaign to defend the swimming pool from closure.

Labour politicians were shocked at the scale of the opposition. They tried announcing that they could save the pool by knocking down the local Star leisure centre, a well-used sports and community centre, and using money from the sale of the land to redevelop and relocate some of the facilities on the Splott pool site.

Splott has some of the highest unemployment in the city and a real lack of facilities. Reducing these even further is not acceptable. TUSC opposes all cuts and will fight to save both Splott pool and the Star centre.

People elected a Labour council in the hope they'd oppose Tory cuts and stand up for local people. TUSC is getting good support in these two communities and raising confidence that we can campaign together to stop the cuts.

TUSC public meeting with rebel Southampton councillor Keith Morrel: 11.30am, Saturday 30 November, Star centre, 2 Splott Road, CF24 2BZ

Glasgow

Well over 10,000 glossy four-page TUSC leaflets have been delivered to the vast majority of homes in Glasgow city council's Shettleston ward, with thousands more still on their way. 10,000 post cards highlighting Unite member and Scottish TUSC candidate Jamie Cozza's pledge to move a 'no cuts' budget for Glasgow have also been printed.

Jamie reported about the campaign so far: "Last Wednesday saw a hustings (debate) hosted by Save The Accord Centre campaigners. Only three of a potential 12 candidates turned up.

Labour, having already voted to shut down the centre to make way for a car park for the Commonwealth Games, sent their candidate to a meeting with local

police instead!

"I made clear from the outset that I am standing on a socialist programme and called clearly for a 'needs budget'. Glasgow city council has huge reserves and borrowing powers and should use these to protect the services, jobs and pay of the people of Glasgow and Shettleston, while building a mass campaign to fight cuts.

"Regardless of the outcome of the election, I will still be campaigning in the area against the cuts, against the bedroom tax, supporting campaigns like Save The Accord Centre, and for the SNP to change Section 16 of the housing act to legislate against any evictions for bedroom tax."

Philip Stott

Lambeth

Socialist Party member Steve Nally is standing for election as a TUSC candidate in Vassal, a ward in Lambeth, South West London, on 28 November.

The election was triggered by the resignation of Kingsley Abrams, after he was pushed out of the Labour group for his refusal to vote for cuts.

Unite union executive council member Abrams has since attempted to become the Labour parliamentary candidate for Brent central but he was not even allowed on to the shortlist.

TUSC confidently put forward the argument that trade unionists need a complete break with Labour to elect councillors who will oppose all cuts and fight for a budget that meets the needs of the community.

Thousands of leaflets have been distributed, reaching every property in the ward, with more than half of the ward canvassed.

Socialist Party members have run stalls in support of the campaign and received an enthusiastic response.

Laurence Maples

Nuneaton

I am standing in the 5 December Arbury byelection in Nuneaton for TUSC as a sixth-form student.

The views recently expressed by Russell Brand have been echoed in the streets of Arbury as people have become alienated from the capitalist parties and with a local Labour councillor who couldn't be bothered to turn up to meetings.

Or as one person said: "I'll vote for you because you're actually getting off your arse and doing something about it!"

Aidan O'Toole

See tusc.org.uk for more reports

PCS civil service union activist Alex Davidson is also standing for TUSC on 5 December in Manchester's Ancoats and Clayton ward byelection

Brazilian socialist councillor speaks in England and Wales

Manchester

"The people want FIFA-standard housing, FIFA-standard hospitals, FIFA-standard schools!"

Brazilian trade unionist and PSoL (Party of Socialism and Freedom) councillor Paulo Eduardo Gomes addressed a packed meeting of Socialist Party members and supporters in Manchester on 18 November.

Explaining how vast sums are being spent on Brazil hosting next year's FIFA World Cup, while 45 million languish in dire poverty, Paulo also related how young people and workers are fighting back.

A colossal strike wave has swept Brazil following the successful mass protests against unaffordable public transport earlier this year.

"The young people and workers have taken to the streets, and now they know that they have the power to change the world," said Paulo.

He concluded an inspiring meeting, which raised over £100 in the financial appeal, by saying: "For the young generation, and for future generations, we have to fight for a better world, and that means we are fighting now, together, in Brazil, and in Europe, and across the world."

Hugh Caffrey

Leeds

On 19 November, Leeds Met Socialist Students hosted a public meeting with Paulo, who is a councillor in the city of Niteroi near Rio.

Paulo is also involved in building PSoL. He has helped champion the interests of workers and youth in Niteroi, defending Occupy protesters who took over the council chamber for a month. He also explained how he and fellow PSoL councillors publish their expenses online, much to the chagrin of the pro-business politicians.

Iain Dalton



Manchester photo Paul Gerrard



Leeds photo Socialist Students



Paulo also spoke at the Swansea Socialist Party public meeting on 21 November photo Swansea SP

Bristol: Art and Revolution

Joe Etherington introduced Bristol North Socialist Party's discussion on Art and Revolution, feeding back from the session at Socialism 2013.

We discussed what art is, how subversive art is neutralised and sold back to us, and the restrictions on creating, accessing and studying art imposed by class society.

The business part of the meeting covered a recent TUSC public meeting and building for the May elections, and plans with the anti-cuts alliance (Badaca) to fight against the £90 million of cuts and 800 job losses that have just been announced.

We finished with plans for activity in the coming week, including a Saturday stall campaigning against energy price rises.

John Yeandle

Socialist Party national women's meeting 2014

11-12 January, Leytonstone, East London
Open to all women Socialist Party members

Saturday 11 January
1-3.15pm Marxist economics and the crisis
3.30-5.30pm Capitalist feminism v socialist feminism
7pm Social event with food available

Sunday 12 January
10am-12.30pm Choice of three commissions -
1) Sexism in culture
2) Origins of the oppression of women
3) 100 years since the suffragettes

1.30-3pm Choice of two workshops on building the Socialist Party among women-
1) in the universities
2) in the trade unions
3-4pm Reports from two commissions, open discussion and final comments

Contact 020 8988 8796 or sarahwrack@socialistparty.org.uk for more details, including accommodation, pooled fare, childcare, and to book your place

Nigeria: A political party of the working class is born

Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN) holds inaugural convention
Hassan Taiwo Soweto, national youth leader, SPN
See socialistworld.net/doc/6563

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| | £ target | £ received | October-December 2013 | Deadline 6 January 2013 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Eastern | 1,200 | 1,453 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| Wales | 2,300 | 2,123 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| West Midlands | 2,100 | 1,920 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| South West | 1,400 | 1,237 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| East Midlands | 1,600 | 1,364 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| Yorkshire | 2,900 | 2,053 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| London | 6,100 | 4,319 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| Northern | 600 | 367 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| North West | 1,200 | 680 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| South East | 750 | 243 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| Southern | 1,200 | 370 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| England & Wales | 3,650 | 2,111 | ██████████ | ██████████ |
| TOTAL | 25,000 | 18,244 | ██████████ | ██████████ |

Iran interim nuclear deal reflects changed world relations

The interim nuclear deal between Iran, the US, and other world powers has grabbed the world's attention. To provide the context for this development, the Socialist publishes a short extract from an article written for the December issue of *Socialism Today*, the Socialist Party's magazine.

The limits of US power in the Middle East are assessed by Judy Beishon from the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers' International (the CWI is the world socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated).

The shift towards negotiations with Syria helped open the way to talks with Iran over its nuclear industry, the first involving the US and Iran since 1979, which quite quickly led to a 'landmark' interim deal. Iran's nuclear programme will be restricted for six months and sanctions reduced in return.

The 2005 election of the hardline Iranian president Ahmadinejad was partly a repercussion of US president George W Bush's inclusion of Iran in an "axis of evil". The departure from Ahmadinejad's policies of the new president, Hassan Rouhani, does not indicate a fundamental change in the nature of the repressive regime.

But Rouhani's election and approach have reflected a strong desire by the Iranian masses to end the deprivations blamed primarily on western imposed sanctions, and recognition by a layer of the ruling clerics that they need to ease censorship and sanctions in order to head off revolt from below.

Inflation is an unbearable 40%, poverty is rising and the economy is shrinking. Obama being US president and flailing about for solutions for Syria was part of the jigsaw that enabled Rouhani to enter into talks.

As well as wanting the sanctions lifted, Iran has expressed willingness to help with talks to concoct a deal in Syria, probably partly motivated by the fact that assisting As-

sad is a strain on Iran's budget.

Obama, on his part, will be hoping that following the myriad of setbacks for US imperialism in the Middle East, he can at least oversee a new departure in relations with Iran, gain kudos from it in his final term of office and open a door to Iran using its influence in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon in a conciliatory manner. But as fast as the US tries to open this new door, some others shut in its face as outrage breaks out from regimes that see Iran as a bitter enemy.

The stakes are high; if at any stage Iran is suspected of becoming closer to making a nuclear bomb, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt will want to follow suit. A BBC Newsnight programme on 6 November suggested that Saudi Arabia has already made plans to receive nuclear weapons from Pakistan if it believes it necessary. Further negotiations with Iran may bring about a final deal.

Critics

However there are plenty of leading Republicans and Democrats in the US who are critical of the interim deal, with some adamantly opposed to concessions for as long as Iran has any nuclear industry. They see a nuclear Iran as a much greater threat to US and nuclear-armed Israeli interests than Assad's non-nuclear Syria. In Iran too there are clerics in the elite who are opposed to making the necessary concessions

for a final deal to be reached.

Obama's overtures to Iran were met with unrelenting outrage from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who went into open conflict with the US administration, arguing that no concessions should be given to Iran while it still enriches uranium. He condemned the interim deal as a "historic mistake".

As Iran says it won't give up its right to enrich, there is no middle ground between it and Netanyahu's position at present. Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman halfheartedly tried to reduce tensions by saying in November that "Israel's relations with the United States are a cornerstone and without them we cannot make our way in the current global climate", but he also warned in the same month that while "the ties with the US are continually deteriorating", Israel must "seek other allies with common interests."

Israel

Netanyahu has often stated that he will not allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons. His predecessors launched 'pre-emptive' missile strikes on the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981 and a Syrian site in 2007 and more recently test flights have been carried out with Iran in mind.

If Netanyahu's government at some stage decides to strike Iran unilaterally, Israel doesn't have the bunker busting bombs that the US has and it would face even greater isolation internationally than it already does. Going ahead would strain relations with the US further and indicate a corresponding loss of US influence. Iran and Hezbollah could retaliate against oil supply routes, US bases or Israel itself, widening out the conflict considerably.

There are voices within the Israeli ruling class urging their government to veer away from pursuing 'reckless' policies regarding Iran and the



The US continues to fund Israel but John Kerry has recently expressed anger at settlement-building on what would be a Palestinian state



Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine
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Manny Thain investigates
- **Tony Benn's last diaries**
Peter Taaffe reviews
- **Middle East quagmire**
Judy Beishon writes

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Palestinian territories. Nevertheless, although now even more problematic for him in the short term, it can't be ruled out that Netanyahu will eventually order an attack. This is despite the fact that neither military strikes nor an international deal can guarantee to stop the Iranian elite from making nuclear bombs in the long run. Strikes could even spur them on to do so.

The Saudi monarchy has common cause with its enemy regime Israel in wanting to stop concessions to

Iran. Saudi Arabia is also furious with the US on its failure to strike Assad and step up assistance for some of the Syrian rebel forces.

It has threatened to withdraw cooperation with the US regarding its own financing of Syrian militias and turned down a seat on the UN security council in October, citing that the UN had not stopped the Syrian government from using chemical weapons or found a solution to the Palestinian cause, among other condemnations.

Southampton: Labour flies the white flag in face of call to fight back

Nick Chaffey

Southern region Socialist Party secretary

£57 million of cuts since 2010 and Southampton's New Labour council has announced a further £60 million cuts to come over the next three years. This week's council meeting was the last before the council votes its budget through in February next year.

Southampton Councillors Against Cuts, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, went to the meeting to urge Labour councillors to reject the cuts agenda and launch a mass campaign to fight central government for the funding the city needs.

Through using reserves and borrowing powers to fund the budget gap it would be entirely possible to protect jobs and services. By refusing to implement the cuts the council would give a lead, build mass support that could force a weak and unpopular government into retreat.

Moving their motion, Keith said: "This motion gives the Labour councillors in this chamber today

the opportunity to chart a different course. You can say to this government of the rich and powerful: 'We were elected by the working people of this city to defend their interests, not collaborate in attacking them.'"

He urged Labour to pledge to "convene a conference here in this city to which we will invite the people of Southampton, to debate the way forward and organise a challenge to the unacceptable demands you are making on us." Councillors should also promise to: "refuse to bend the knee", and instead "fight for our class."

Fighting back wins

Seconding the motion, Don said: "It has been shown recently if you are willing to fight anything is possible... it's not that long ago we were told that Oaklands swimming pool was to close and we were to 'get used to it', as the then leader of the council said at the time.

"But residents and others put up a fight and forced the administration to find an alternative, giving the pool a future. So it can be done."

Council leader, Simon Letts, gave a reply that unfortunately confirmed the deepest cynicism and betrayal. Completely unwilling to provide any leadership, he hides behind false arguments of 'illegality', of 'commissioners taking over' and 'absence of any support' for such a stand.

In fact Labour is happy to promote a consultation process that encourages the public to choose which services they want to cut and where efficiencies can be made. This will mean the wholesale destruction of the youth services, libraries, Sure Start services and non-statutory provision.

Even the council workers, whose strike in 2011 paved the way for the defeat of the Tory council in 2012, will see an attack on their terms and conditions. Badged as the implementation of a Living Wage, the proposal is unfunded and demands changes to current terms and conditions.

The Labour administration has warned that if an agreement isn't reached, workers will be dismissed and re-employed on new contracts. Exactly the same threats were used



Don Thomas (left) and Keith Morrell photo Southampton Socialist Party

by the previous Tory council! One outcome of the council debate was to unite Labour, Lib Dems and Tories in attacking Keith's and Don's proposal!

The message is clear: Labour may have no fight in them, no alternative and no confidence in winning

support to stop the cuts, but Southampton Councillors Against the Cuts do and are prepared to take the campaign to communities across the city in the months running up to next February's budget-setting meeting.

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.

One shining light

The antics of 'our' elite disgust most of us.

A multi-millionaire government minister, all too keen to denounce people on benefits for 'dependency' discovered he had 'mistakenly' been heating his stables on expenses!

Imagine what might befall the pensioner claiming she had mistakenly left her gas fire on over the winter but couldn't afford to pay the bill? Or if someone 'mistakenly' took a benefit they weren't entitled to.

The Royal College of Nursing made Freedom of Information requests that revealed that spending cuts have led to a shortage of 20,000 nurses. This hidden workforce crisis had been "missed" by government figures (for "missed" read 'hidden').

The other night, celebrities on TV told me with their sincerest faces just how much another few of my pounds would help people on Children in Need. The same celebrities with tax arrangements that ensure they don't pay the huge sums to the public purse that they should have.

In the last year my bank, the Co-operative, was almost broken by someone who seemingly knew more about drugs than banking.

If we're to stop these antics we need an economy and society owned by us, and democratically run by us, with no special privilege for those put in charge. That's what a socialist society would offer.

And in a week of news laden with rotten cynicism, there was one shining light. In America a socialist won an historic election victory. Working people, offered a credible fighting socialist alternative, supported it.

To build that alternative here should be the mission of us all.

Dave Griffiths

**We need a general strike!**

The Con-Dem government is waging war against the working class and, because of the failure of the TUC to follow the mandate from last year's conference to investigate the possibility of a one-day general strike, are winning.

13,000 millionaires got an average £100,000 tax cut, bankers got billions in bonuses, private 'health' companies made billions out of the sell-off of parts of the NHS, MPs are to get an 11% pay rise. Then we have the fuel companies; energy prices have risen 34% since this government came to power, that's eight times the rate of inflation.

What have the working class got? We can expect 30,000 pensioners to die this winter of cold related illness. There's the growth of pawn shops and foodbanks. For the first time since World War Two, the Red Cross has decided to issue food parcels to the starving here in Britain - 702 cases of rickets, 5,499 hospital admissions for malnutrition. At Christmas this year 80,000 children

will be homeless, whole families living in one hostel room.

There's individual trade unions taking heroic strike action to fight the cuts but we need united action against this vicious onslaught. The TUC needs to name the day for a one-day general strike, as a warning, with more to follow.

Mary Jackson

**Socialism 2013**

As a Socialism weekend 'virgin' I would like to say what a positive experience it was for me. I shall definitely be attending again next year.

I enjoyed meeting highly intelligent, entertaining, but above all, brave comrades from other branches. I was particularly moved by the comrades who spoke so candidly about their disabilities during the Sunday discussion.

The whole event was extremely well organised and the speakers at both rallies were inspiring. What a joy to sing the Internationale with so many like-minded people! It was a very moving experience for me.

Even though I got no sleep at the Clink hostel, it was clean and functional. Perhaps I am a little bit too old now for hostels! Might have to consider alternative 'digs' next year?

Thanks everyone for a really great weekend and special thanks to our stalwart minibus drivers - Elaine from Newcastle and Jen from Carlisle, and to all who kept me safe, motivated and entertained.

Lynn Sample

City rivalries

Swansea has just been beaten to the title of City of Culture by Hull, for the centenary of Dylan Thomas' birth as well! Swansea and Hull have had something of a rivalry in recent years. A lot of Swansea people would say that we won what really mattered - a 4-2 victory on the last day of the season in 2003 - one of my happiest ever days watching football.

Other comparisons, include whose Labour council is currently planning the most cuts to services? Here Hull just edges it - £48 million as opposed to Swansea's £45 million.

But at least in Hull there have been a minority of councillors who've put their principles and commitment to their constituents over loyalty to a Labour Party which passes on Con-Dem cuts. There, councillors have been suspended from Labour for refusing to vote for cuts.

To date, there has not been one Labour councillor in Swansea prepared to take a similarly principled stand. Swansea Labour, you're letting us down, don't implement Con-Dem cuts. Or else leave the field free so we can elect councillors who will take up the challenge.

John Roberts

TV review

Amazon's exploitation exposed

Ronnie Job

The conditions revealed in Panorama's exposé on working conditions in Swansea Amazon came as no surprise to Socialist Party members. I submitted an article to the Socialist in September, based on the experiences of an agency worker employed by Amazon over the Christmas period.

The programme concentrated on the physical strain, with the 'picker' the BBC placed in the site having to walk up to eleven miles on a night shift. It also exposed the mental strain of constantly trying to meet targets which, for many of the workers spoken to, seemed barely possible. Targets took no account of different distances of items to be picked. Sometimes automated lights failed, leaving the picker trying to find items in the dark.



'Pickers' at work

brand of exploitation to Wales. Amazon received a grant of £8.8 million towards the cost of the Swansea warehouse.

Subsidies


There was also the construction of the Ffordd Amazon access road with, according to Panorama, £4.9 million of Welsh Government funding. Amazon, a company that pays little or no tax in the UK, is being heavily subsidised by politicians of all mainstream parties.

The appalling conditions at Amazon are definitely connected to the lack of union organisation and involvement in health and safety. The programme interviewed GMB union general secretary, Paul Kenny, who was damning about conditions but failed to outline a strategy for unionising the workforce.

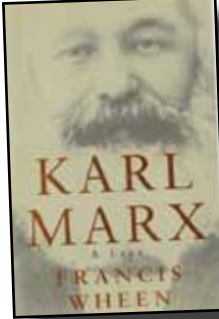
Swansea Socialist Party members have been contacted by student activists in the city who are already collecting stories of students who've worked in Amazon on the same sort of casual conditions exposed last night. They are discussing organising a protest outside Amazon over the Christmas period.

Amazon's practices need to be exposed but what is desperately needed is for the workers to be organised in a union. In order for casual workers to be inspired to join a union, they have to be convinced that whichever union aims to recruit there has a strategy and the determination to take Amazon on.


Victories can be won over casualisation by aggressive bosses - just look at the victories won by Hovis workers, organised by the BFAWU. That's what is needed at Amazon now!



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Hull city council unions force cuts climb-down

Mike Whale
Chair, Hull city council trade unions

The threat of industrial action by Hull council unions has forced a climb-down by the authority in its attempts to impose huge cuts in terms and conditions.

The workforce has been balloted twice and each time rejected cuts packages of £2.8 million.

While the authority has been forced to retreat, it would be wrong to trumpet this as a complete victory for the trade unions. It is still the case that a Labour council is imposing some cuts, mainly on overtime and car user rates, which will seriously affect sections of the workforce.

The new set of proposals will still have to be put to the workforce in the form of a ballot, but the local unions believe that in the current situation this is probably the best we would be able to achieve.

It is a particularly humiliating defeat for the senior officers of the authority who seemed determined to impose the worst cuts possible on the poorest sections of the workforce while protecting their own lavish pay.

At times over the last year or so, it has seemed as if some of the senior officers have been deliberately trying to provoke a confrontation.

Last week, for example, before the end of the 45-day "cooling off period", officers started to hold meetings with staff to explain how the process of dismissal and reengagement might happen.

This was provocative and threatening in the extreme. Some officers simply told staff that if they didn't sign new contracts then they would lose their job!

The senior officers completely ignored the attempt to try and resolve the dispute and resorted to trying to stampede the council into the "dismiss and reengagement" process.

The unions will be demanding that disciplinary action be taken against those responsible.

While the senior officers wanted to implement the cuts, they will argue that they were only following orders from the Labour-led cabinet, which agreed to the cuts and dismissal and reengagement of the workforce if the cuts were not accepted in the first place.

It was the cabinet member with responsibility for HR, councillor Phil Webster, who intervened (to his credit) to try and search for alternative ways forward when it became clear that the unions would actively

Victory against victimisation

Russ Bowering has been a Unison activist for many years and has been victimised for his trade union activities. However, Russ has won a total victory against his employer, the waste disposal company FCC. FCC was originally a council-run service. Undoubtedly the key element behind Russ's victory was the threat of strike action by 25 fellow Unison members.

Another important element was the warning from Hull city council that it would implement its anti-blacklisting policy and refuse to use FCC in the future. While Labour councils are implementing cuts, it shows that pressure can be put on them to adopt anti-blacklisting and other policies which can help support threatened workers.

Management used trumped-up charges to discipline Russ and he has been off work since July. But Russ has been reinstated, and on

his original pre-transfer terms and conditions. Management had insisted that if he was to return it would have to be on less favourable terms and conditions.

This victory should encourage other victims of blacklisting and victimisation that they can win if the trade unions take up the cudgel. Another warning to the Labour movement from Russ's experience is that privatised council firms will try and reduce pay, terms and conditions. That is why the trade unions have to fight council privatisations.

Russ would like to publicly thank all trade unionists who sent messages of support. He is determined to help others who have suffered like him and spoke at the NSSN Yorkshire conference on 23 November.

For more details on this see: www.socialistparty.org.uk

If [Labour councillors] are opposed to cuts, then they have to be prepared to make a stand

oppose the cuts. There is no doubt that Phil Webster did not and does not want to carry out cuts.

This applies to all of the Labour cabinet and the Labour councillors as a whole.

However, if they are opposed to cuts, then they have to be prepared to make a stand like councillors Gary Wareing, Jill Kennett

and Dean Kirk and vote to refuse to implement the cuts at all.

The cabinet and Labour group should use this opportunity to start a campaign with the trade unions and local communities to force the Tories to return the £100 million stolen from the city.

If they don't, then all we have done is postpone a battle.

Anti-blacklisting campaign will not go away

Neil Cafferky

The TUC day of action on 20 November was a reminder to construction bosses that the campaign against the blacklist will not go away. The ferocity of the Con-Dems and the right wing media's response to Unite's leverage campaign is a testament to the role it has played in exposing blacklisting firms.

Leverage campaigns are a useful tactic in the battle against the bosses but as a supplement to the most effective weapon. This is still strong union organisation with active reps elected from the workforce on site. Evidence shows that where workers are organised and have the industrial strength to enforce proper health and safety, there is a dramatic reduction in 'accidents' and deaths.

An important demand must be union monitoring of hiring practices to ensure any blacklisting can be quickly exposed.

Alongside the bosses' offensive on the sites the Tory government is also tearing up health and safety regulations. This will be a death sentence for many workers in industries such as construction. David Cameron has called regulation "an albatross around the neck" of British business. And the Labour Party has made no commitment to reverse this. The anti-trade union laws, supported by all three parties, remain an obstacle to union organisation.

Blacklisting of trade union activists and 'business friendly' legislation are two sides of the same coin - the combined use of legal and illegal methods to prevent workers from organising to improve their working conditions.

Strong union organisation is the



Unite's inflatable rat is put to good use photo the Socialist

starting point for the fightback. But to combat the 'legal' attacks workers also need a political party that stands in their interests. A party that is in favour of more health and safety regulations, not less. Of a properly funded inspection regime. A party that is in favour of trade unions organising and effectively representing their members, not putting restrictive laws that only help the employers.

This is based on a Socialist Party leaflet which was distributed on many protests during the Day of Action.

Workers protest in Leeds

On 20 November, around 15 protesters, mostly members of construction union Ucat, gathered outside the Merriam shopping centre in Leeds where blacklisters Robert McAlpine have offices.

They were joined by comedian Mark Thomas for part of the morning as well as a number of local trade unionists.

The PCS union, who have offices in the same building, had kindly offered protesters use of their toilet facilities. But when some protesters attempted to go in, managers attempted to block their entrance. One assaulted two protesters by shoving them into the doors - one ended up in hospital.

Iain Dalton

In brief

Save our children's centres!

Tory dominated Kent County Council (KCC) has announced cuts of £273 million over the next three years. This includes £24.8 million in staffing costs. This is a direct threat to our public services and to the jobs and livelihoods of an estimated 600 KCC staff. This is on top of 1,500 jobs already gone. KCC has proposed 23 closures of Sure Start children's centres. Linking up with parents around the county, the Kent trade unions have begun a campaign to mobilise opposition to these Tory cuts, beginning with the children's centres. We held an initial protest in support of Kent parents in Maidstone on 19 September.

• A further protest is scheduled for 2 December, from 11.30am-1.30pm, outside a cabinet meeting.

David Semple, secretary, Kent Association of Trades Union Councils, personal capacity

Children protest

My heart sang when I saw and heard them. Children and young people, marching and singing and chanting and banging drums. They were making their grand entrance onto the political stage and would not be ignored. On 19 November they were protesting about Leicester city council's plans to drastically cut the budgets of their adventure playgrounds to the point where they will not be able to function.

Children from the Woodgate Adventure playground told me that these playgrounds keep violence down and life without them would be boring with nothing to live for. Some 14 year old volunteers from Goldhill adventure playground described how they involve disabled children in their playground. Their pride in their work was obvious and moving.

Some of these adventure playgrounds have been around for 40 years. They work with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the city.

Some are open from 9am until 6.30pm during term time working with children excluded from school and children that have to hide from their families because of abuse and violence.

Yet Leicester council are cutting their budgets by £300,000. Children did not cause this economic crisis and should not be made to pay for it.

Councillors serious about representing the people of Leicester would not be making cuts but mobilising people of all ages in a struggle to obtain more funding. We need people to stand as Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates to defend ordinary people and refuse to pass on these hated cuts.

Heather Rawling Leicester NUT, personal capacity

Mike Barker adds: "This is not the first time that the council has attempted to undermine the provision of childcare facilities in Leicester, and it is not the first time that Leicester's residents have been forced to defend their services. The last time such cuts to the city's adventure playgrounds were fought the council was controlled by the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, with the opposition group of Labour councillors acting as part of the protest. Now they are inside voting for them!"

COUNCILLORS: SAY **NO** TO TORY CUTS

The Tories, Lib Dems, Labour and Ukip all agree that the decimation and privatisation of public services has to continue to keep their big business backers happy. But the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) says there is a choice – we, the 99%, don't have to pay for the failure of a system that mainly benefits the 1%. On 5 December, TUSC is standing in six council byelections to show there is an alternative to cuts, cuts and more cuts. Tony Mulhearn, one of the Liverpool 47 councillors who, from 1983 to 87, refused to carry out Tory cuts and won £60 million of extra funding from central government, reports on the byelection campaign in Liverpool.

Taking inspiration from socialist Kshama Sawant's magnificent victory in Seattle, USA, TUSC candidate John Marston, a veteran socialist, life-long trade unionist and seasoned campaigner, is fighting for the Liverpool Riverside council seat vacated by Paul Brant.

Brant, who resigned for personal reasons, was the financial lieutenant of king cutter Labour Mayor Joe Anderson.

For TUSC, stalls, leafleting and media releases are part of an energetic campaign which involves community organisations, the RMT and FBU unions, and local authority workers.

Unlike Paul Brant, John calls for an end to all cuts, and for the immediate end to the evil bedroom tax. He demands the council declares it will not penalise tenants due to the bedroom tax.

John is implacably opposed to Mayor Anderson's proposal for further cuts of £150 million which would savage the city's remaining

services bringing further hardship to the neediest in Liverpool.

In a cynical ploy, these cuts are being front-loaded so they are implemented before the 2015 general election, so that a future Labour government avoids the blame.

Anderson himself revealed, under pressure from local authority unions, that national Labour Party figures told him not to expect any financial relief from Labour.

Reserves

Anderson has used the city's reserves to bankroll a questionable company to convert the ex-Tax Building on the Queens Dock into upmarket flats; he's funded Everton FC to purchase land for training facilities; he boasts of the restoration of Cunard buildings as a cruise terminal and offices.

None of these enterprises, funded from the council's reserves, will benefit those who rely on services in the city.

In a grotesque display of hubris, a

grinning Anderson was pictured in the Liverpool Echo proudly holding up two bags full of food, fulsomely praising Tesco's generosity to Liverpool's food banks.

He seems completely oblivious that Labour council's subservient compliance to Con-Dem cuts has led to a mushrooming of foodbanks throughout the city.

Anderson and Brant declare that while it breaks their hearts, there is no choice but to implement the cuts.

Riverside's unemployment stands at 25%, and nearly half the ward's children live in poverty – almost twice the national average.

John Marston said: "There is a choice. The 47 councillors in the 1980s refused to implement Thatcher's cuts. Anderson and his cohorts should do the same.

"If the city's financial reserves can be used to finance private well-heeled interests, they can be used to set a needs budget to restore the cuts in services on which our people rely."

See page 8 for more TUSC byelection campaigns



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.

In May's council elections, TUSC aims to stand 625 anti-cuts candidates. Could you be one of them?

See www.tusc.org.uk

See page 9 for campaigning by Southampton anti-cuts councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas

What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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