



End poverty pay scandal

REAL LIVING WAGE NOW

The Con-Dems tell us we're in a 'recovery'. Well, it doesn't feel that way to most of us. Far from it. While bankers get astronomical bonuses and pay, the PCS union has worked out that the real value of UK pay has fallen 7% since the start of 2008. Since 2010 there has only been one month when average pay didn't fall – and that month was skewed because of bankers' bonuses! Tory Chancellor George Osborne has floated a rise from the current rate of £6.31 an hour to £7

an hour. But this does not even reach the 'living wage', an hourly rate set independently and updated annually according to the basic cost of living in the UK. It is set at £7.65 and £8.80 in London. Today the minimum wage is at its lowest level in real terms since 2004. Millions of workers cannot make ends meet. Working Tax Credits, essential for many workers to survive, bail out low-paying Scrooge employers. Socialists stand for a minimum wage that is enough to live on and for no exemptions to that.

Socialist Party member Karen Fletcher spoke to Jason (not his real name) about the reality of life on low pay.

Jason is married and has a six year old son. He works with mentally disabled adults and has been in his current job for five years.

He is contracted to work a minimum of 30 hours a week at £6.50 an hour. He has not had a pay rise in four years. He stays because he loves his job.

When asked what it would mean to him to earn £10 an hour, Jason's answer was simple and heart-breaking. He told me it would

"make a huge difference - we wouldn't have to keep borrowing money from family. We wouldn't worry about the gas and electric, we could get a big shop when I get paid."

At this point his wife wistfully pointed out that they could finally begin to save, to get out of their small flat and live in a house with a garden. It's not exactly a soaring ambition is it, to be able to open the door and let your son play in the garden.

The Socialist Party says:

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to the 'living wage', as an immediate step towards £10 an hour
- 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



Mitie cleaning workers striking for decent pay photo N Cafferky

Miliband's Tory policies: What exactly is the point of Labour?

Ed Miliband and his shadow cabinet are going hell for leather with speeches and newspaper columns. They want to show how fit they are for election in 2015. But who are they trying to impress? Certainly not working class people – or even the middle class Miliband claims to now defend in the election pledge top trumps he is playing with the Tories.

The up to 1,000 families falling into debt each month because of the Coalition's cuts to council tax benefit, implemented by Tory, Lib Dem and Labour-led councils, will certainly be on the look-out for policies that promise relief from the ongoing misery of austerity.

Similarly those forced to request specially prepared 'kettle boxes' from food banks, ie products that can be prepared by adding boiling water, such as instant soup, mash and just-add-water porridge. A 'cold box' food parcel has also been created, containing three days' worth of mainly tinned groceries that can be prepared without the need for heating or hot water for those in even more dire straits.

In a further bid to compete with the Tories, Rachel Reeves, shadow work and pensions secretary, announced Labour's plans to introduce further sanctions to those struggling to find a job. Those who do not perform well in maths and language tests could lose their benefits under Labour.

In May the Office for National Statistics announced the highest number of vacancies since 2008 – 503,000. But there were 2.52 million unemployed, over a third of whom had been out of work for over a year.

Nationalising the banks under democratic workers control and management, as well as major taxing of the cash hoards of the super-rich, could help finance a massive programme of socially useful job creation and training. Part of that could be building quality council housing and renovations to deal with the devastating and spiralling housing crisis – not Labour's increased competition

between building companies.

Miliband and Labour have shown they have precisely nothing to offer working people and all those suffering the cruelty of austerity. Writing in the Financial Times Janan Ganesh hit the nail on the head in summarising that, with the slew of pledges emitting from Labour HQ, Miliband is "evangelising for popular capitalism".

Capitalism, be it Miliband's 'responsible' variety or not, is a system based on private not popular ownership of the wealth of society. Labour's proclaimed hopes that the provision of choice, competition and regulation will rein in all the excesses is dead in the water. Oxfam's latest figures expose the reality – today 85 people own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population! This is the utterly and fundamentally unequal system that Miliband is defending.

Capitalist party

Labour has called for 'more competition' to shake up the banks and house-builders, as they suggested regarding the energy companies at the autumn conference. But it wasn't that call last October which people warmed to – it was the call to freeze energy prices, which chimed with the popular mood for nationalisation of the energy companies.

But the venomous Daily Mail and other right-wing tabloids went for Miliband, seeing it as an opportunity to crush any perceived diversion from pro-market fundamentalism. Now Labour is running away from anything that makes even the most modest challenge to the big corporations.

Thatcher claims her proudest achievement was Blair and his pro-capitalist New Labour. Ganesh correctly writes: "Had the late UK prime minister lived to see Ed Miliband propound her own economic vision, the frisson of intellectual hegemony would have been even headier."

This touching faith in 'competition' betrays

Labour's incapacity to put forward an alternative to austerity. This is because today the Labour Party is an outright capitalist party. As Labour 'rising star' Chuka Umunna says: "we're all capitalists now".

Not so. Experience of capitalism means greater numbers recognise that what is needed is not tinkering around the edges but a socialist alternative.

A socialist economy would have to be a democratically planned economy. This would mean bringing all the big corporations, controlling around 80% of the British economy,

into democratic public ownership, under democratic working class control.

Socialists argue that such an alternative is possible but it requires mass working class action. As the creators of wealth, workers, when they are organised and have a determined leadership, have enormous potential power. They need organisations armed with the ideas and understanding of how to change society. If you agree – join the socialists.

See pages 6 and 7

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

While Miliband's attack on the bankers and the 1% has all the intensity of being savaged by a sheep, Labour's real attacks have been reserved for the trade unions and the remnants of the collective voice of the working class that still pertain in the party. But Labour's attempts to expel the unions' voice will provoke questioning among workers about how to ensure they have a political say.

Worldwide millions of people are fighting back against the reality of capitalism. In South Africa the miners are preparing to strike once again for wages they can live on. It is these workers who took the first steps, along with socialists in the DSM (sister party of the Socialist Party in SA), towards building a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme including nationalisation of the mines, living wages for all and a break with capitalism. Here the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, involving the RMT and leading trade unionists, is a precursor to fulfilling a similar role. Get involved.

Councillors can make a difference... but only if they are prepared to fight

Next May there will be elections in England for over 4,000 councillors in local authorities across the country. To get what the BBC calls 'balanced media coverage', parties need to contest 15% of the seats up for election – that means 625 TUSC candidates. Could you be one of those?

Come along to the conference and meet other prospective candidates and TUSC supporters who are building an alternative to the austerity parties in their areas.

Come to the TUSC 2014 Local Elections conference

Saturday 1 February, 11am - 4.30pm
Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London, W1T 6AQ
Nearest tube Warren Street
Conference registration fee: £10 waged /£2 low/unwaged

www.tusc.org.uk

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

Transport workers have power to defeat cuts

Paula Mitchell

London Socialist Party regional secretary

Almost 1,000 jobs to go, all ticket offices to be closed (despite 71% public opposition), some workers to lose as much as £10,000, new grades to be introduced on lower wages. This is what faces Londoners if the Underground workers lose the battle which looms over the city.

It's the bosses and their political representatives versus one of the strongest trade unions.

Rail and tube workers are like the miners in the past – decent wages, good holiday entitlement and other terms – all hard-won and maintained by a strong union organisation that is prepared to fight for its members. Smash that and it's open season on the rest of the working class in London. But the rail unions can bring the city to a standstill. They have the biggest industrial power in London and the potential to defeat Johnson.

As we go to press the RMT are in discussions at Acas. Members will expect the union to exhaust every possibility to negotiate. But when

the bosses offer nothing, an attack on this scale needs a response by the might of the organised working class.

On 16 January a public rally organised by the RMT-initiated campaign, Hands Off London Transport, took place. On the platform were rail union reps Mick Cash, RMT assistant general secretary, and Manuel Cortez, general secretary of rail union TSSA. They were joined by speakers from the Disabled People's Against Cuts (DPAC), National Pensioners Convention, the Green Party and Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn.

Union power

From the floor, Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of the RMT, welcomed the support from all these groups, but stressed that what will smash these cuts is the power of the union and the working class. Backing up this point, Linda Taaffe, secretary of the National Shop Stewards Network, argued that this is a fight for all trade unions; the Tories and the bosses want to smash the RMT to be a lesson to every other trade unionist.

Linda drew on the example of the

miners' strike in the 1980s. "There was no lack of commitment from miners and from ordinary people. What was lacking was support from other unions. That is the lesson we need to learn, to raise this fight to a different level."

That is what made the contributions of Manuel Cortez, Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary of the civil service union PCS, and Martin Powell-Davies from the NUT executive (there in a personal capacity) so important.

Manuel declared his union's aim to strike on the same day as the RMT, to stand shoulder to shoulder, and said what was needed was to link up with other workers in the public and private sectors.

From the floor Chris Baugh announced that PCS members in the Met Police were aiming to coordinate action on the same day as the RMT. He said all the unions needed to synchronise action and called for a 24-hour general strike. Martin Powell-Davies explained the need for the NUT to approach RMT, PCS, higher education unions, etc, to bring everyone together.

A public campaign is important because London's Tory Mayor Boris



NSSN members supporting striking RMT Mitie workers photo Neil Cafferky

Johnson and the right-wing press like the Evening Standard will whip up a campaign against tube workers. Everyone across London will be affected by this dispute.

An appeal to all workers across London from the rail unions is needed. Urgent discussions with key trade unions, especially with bus drivers organised in Unite, will be the start to mobilising the work-

ing class of London behind the tube workers.

But what's most important is the power of the Underground workers themselves. The national leadership of the RMT needs to lead from the front in preparing members including with workplace meetings, building up confidence that they can win and steeling them for the battle ahead.

Pay me - I'm a banker!

Nationalise to stop the fat cats' rip-off rewards

Matt Gordon

It is a tough time for bankers. The EU has decided to cap bankers' bonuses at 100%, and so condemned those earning more than £410,000 to "only" get paid double their salary.

Luckily for the bankers, they have loyal friends in the persons of David Cameron and George Osborne, who are gallantly calling for bankers at RBS to receive 200% bonuses instead.

RBS - the loss-making, scandal-riven, incompetent giant which is 82% owned by the taxpayer - hasn't even asked the prime minister and chancellor to fight their corner, at least publicly, but they are doing it anyway.

Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, has also proven to be a good chap - he also opposes the "crude" EU bonus cap and instead thinks bankers should get paid the market rate, ie as much as they can possibly get away with.

Cameron, Osborne and Carney are good enough to let some minor misdemeanours at RBS slide. Things such as pre-tax losses of £634 million in the third quarter 2013 alone, revelations that the bank was forcibly driving small businesses to the wall in order to seize their property and maximise profits, technical issues that potentially affect 250,000 customer every single minute, and 30,000 job losses since 2008, all of this does not impact on the decision to support massive bonuses.

After half a decade of recession, austerity and plummeting living standards, bankers' bonuses continue to increase.

In 2012, 95 bankers at RBS each received a bonus of at least £1 million. These figures were dwarfed by rival banks, such as JP Morgan who paid 126 London staff £2 million



photo Wales SP

each, and Goldman Sachs London who paid 115 people a whopping £2.7 million each - at least!

Loopholes

The new EU regulations on capping bonuses won't make any difference, with or without Cameron and Osborne opposing them.

Barclays are now handing senior staff a "third payment", a payout classed neither as salary nor bonus and so exempt from the restrictions.

Other banks are making similar "cash allowances" or increasing share awards. For example, the new RBS CEO Ross McEwan was handed £1.5 million in shares simply for starting in his new post. That is not the sort of recruitment incentive you see at the Jobcentre!

As well as this, if the EU rules are imposed, banks will simply decrease bonuses but increase sala-

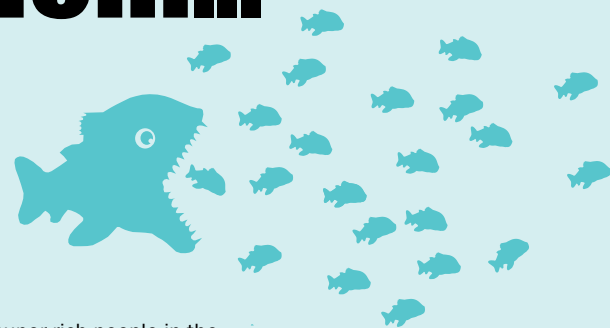
ries. That is why Ed Miliband's support for the EU cap is so ineffectual. The government could make whatever decision on RBS bonuses it wanted to - instead of fighting to increase them, Osborne should scrap bonuses altogether.

Any bank, especially one that is majority owned by the British people should not be allowed to ruin small businesses, defraud customers, cut thousands of jobs or reward the bosses.

The only way of stopping this is taking the banking system into full public ownership to be democratically run by elected and accountable committees including finance workers and service users.

Banks could then be used to support struggling families and small businesses, to break the stranglehold of the super-rich minority over the economy, as part of developing a democratically run planned economy in the UK and the world.

Them...



85 super-rich people in the world, in total, own as much wealth (\$110 trillion) as half the world's population of 3.5 billion people.

Robb, said: "Sky high housing costs, stagnating wages and the high cost of living have taken their toll."

In the US the share of national income going to the top 1% has doubled since 1980 to 20%. For the top 0.1% it has quadrupled.

Capitalist investor Warren Buffet, **\$53.5** billion wealth,

pays only 17.7% in income tax while his secretary (on an above average salary of \$60,000) pays 30% in tax. (source: Oxfam)

Cost of living

Total average weekly pay increased from £439 to £476 between March 2008 and October 2013 - 8.5% over 5.5 years. Over the same period the CPI prices index went up from 106.7 to 127.5 ie up by nearly 20%. Domestic gas and electricity prices rocketed by 50%.

Deeper in debt

Research commissioned by the homeless charity Shelter has shown that one million people have had to turn to payday loans and credit cards to pay their rent or mortgage. Shelter also report that 9,000 people unable to pay their rent or mortgage called the charity last year - an increase of one-third. Many more cash-strapped workers are too ashamed to ask for help from friends and family. Shelter's chief executive, Campbell

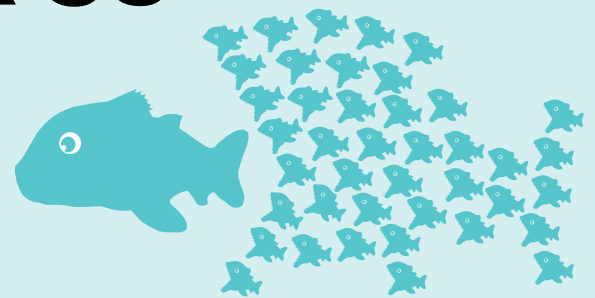
Below minimum

It's not just Bangladeshi workers (where a factory collapsed last year) who have been suffering from low-wage paying, profiteering employers. A US embassy cable, leaked by Wikileaks, showed how clothing companies, such as Levi Strauss and Hanes, paying what the embassy described as 'slave wages', decided they didn't want to implement an increase in the Haitian minimum wage to 61 US cents an hour and instead exerted their influence on the US government to persuade the Haitian government to change this to 31 US cents an hour, or \$3 a day. Even the pitifully low US federal minimum wage (which campaigners in Seattle and elsewhere are trying to force up to \$15 an hour) is \$58 dollars a day, almost 20 times more!

Utwit forecast

And now the weather forecast brought to you by Ukip. 'Blackening skies will be followed by pestilential plagues of frogs and locusts...' At least it would be if Ukip's suspended councillor in Henley-on-Thames, David Silvester, was involved, judged by his ludicrous claim that extreme weather events have been caused by the government legalising same sex marriages. Before suspending this former Tory party 'fruitcake' Ukip initially cautioned against disciplining Silvester, saying that spouting such reactionary nonsense was justified on the grounds of "free speech". Ukip poses itself as an 'anti-establishment' party. In reality it is a vituperous nest of 'real Tory' bigots.

...& Us



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



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Fracking - profiting from environmental destruction

Matt Kilsby

"We're going all out for shale" - said David Cameron at the same time as he announced bribes to councils and local planning authorities in order to spread fracking operations across the country.

Over the last few weeks as protests and direct action against fracking - or hydraulic fracturing, to give it its full name - have intensified, much has been written and said about the process in the media. But what are the environmental impacts of fracking? Is it safe? And who is set to profit from an expansion of mining and drilling?

Fracking is the process of drilling and injecting fluid into the ground at a high pressure in order to fracture shale rocks and release natural gas inside. More than a million gallons of water are mixed with sand and chemicals - including lead, uranium and mercury - and then sent 10,000 feet below the ground through a drilled pipeline. The fluid reaches the end of the well where the high pressure causes the nearby

shale rock to crack, creating fissures where natural gas flows into the well.

During this process, methane gas and toxic chemicals leak from the system and contaminate nearby groundwater. In America, where fracking sites are generally located in sparsely populated areas, methane concentrations are 17 times higher in drinking-water wells near fracking sites than in normal wells.

In densely populated Britain the probability of harmful contaminants entering our drinking water is alarmingly high. Meanwhile, more than 50% of that toxic fracking fluid is left underground forever.

So what about the jobs and cheap energy that fracking will bring? The government promises thousands of new jobs but the reality is very different. This is because the fracking sites can be remotely operated, meaning very few local workers will be employed.

Furthermore, our energy bills won't go down because the gas produced will be sold on the open market. Energy companies will still set the prices and charge whatever they

need to in order to preserve their massive profit margins.

The energy companies will continue to rake in millions at our expense. No wonder Total - the French energy company that cannot frack at home because the process has been banned by the French government - is desperate to get its hands on fracking licenses in the UK.

Fracking is an insanely resource-intensive method of energy production and is indicative of the bankrupt capitalist system - a system which is incapable of looking after our environment and developing sustainable and green energy sources because it is transfixed by profit for the few.

Only socialism can properly safeguard the environment for us and future generations at the same time as making sustainable energy available for all. We need to take the profit out of energy production and distribution. That is why the Socialist Party calls for public ownership and democratic control of the Big Six energy companies and a socialist plan for energy production, distribution and pricing.

What we saw

As seen on Facebook Martin Luther King day in the USA



After Kshama Sawant's (pictured) election victory in Seattle, Socialist Alternative supporters follow up their campaign for a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Teachers need a date for national action

Martin Powell-Davies
Member of the NUT national executive

Teachers are facing yet more attacks on our conditions, when our existing intolerable workload is already driving many teachers out of the profession – a rate of ‘wastage’ that even head of Ofsted, Michael Wilshaw, has had to admit is a ‘national scandal’.

Michael Wilshaw’s answer to the crisis facing education – that teachers should ‘stop moaning’ is no solution. Yes, we should complain but complaining will not change matters – only a serious campaign of ac-

tion will do so.

NUT members are waiting for news from the emergency meeting of the National Executive that met on 16 January.

That meeting was called in the light of the commitment, made following the postponement of the strike action in November – a postponement that I opposed – that, instead, “in the event that insufficient progress is made in talks with the Secretary of State, a joint day of national strike action be called and taken no later than 13 February 2014”.

Given that Michael Gove has so far refused to agree to meet separately with the NUT, NASUWT and

Wales teachers’ union UCAC to try and resolve our disputes, then clearly no such progress has been made. However, Executive members have been asked to maintain confidentiality about the decisions made at the meeting.

All I can say is that discussions will be continuing at the next national executive meeting on 30 January and that, clearly, if action is to be taken before 13 February, then there is little time left to make such a strike announcement.

It’s no secret the position that I would argue for: naming a date for a one-day national strike before 13 February as was promised, seeking to coordinate with other trade un-

ions in dispute – like the RMT, FBU, PCS and Higher Education unions as well as the NASUWT, and, critically, making clear to both teachers and the Secretary of State that our next strike is not just a one-off protest action but part of an ongoing campaign with further industrial action and campaigning activities to follow in the spring and summer terms.

• **The network of local NUT associations and reps organised by Lanac will be meeting in Leicester on 1 February. For more information see: nutlan.org.uk**

• **Martin’s blog: electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk**

In brief

Bus drivers’ strike



Picketing in Bridport

About 60 drivers, members of Unite, at First Hampshire and Dorset were on strike for 24 hours on 20 January in a dispute which has seen their pay fall dramatically behind their regional counterparts. The drivers are currently on £8.30 an hour, compared with drivers on Yellow Buses in Bournemouth who earn £10 an hour.

The management has offered 1.5% for April 2013 – April 2014 which would take the pay to £8.50 an hour – however, the company wants to claw back that rise by eroding terms and conditions, such as reducing sick pay.

I visited the 14-strong Bridport picket line. I spoke to one driver who said that their demand is not only parity with drivers in other parts of the company, but to reduce their driving time.

They’re now on a work to rule, with a further strike on 29 January, market day in Dorchester and Bridport.

Unite said that the deal offered no back pay and management also wanted to start the pay year on 1 July which was ‘moving the goalposts’ by three months.

The drivers are fighting for £9 an hour, with no strings attached.

Paul Morris

Universities strike

Members of the University and College Union (UCU), working in higher education will start a series of two-hour strikes on 23 January. These are part of the pay dispute, exacerbated by the revelations of six figure pay packets being given to some university heads, while staff have only been offered 1%.

The other two strikes will be on 23 January from 11am to 1pm and 28 January from 2pm to 4pm.

There will be joint strike action by Unison, UCU and the EIS in Scotland on 6 February.

“Three Cosas”

Workers at the University of London are to strike from 27 to 29 January. These cleaners and other ancillary workers, members of the Independent Workers of Great Britain are employed by Balfour Beatty and have been fighting for a living wage and better conditions for some time, with significant victories. Their ‘3 Cosas’, the theme of the current battle, are sick pay, holidays and pensions.

South Africa solidarity

The AGM of the Communication Workers Union Broad Left has agreed to donate £100 to the South African Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) election fund.

For more information see: <http://workerssocialistparty.co.za/>

Clive Walder, CWU Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester Branch

Teachers strike against regime... And threatened redundancies



Part of the large picket line photo Steve Score

Leicester Socialist Party

Over 30 National Union of teachers (NUT) members mounted a picket line on 16 January outside Gateway Sixth Form college in Leicester. They were on strike for the second time that week, and plan three more days of strike action if their demands are not met.

The union has grown rapidly at the school, with 23 new members this term reflecting the mood but also the fact that when a union fights people can see the need to join. Every union member was on strike.

One of the pickets, a long-serving teacher at Gateway, explained: “Our problem is with the way observations are being used in a punitive way... We fear it is being used as a

way of getting rid of teachers.

“They are sending managers in to observe us who never leave the office, who don’t understand what we are doing and can make decisions that are potentially career-terminating. This adds to the stress teachers face. They didn’t want to give us notice of which lessons would be observed, creating the feeling that they are trying to catch you out!”

“This action has an effect of uniting people and the actions of the head have actually brought the staff together against her!”

This is the second local school dispute in Leicester in a short time, with the possibility of others on the way. In spite of the delay in national action by the teaching unions the mood to fight exists in many schools.



Fighting to defend jobs and the school photo A Tice

Alistair Tice

Abbey school in Kimberworth, Rotherham, is a special school for pupils aged 7 to 16 with “moderate learning difficulties and complex needs.” Its 2011 Ofsted report was: “good with outstanding features.” The school is not in financial difficulties.

So what does Rotherham Labour local education authority do? Appoint a new executive headteacher, imposed from a neighbouring secondary school, with no special schools experience.

And what does this head, Roger Burman, do? Introduce a restructuring plan in which all staff have to apply for their own jobs, and reduce the number of teaching posts from

18 to 12 threatening six compulsory redundancies.

Advertisements for some of the new senior posts have appeared on the Rotherham council website indicating that special school experience is not essential.

That’s why the 12 classroom teachers that are members of the National Union of Teachers took strike action on 16 January. If a position of ‘no compulsory redundancies’ is not guaranteed, they will strike again.

Teaching assistants, members of the GMB union, were on strike on 20 January, against the restructuring programme.

Email messages of support to NUT rep Pat McLaughlin: ppmac@talktalk.net

More action needed to defend Probation Service

Probation worker in Unison

I recently attended a Unison seminar regarding the government’s proposals around the probation service. I was very glad to hear my union was doing something as prior to this, Unison had held a ‘lunch-time protest’ in solidarity with Napo members in my local Probation Service office. I found a beleaguered workforce there lacking confidence.

Some had asked why Unison had

not taken the same action as Napo. I could not answer them and felt angry towards my union.

Shortly after the protest, Napo called their strike so I went to the same office to show solidarity. I found a completely different workforce. They came out confidently waving flags and banners with much enthusiasm.

So when Unison publicised the seminar, I believed Unison had listened and were now organising for action. How wrong I was!

The first part of the day outlined what risks the government proposals have for the public and service users.

They are truly shocking and highlighted the need for action.

The Unison officials explained that they had balloted Probation Service members asking if they were willing to take action ‘up to and including strike action?’

The overwhelming response was ‘yes’ (80%) on what Unison said was a very high number of votes cast for

a ballot.

But no action was taken from the ballot because we were told: “We have to be realistic about what we can achieve.”

The whole experience has highlighted to me how essential it is to reclaim my union for workers and the public who rely on our services. I encourage all union members to get active within their unions to ensure they are representing their members fully and acting in their interests alone. I know I will!

Publicity alone can’t save sacked union branch official

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest

Polly Toynbee, well-known Guardian journalist and prominent Labour Party member, recently wrote a column highlighting the case of Charlotte Monro, chair of our local Whipps Cross Hospital Unison branch.

It is widely accepted that Charlotte was victimised and sacked for speaking out against cuts and specifically the removal of the stroke unit from the hospital.

The Socialist Party argued at every turn in this struggle that the defence of Charlotte should be linked to the general fight to defend healthcare. However, that was not the strategy put by the officials within Unison’s London region. Their strategy echoes that being put by the national leaders of Unison and other trade unions: don’t have strikes that will put the Labour Party in an embarrassing position in the run up to a general election.

Since Charlotte’s first suspension we have had a public meeting of over 100 and another of over 70, a demo of

between 600-700 people, an indicative ballot for action, of which 97% voted in favour of strike action.

But London Unison officials have frustrated any attempt to widen support for Charlotte and for a campaign against cuts. Unison officials refused to circulate a letter appealing for support for Charlotte, a retired members’ meeting was told that they couldn’t send a message of solidarity to the local demonstration, Unison officers advised the branch committee not to call a meeting or to discuss what was happening to Charlotte on any level.

Polly Toynbee is very eloquent at describing the problem and it is great to get celebrity endorsement. Russell Brand retweeted a tweet I put out asking him to back our local demo last September. He probably has millions of followers on twitter, yet I’m not sure even one of them turned up to the demo.

Publicity is important but a strategy that wins is vital. It would be great to see all those journalists who are lamenting the effects of cuts now in their columns, lining up to back the RMT in their dispute over job cuts..

Stop the student debt spiral - day of action 6 February

Part of a week of action opposing student loan privatisation

Socialist Students

The Student Loan Company (SLC) is up for sale. Not content with charging us £9,000 a year fees for increasingly cut to pieces education, £100 million worth of bursaries, a lifeline for the poorest students, could be gone come September. SLC privatisation could see our student loan conditions retrospectively changed, pushing students and graduates deeper into debt.

In public, the government claims privatisation will not affect students. But behind closed doors, leaked documents have revealed plans to allow potential new owners to charge graduates whatever interest rates they like, regardless of their original loan agreement.

Marketisation

Selling off and privatising student loans represents a further nail in the coffin for the provision of public education. If privatisation is completed, the government will play almost no role in the funding and provision of higher education. Instead, students will have to rely on unscrupulous loan shark-style finance companies or rich parents.

This transformation of universities from public institutions of learning to business bodies, competing in a market for 'customers', is already having a profound impact on the nature of the education they provide.

Recently, students at the University of London were faced with brutal police violence when peace-

driven system.

But these attacks can be beaten. Student activists have called a week of action against Student Loan Privatisation. Socialist Students is co-ordinating protests, occupations and stunts to say 'drop the debt, stop privatisation' on Thursday 6 February. This could be the launch pad for a mass campaign.

On the day of action Socialist Students will also be demanding that the National Union of Students does its job and organises a national student demonstration to end student debt as well as to defend the right to protest.

Our movement must say education is a right, not a privilege. This is the fight against student loan privatisation, but it's the fight against fees, cuts and marketisation as well.

Things can be different. The super-rich 1% should be made to pay for their crisis. Socialist Students says grants not loans, free education not fees and cuts. We can win fully funded, publicly owned, democratically run, free education for all.

We demand:

- Save our bursaries – stop all cuts
- Stop the student loan sell-off – keep the profiteers off student debt
- No interest rate hikes – no decrease in repayment thresholds
- Bring all privatised sections of the loan book back into public ownership and cancel student debt
- Fully funded, publicly owned, democratically run universities, free to all students
- Fight for free education
- Grants not loans! For publicly funded living grants
- No to all cuts and privatisation on our campuses
- We need a national student demonstration organised by NUS under these demands
- No to capitalism. For a socialist world, where the big monopolies are taken into public ownership, the economy is democratically planned and resources are used to meet the needs of all humanity



photo Senan

Youth Fight for Jobs campaign in Croydon

Socialist Party members held a successful Youth Fight for Jobs campaign stall in Croydon, South London on Saturday 18 January. We plastered the stall with posters against zero-hour contracts and used a megaphone to explain the insecurity such contracts create in young people's lives. We met lots of young people interested in fighting back, sold 20 copies of the Socialist and raised more than £50.

We hope to build on this success with more campaigning activity and hopefully regular Socialist Party youth meetings.

Laurence Maples

If privatisation is completed, the government will play almost no role in the funding and provision of higher education

fully demonstrating. In response, thousands of students joined 'Cops off Campus' protests. The two issues are related. Democracy and protest have no role to play in this new marketised education system. Critical thinking and academic freedom are inconvenient luxuries in a profit

Socialist Students national conference

Rally for Revolution
Saturday 1 February
6pm-8pm

Socialist Students national conference
Sunday 2 February
10am-5pm

Come along to the Socialist Students national conference. We'll be discussing and debating the big issues affecting students - student loan privatisation, #CopsOffCampus, cuts and housing, the thirst for socialism and Marxism among students and young people, the battle for ideas on university campuses, Russell Brand's call for revolution, and how we can build a fighting and democratic NUS!

The event is open to all members of Socialist Students on any school, college, or university campus.
The whole weekend will be held in the Epicentre – 41 West Street, Leytonstone, London, E11 4LJ
If you would like to attend, send your details to socialiststudents@gmail.com



An open letter to Tristram Hunt, shadow education secretary

Dear Mr Hunt,

You have made it clear that you will revive the idea floated during the last Labour government of regular "relicensing" of teachers. Shamefully, you are lining up behind education secretary for England, Michael Gove's agenda of blaming teachers for the problems of education and society more generally. The root causes of these problems lie in cuts, underfunding and poverty. As a historian you should know that there is a clear correlation between social deprivation and educational performance.

If you took the time to talk to teachers, you might realise that the real issue that needs to be addressed is not the myth

of "underperformance" but the fact that huge numbers of excellent teachers are leaving the profession because of the impossible demands we face.

Under Mr Gove's performance-related pay legislation, the threat is that we won't be awarded a pay rise. Under Mr Hunt, the threat will be that we won't even keep our jobs.

In Britain, politicians of all stripes have embraced the ethos of the US model of education over the past two decades. They support the privatisation of education in the form of academies and free schools, they share the same mania for testing and all choose to ignore the fact that class and poverty are fundamental

factors in shaping attainment.

Professor Diane Ravitch, a historian of education and former US assistant secretary of education, explained in a 2010 article for The Wall Street Journal why she was opposed to blaming teachers for the problems of America's education system: "The current emphasis on accountability has created a punitive atmosphere in the schools. The Obama administration seems to think that schools will improve if we fire teachers and close schools. They do not recognise that schools are often the anchor of their communities." Fellow American education writer Alfie Kohn has similarly noted how politicians and the educational establish-

ment express "outrage" at low academic achievement and believe in quick fixes such as blaming teachers.

"Many public officials, along with like-minded journalists and other observers, are apt to minimise the matter of resources and assume that everything deficient about education for poor and minority children can be remedied by more forceful demands that we 'raise the bar,'" he writes. "The implication here would seem to be that teachers and students could be doing a better job but have, for some reason, chosen not to do so and need only be bribed or threatened into improvement."

This is all in sharp contrast to Finland,

which is widely recognised as having one of the best education systems in the world. Children there don't start formal education until they are seven and education is free at all levels. There are no school rankings or inspections and students take only one standardised test when they are 16. Teachers are well-paid, respected individuals. There has been no privatisation and there is an emphasis on social equality that is sadly lacking in Britain with its mania for privatisation of public services.

Dr Dylan Murphy
History teacher
This was published in TES magazine

Capitalism is a system in crisis

This is the case for socialism

We say there is an alternative to endless misery. Today, more than ever before in human history, enormous wealth, science and technique exists which could, if properly harnessed, easily provide all of humanity with the necessities of life that capitalism cannot provide.

Socialist Party deputy general secretary Hannah Sell makes the case for socialism in a new pamphlet. Here is an extract.

The world economy is more than 17 times the size it was a century ago. Yet we are being told that the most basic public services can no longer be afforded. It is not much to expect a job with a living wage, a secure and high-quality home, and a dignified retirement with a living income, yet in 21st century Britain these are becoming unobtainable luxuries for millions.

The obstacle to achieving these modest aspirations is capitalism: a system that puts the production of profit for the few - the millionaire and billionaire capitalist owners of industry and the resources of society - before the social needs of the majority - the multi-billion poor and working class throughout the world.

Capitalism is an economic system which has the exploitation of the working class at its heart. Profit, which provides its driving force is, as Karl Marx - the founder of scientific socialism - explained over 150 years ago, "the unpaid labour of the working class". From this flows all the inequalities of capitalism, which the current crisis has laid bare.

Even in boom times the working class cannot afford to buy back the full product of its labour power. In periods of growth capitalism can temporarily overcome this problem by ploughing

part of its profits into developing the means of production. This in turn creates new factories, workplaces - the organisation of science and technique - but at a certain stage all the same contradictions reappear.

Capitalism is an inherently unstable system, which swings from boom to slump. However, in today's world the booms have become weaker and the slumps deeper. We are now in the worst crisis since the 1930s.

Drowning in profits

Yet the capitalists are literally drowning in profits. In Britain alone, the major corporations are hoarding an incredible £750 billion, which they are not investing because they do not consider they would make enough profit. The capitalists are thus betraying their historical purpose.

In the past, despite the many horrors of capitalism, it at least drove society forward by developing the means of production. Today, the sickness of the system is summed up by a failure to invest.

Even before the recession, levels of capital investment were at historically low levels. Instead of investing in manufacturing, the capitalist class tended to gamble on the world's financial markets because it was

more profitable. The bursting of the huge bubbles that were created was the trigger for the 'great recession'.

British capitalism has led the world in this process with massive de-industrialisation. For example, Germany's manufacturing base accounts for 20% of its economy but Britain's is just 10.5%. British capitalism today is a third-class power. Only its finance and banking sector is a world 'leader', including leading the way into the catastrophic crisis of 2008.

While capitalism is driving more and more people to food banks in order to make ends meet, socialism would be able to meet people's very modest demands - for a living income, a secure home, some leisure time - and much more, by the planned use of the resources of society for the benefit of all.

By socialism we do not mean the old dictatorial regimes of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which were dominated by a privileged caste of bureaucrats, who presided over a planned economy which played a progressive role until it was strangled by bureaucratic mismanagement. We stand for international socialism, based on mass participation in the control and running of industry and society.

Capitalism is an inherently unstable system, which swings from boom to slump. However, in today's world the booms have become weaker and the slumps deeper. We are now in the worst crisis since the 1930s

A few examples of socialist policies:



photo Chris Newby

Unemployment and the working week

As unemployment and underemployment increase, Britain's full-time workers still have one of the longest average working weeks in the European Union. More than four million workers officially work more than 48 hours a week (and many more do so in reality) in order to make ends meet. At the same time workers are being told that they have to retire later and later.

This is the lunacy of capitalism - millions thrown on the scrapheap while others work their fingers to the bone. By introducing a 35-hour week with no loss of pay - in other words sharing out the work - it would be possible to dramatically decrease the number of unemployed while simultaneously improving the quality of life of working class people.

If this was combined with, not only an immediate halt in cuts to public services, but a massive increase in them, it would be possible to eliminate unemployment. This would allow us to develop a vastly improved health service, education system and childcare.

Housing

There are five million people, two million households, who are desperate for social housing. The pipe dream propagated by Thatcher of a 'home owning democracy' lies in ruins. The average house deposit is now £27,500 (and twice that in London) whereas the median wage is only £26,500.

More and more people are being forced into the private rented sector which is almost always expensive and insecure, and often substandard. As the benefit cuts and bedroom tax bite, increasing numbers of people are facing homelessness - turfed onto the street because they cannot afford to pay their rent.

A socialist government would immediately institute a mass programme of building of high-quality, affordable council houses. In the past even Tory governments, under mass pressure from the working class, supported a mass house-building programme. From 1949-54 an average of 230,000 council houses were built each year.

There are more than 150,000 skilled unemployed building workers in London alone. A house-building programme would provide work for building workers, but would also immediately halve or more the amount of money spent on housing benefit, which is currently handed to the private landlords.

Of course, a socialist government would have to take the protection of the environment into account when building housing. At the moment the big construction companies build purely for profit with little concern for the environment, the standard, or affordability of the housing.

A mass house-building programme would mean careful planning to ensure the protection of green spaces. In many cases, it would be possible to build on fully decontaminated brown-field sites. Moreover, pleasant and safe homes for all form a crucial part of a decent environment.

We also recognise that capitalism will never accept permanent or lasting reforms that significantly improve the living conditions of the working class. The battle against austerity has to be linked to the socialist transformation of society

Manufacturing jobs

In a world of crisis, there is a particular crisis of British capitalism, which is paying the price for its refusal to invest in industry over decades. Despite the CBI calling for the government to find ways to increase investment in manufacturing, there is no prospect of rebuilding Britain's feeble manufacturing base.

On the contrary, manufacturing shrank by 2.1% in the first three quarters of 2012 and exports continue to decline. At the end of last year industrial output reached its lowest level since 1992.

Both Tory and Labour governments have done nothing but stand aside and wring their hands as factories and steel plants have closed or had their workforces cut to the bone. In the past, even Tory governments intervened in the economy occasionally. Tory Prime Minister Ted Heath, for example, nationalised Rolls Royce in the early 1970s. Clearly, the Tories were acting in the interests of big business, propping up industries before selling them back to the fat cats at rock bottom prices, similar to the way the banks have been propped up by government money today. However, manufacturing industry, by contrast, is allowed to go to the wall.

Hundreds of millions of pounds of public money are being spent picking up the pieces in Dagenham, Birmingham, Yorkshire, Scotland and Wales and all the other places where factories have closed or jobs have been slashed. The cost comes from the loss of tax and Na-



photo Paul Mattsson

tional Insurance income, the increase in benefit claimants, and the unquantifiable social costs such as the extra strain on the health and welfare system.

Rather than spend that money dealing with the aftermath of cuts and closure, it would be far better to invest it in keeping the industry concerned alive and, if necessary, developing new, more socially useful production. For example, there is no need for all car plants to continue with their current production. Workers should be asked what the best use of their skills would be. Options might include environmentally friendly cars, buses or trams or the development of green technologies.

In the mid-1970s, workers at Lucas Aerospace, the weapons manufacturer,

produced an alternative plan of production. They worked out that their production lines could easily be altered to produce kidney machines, electronic wheelchairs and a number of other products far more useful to humanity than weaponry.

But such huge public investment should not be yet another subsidy to private companies' profits. Government intervention and public investment should be matched by public ownership and control. It would then be possible for workers in individual plants, together with representatives of workers throughout industry, to draw up a new plan of production to better meet the needs of the whole of society.

For a party that stands against austerity

The government has no mandate for the vicious austerity it is implementing. The Tories couldn't even win a majority in the 2010 general election. Instead they had to cobble together a coalition with the Lib Dems, who had increased their vote only by claiming to be to the left of Labour.

Since then the brutal reality of the government's policies - continued economic crisis, pay freezes and cuts, tuition fee hikes, growing unemployment and benefit cuts - has led to the governing parties plummeting in the polls.

Austerity is unpopular but there is no voice in parliament which opposes it. At every step the Labour Party has accepted the cuts agenda. Labour leader Ed Miliband and his sidekick Ed Balls disgracefully promised to bring "iron discipline" to controls on spending by sticking with Tory spending plans at the start of a future Labour government.

Labour may well still win the next general election, but they are doing their best to throw their chances away by offering their own version of austerity gruel. At the same time, at local level Labour councils are implementing the coalition government's cuts.

No wonder that workers' most common response to elections is to sit on their hands and abstain. Some have tried to kick the government by voting for UKIP - which poses as the voice of opposition, though in reality stands for even more brutal austerity than the Tories.

The stockbrokers and millionaires who



photo the Socialist

lead UKIP have won votes by posing as being 'against the big three parties'. They are tapping into the deep-rooted suspicion of 'parties' and 'politics' in society - an inevitable consequence of having all the major parties stand for the 1% rather than the 99%.

It shows great sense to be cynical about political parties when faced with the pro-rich, pro-banker, sleazy and corrupt parties of Westminster, which really are 'all the same'. We understand why people draw the conclusion that it is better to ignore politics and declare a plague on all their houses.

The problem with this is that it lets the various brands of self-serving careerists continue to run the show, abusing the rest of us. There are many examples of this. In Spain in 2010 a mass movement - the 'indignados' -

burst onto the scene, struggling against austerity. But, because the movement in the main stood aside from the electoral field, it allowed the PP (equivalent of the Tory Party) to come to power.

Egypt has been shaken repeatedly by mass revolutionary uprisings. However, the lack of a mass party of the working class and poor means that the forces that are making the revolution have so far not been able to take the power.

The Socialist Party is fighting for a party of a completely different type. We need a party that stands for the interests of the overwhelming majority: the working class. Such a mass party would not exist only to stand in elections, but to unite the different sections of the working class - young and old, working and unemployed, black and white - in a common struggle for its collective interests.

Standing in elections is one important aspect of that struggle. In England and Wales the Socialist Party helped to found the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which provides a banner under which different workers, anti-cuts, anti-bedroom tax, 'save our services' campaigns and youth organisations can stand in elections on a clear socialist platform.

TUSC also involves the RMT (the rail and transport workers' union) led by Bob Crow, and leading trade unionists from the civil servants' union (PCS), the teachers' union (NUT), and others. We see this as a step towards building a mass party of the working class.

www.tusc.org.uk

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Lincoln marches against racism and fascism

On 18 January, around 150 people marched under the banner of Lincoln Against Racism and Fascism (LARF).

In early December, the far-right East Anglian Patriots group had announced they would demonstrate in Lincoln having marched in June against the building of a mosque in the city.

Socialist Party members in Lincoln played a key role in relaunching LARF. A LARF public meeting in December unanimously agreed to hold another counter-demo, plus a rally against racism in the run-up to the demo.

Despite its democratic decision, intense pressure was exerted on steering committee members to call off the counter-demo by Labour councillors and 'community leaders'.

the LARF Facebook event. A call was made in the trade union movement for stewards to defend the rally. Two fascists attempted to enter the venue, but stewards stopped them.

The demo rally was addressed by dozens of people, with demonstrators encouraged to say why they had taken part. Many had never been on a protest before. A soldier said that far-right groups lie about their support in the ranks of armed forces.

Trade unionists from PCS and Unison, two Labour councillors, Youth Fight for Jobs campaigners, Socialist Party members, the Lincoln University Student Union and Islamic Society, and a local Eastern European community group also spoke.

Once the East Anglian Patriots had set off on their march, anti-racists moved off from their rally towards them and chanted, separated from them by a large police presence.

fuel the spread of this poison in our society.

Some of the far right left their demo main route to attack the anti-racist protest. They were forced back by demonstrators, which was rightly cheered as a victory.

When the far right had left the city centre, the march set off again back to the initial assembly point, identified by stewards as a safer area for protesters to disperse.

The thousands of people in the city centre on Saturday heard LARF's clear message: "when the far right spread their racist lies, we fight back and organise!"

Protest against Atos 'assessments' on 19 February

Ben Golightly
Swansea Socialist Party

Protests are planned to take place outside Atos assessment centres across the country. On 19 February, disabled people and their allies will again express their disgust and anger at the flawed and harmful Work Capability Assessments, welfare cuts, and the cruel sanctions regime.

To add insult to injury, the Atos chief executive has taken a 14% pay rise while low-paid PCS members working for the company have had to strike for fair pay.

Since the last big national protest in 2012, disabled people and anti-cuts groups have developed their networks. This is reflected in a greater reach for the protests with, for example, twice as many Welsh cities taking part this year. The NUS Disabled Students Campaign is now involved as well as the growing Unite the Union Community membership.

All cuts are disabling: adult and community learning plays a massive role in helping people with mental health and wellbeing.

Wales has the highest rate of un-

employment in the UK and the highest proportion of adults with disabilities limiting ability to work.

However, the Welsh government is now prepared to implement a massive 37.5% cut to adult community learning and a 33% cut to part-time further education on top of a

All cuts are disabling: adult and community learning plays a massive role in helping people with mental health and wellbeing

4% cut to local authority budgets.

This is just one more reason why austerity must be defeated and we need representatives who vote against all cuts rather than just pass them on.

To take part in the protests, search Facebook for "Atos National Demo @ Your City".



Protest outside the Atos assessment centre in Swansea, 28 August 2012 photo Swansea Socialist Party

Stop cuts in Kent

A protest against £2.5 million of cuts to Kent's children's centres will take place on Saturday 15 February.

The Save Kent's Children's Centres campaign says: "There is no way that £2.5 million worth of jobs can be cuts from this vital service without putting Kent's children at risk, as vital health and education support for the under-fives become harder to access. Councillors are elected to provide services not to cut them."

The march starts at 12noon by Canterbury clock tower. Phone 07525 935 096 or email davesemple84@gmail.com to get involved

Salford protesters challenge council cuts and fracking

Kevin Corran
Unison steward

On 15 January, 200 people - trade unionists, workers, service users, carers, community and environmental activists - lobbied Salford council.

They joined forces to oppose devastating cuts proposed by the council, oppose a new 'head of paid services' post with a salary of £150,000, and to support the anti-fracking campaign in Salford.

The councillors slash and privatise our services, leaving the vulnerable and needy exposed to market forces.

Over 300 workers are threatened by the cuts, with £24.5 million being sliced from the budget.

The Labour mayor and Labour council keep telling us that they have no option but to force through the cuts.

Speaker after speaker condemned the councillors for their lack of fight and their inability to lead a fight-back against these dreadful attacks

on our communities.

If they are unwilling or unable to offer us the leadership and courage to fight the Con-Dems, then we need a party that will stand up for and protect our communities.

A number of speakers called for the anti-cuts groups, anti-fracking campaign and community activists to stand in the May local elections against these austerity parties.

Candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will stand across Salford at May's council elections.

Carlisle petition

Carlisle Socialist Party handed an anti-cuts petition to the city's council executive on 15 January. When presenting the petition, Grahame Higginson said: "[The signatories] want you to stop following the orders of a government which nobody elected, on an austerity programme which nobody voted for, and which one of the parties now in government said it was opposed to at the general election. The people who signed this petition say: 'enough is enough - no more cuts in jobs or services'."

The council's budget meeting is on 4 February

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Socialist Party Congress timetable

The Socialist Party's 2014 national congress will take place on 8-10 March in Clacton. Congress is the main decision-making body of the Socialist Party.

Every branch should plan discussions on the congress documents and set aside time to elect the delegates.

The timetable for Congress preparation is as follows:

27 January - branches to receive EC (executive committee) document on British Perspectives

3 February - branches to receive EC statement on party building

21 February - deadline for branch resolutions, booking crèche places, getting delegates names and £10 deposits to the national centre

28 February - deadline for branch amendments and visitors' names

Egypt referendum: no enthusiasm for new constitution

David Johnson

To no one's surprise, 98% of Egyptian voters said yes to the new constitution in the recent referendum. Almost three years since the beginning of the massive movement of the Egyptian people that led to the overthrow of long-standing dictator, Hosni Mubarak, many yearn for some stability. But the low 38.5% turnout shows large numbers of Egyptians have no enthusiasm for, and many actively oppose, the new constitution.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) boycotted the vote. In less industrialised areas, where the MB's support is strongest, turnout was closer to 20%. But among those aged under 30 – the most active forces of the 2011 revolution – turnout was unofficially reported as 19%.

Senior armed forces officers rode on the back of the massive protests against MB President Morsi on 30 June 2013 to install a military-backed government led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, posing as defenders of the Egyptian people from a MB takeover.

Filling a vacuum

The lack of independent working class organisation in the demonstrations, either through trade unions or a mass working class party, allowed the officers to fill the vacuum caused by the MB government collapse. After the massive pressure of millions of workers on the street, the officers announced measures such as increasing the minimum wage for public sector workers (but not private sector).

Now these officers are trying to consolidate their position. The new constitution, written by an unelected committee without representation from the independent trade unions, allows the armed forces to continue hiding its huge business interests.

It will decide who the defence minister is – not an elected parliament. Military trials for civilians, so hated under Mubarak, continue.



The low 38.5% turnout shows many actively oppose the new constitution

Although strikes and sit-ins are defined as rights, the constitution allows the government to regulate how these 'rights' will be used.

Tough new laws regulate the right to protest, requiring protest organisers to get police permission, giving 24-hours notice, details of start and finish times, route and names of or-

forces have also used their regained powers to arrest young and left-wing political activists. There have been almost daily protests in universities, many by students supporting the MB but also by liberal and socialist students. Security forces have stormed on to university campuses, as well as attacking protests and activists outside. Bit by bit, Mubarak's repressive regime is being reconstructed.

In April 2013, weeks before the huge demonstrations forced Morsi out, there were 448 workers' protests, including strikes, blockades and occupations. In December there were only eleven, although this included an important strike by 5,000 workers at the Egyptian Iron and Steel Company.

Economy

The economic situation remains dire, meaning more attacks to come on workers' pay and conditions, and subsidised cooking gas and foods. The ruling class is desperate to have a strong government that can successfully implement these attacks.

But different sections of the ruling class have their own interests. Senior officers control industries owned by the armed forces. Under Morsi,

they were challenged by the wealthy businessmen of the MB. Another section of big business is not aligned to the military or MB, but they have thrown their weight behind Sisi to become the new president. A presidential election is likely soon, with Sisi widely expected to declare his candidacy on 25 January, the anniversary of the start of the uprising against Mubarak.

Sisi hopes to get elected with a similarly convincing majority to the referendum, boosting his authority to carry out the cuts and repressive measures Egyptian capitalism needs to survive. But workers and the youth have seen off Mubarak and Morsi and will not easily give up their rights to organise and fight for their interests.

Drawing on the lessons of the past three years, increasing numbers of revolutionary workers and youth will conclude that the working class must raise its own independent interests and not be sucked into support for one or other wing of the capitalist class. Workers need to build their own organisations, including a mass party with a programme of democratic socialist change that could unite all their struggles into an unstoppable movement for a government of workers and the poor.

Workers and the youth have seen off Mubarak and Morsi and will not easily give up their rights to organise and fight for their interests

ganisers. Demonstrators who have defied this new law have been beaten up and sexually harassed while in detention. Journalists thought to be sympathetic to the MB have also been arrested.

While the roundup of MB leaders as "terrorists" has been widely supported, the police and security

is a self-serving lie designed to allow government parties Fine Gael and Labour to present themselves as our saviours for the five months until the next elections.

In December the official role of the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) in Irish economic planning ended.

But the Troika is not going anywhere. The visits of the men in suits passing homeless people in the streets while dictating increased austerity will continue for years to come. The IMF will have a process called 'Post-Programme Monitoring', involving two reports a year, until nearly all of the debt to the IMF is repaid.

Institutionalised austerity

The Irish state is also now subject to a huge number of undemocratic new EU economic rules. These institutionalise the imposition of austerity, through the transfer of significant powers from elected governments to the unelected European Commission.

They mean that the state can be subject to a fine of hundreds of millions of euros if it fails to follow 'recommendations' from the European Commission to impose yet more cuts and extra taxes.

They mean budgetary plans have to be presented in advance to the European Commission and Council for recommendations before any discussion in the Dáil (parliament).

The power to decide on economic policies will remain out of the democratic control of the majority. This is not economic sovereignty.

The European Commission presents these measures as a way of avoiding future crises. This is a re-writing of history. The crisis was not caused by too high public spending or debt – in fact Ireland in 2007 had one of the lowest levels of public debt in all of Europe. Public debt has only ballooned since banks across Europe were bailed out.

Six years of austerity policies have resulted in the highest rate of unemployment in Europe since the introduction of the euro and continuing economic crisis.

More austerity will make it worse

for the 99% and better for big business, which has benefited from labour costs being pushed down, and bondholders who continue to get repaid.

Socialism

Of course, these new rules could be broken – but it would take a genuinely left government and a mobilised population to sweep them aside.

In 1897 James Connolly warned of the danger of merely replacing a foreign capitalist government with an Irish one: "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic your efforts would be in vain... England would still rule you to your ruin, even while your lips offered hypocritical homage at the shrine of that freedom whose cause you had betrayed."

It is not enough for the Troika to leave through the front door only to come back in again through the back door. Their austerity, their undemocratic measures and their system should go with them.

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

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



US: Huge political upset created by the election of Kshama Sawant

Who would have imagined that in a major American city, at a post election inauguration ceremony attended by 1,000 people, a new, directly elected Mayor and other members of the City Council would be completely eclipsed by the response of the attendance to a socialist Councillor?

Joe Higgins, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) MP



India: Alfa Laval Workers' Strike

Workers from Swedish company Alfa Laval India Pvt Ltd. situated at Kasarwadi, Pune have been on strike for the last three months

New Socialist Alternative (CWI in India) reporters



Brazil: 'Novo Palestina' land occupation

Videos of CWI comrades Tony Saunois and Bilbo Goransson addressing mass rally

socialistworld.net

This "Ireland is a success story" rhetoric is based on spin

Paul Murphy

Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland)
Member of the European Parliament

The entire 'success story' rhetoric of the Irish government, the European Commission and their hangers-on when promoting Ireland's bailout exit is based on empty spin, hyperbole and untruths. It is a story with a purpose – a pat on the back for the Irish government, and a useful stick for the Commission to beat the peoples of southern Europe.

The inconvenient facts illustrating that the bailout has been a success only for the rich are innumerable. They include the increase in profits by 21% since 2007, the payment of €26 billion to bondholders this year by bailed-out banks and the state. Meanwhile Ireland has the highest net emigration rate in all of the EU, with youth unemployment at nearly 30% and an unsustainable debt to GDP ratio of 125%.

The repeated references to the return of 'economic sovereignty' of Ireland are particularly galling. This

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.

Who benefits...

Channel 4's Benefits Street represented the working class as scrounging, lazy, low-life pigs. Where's the show about people, on the same street, who have led hard-working lives but are struggling to put food on their tables? Where's the show about young adults trying to rebel against EMA cuts to get a university education? Where's the show about aristocratic MPs claiming ludicrous expenses? In my city, Hull, 33 jobs at Aldi supermarket were met by 400 applicants. Reportedly there are £16 billion in unclaimed benefits for families who need the money but are embarrassed to be considered being part of the 'Jeremy Kyle Generation'. So why does Channel 4 focus on the minority?

Jack Roe,
Hull

...from "Benefits Street"?

Benefits Street showed the world Thatcher and the Tories wanted and still want - no jobs and having to rely on benefits. Romanians were getting ripped off by greedy bosses who were using them as slave labour at £10 for a 17-hour day. I googled about Romanians coming to UK to see if the tabloid fear about them was right. I found that not many want to come here, they mostly want to go to Germany where the economy is stronger.

Mike Roach,
Bristol

Low-paid boss?

Donald Brydon, Royal Mail Chairman thinks Royal Mail Chief Executive Moya Greene is underpaid. He says the company needs Greene, so he wants a better pay deal for her. "She's the lowest-paid chief executive in the FTSE 100,"



photo Paul Mattsson

he claims. "Investors are saying, 'Donald, how are you going to keep her?' My challenge now is how to make sure she stays."

Privatisation brings with it the expectation of big salary increases for bosses. No such sympathy is extended to postal workers who make Royal Mail what it is and will still be there after Greene has flown the nest.

Clive Walder

Unjust tax

Thousands of people have wrongfully been penalised with the bedroom tax. Fylde Socialist Party calls upon Lancashire county council to return any monies taken for the spare room subsidy from those who were exempt because of the loophole. This applies to certain

people paying rent, who have lived in their home for 17 years. This unjust tax is widely hated and has caused the evictions of disabled people!

In the Commons on 13 January Iain Duncan Smith was challenged by Labour to reimburse the victims of this abuse, to which he replied this will happen, however rejecting calls for the bedroom tax to be abolished.

The bedroom tax is unjust, unpopular and must go. The same can be said for this government!

Ray Smith,
Fylde Socialist Party, in a letter sent to the local press

Fight the cuts!

Using the Freedom of Information Act I found out the local council in St Helens had a reserve of £89 million. This week this same council announced £25 million of cuts saying they have lost 42% in revenue since 2010.

How did they amass this huge surplus while closing libraries, swimming baths and sacking personnel? The council here is overwhelmingly Labour and shout about the loss of revenue then meekly lay down and carry out this vile Con-Dem policy while stacking up these reserves.

Anyone could request from their councils the same information. I think we all need to carry out a concerted effort to protest outside council offices while they meet to set budgets for 2014/15. St Helens Socialist Party are protesting on 5 March to leave these elected members in no doubt that we oppose all cuts!

Les Teeling,
St Helens

Unlovable Johnson

Well done to the Socialist for the centre page feature on the RMT London Underground dispute in issue 794. It is refreshing to see Johnson being referred to as Johnson. He cultivates an image as 'Boris', a loveable rogue. But behind the buffoonish image lurks just another vicious right-wing politician. He's not so "funny" when he closes fire stations and tube ticket offices, axing jobs and endangering public and staff safety.

A GMB shop steward,
London

Don't trust spooks

Obama's pathetic attempts to make cosmetic changes to the spying on US citizens and foreign nationals, which Edward Snowden exposed, convinces nobody. A real democracy would give Snowden a medal of honour and put the NSA traitors on trial.

The US is not a democracy. Its spies flout the constitution daily, justifying themselves because everybody they spy on "might be a terrorist". How long will that lie work? Our homegrown MI5 wouldn't dream of doing any such things of course - they'd get the US spooks to do it for them!

"I'd love to put a bullet in his head," one Pentagon official said. The NSA leaker is enemy number one among those inside the oddly named "intelligence" world whose lies helped Bush and Blair commit mass murder in Iraq.

A party of the working class would give the people a hope of justice. Democracy has been described as a society where "The People Distrust the State." Politicians are our servants not our masters.

Derek McMillan

TV review: Benefits Street

A caricature of poverty

Mark Caudery
Birmingham Socialist Party

Channel 4's recent controversial "documentary" series, Benefits Street claimed to depict life for residents of poverty stricken James Turner Street in Winson Green, Birmingham. It created an unfair, inaccurate caricature of welfare recipients.

Even before it was aired it was causing a stir. The Birmingham Mail carried a prominent article saying programme makers had misled residents by claiming it would be about "neighbourly togetherness and community spirit".

It focused on unemployed people while claiming to be about benefit recipients - that's perhaps the greatest lie of all. Only 2.6% of welfare spending goes on unemployment benefits. The vast majority of people on welfare are in work or retired.

According to research by the End Child Poverty campaign, 81% of Birmingham families are dealing with the reality of poverty. Many of these will be working families; so far these people have not appeared in the programme.

Tory agenda

Although commercially funded, Channel 4 is a publicly owned channel with a reputation for broadcasting material challenging the right-wing narrative of the mainstream commercial media and the BBC. But it is known to broadcast 'controversial' programmes in the search for big viewing figures.

One resident featured in the programme was shown duping members of the public by selling free hotel lobby magazines pretending to be a Big Issue seller. But such crimes of poverty, while anti-social and condemnable, pale into insignificance compared to the crimes of the super-rich bankers who caused such enormous social damage to



photo Channel 4

nificance compared to the crimes of the super-rich bankers who caused such enormous social damage to

When are we going to see the Bonus Mansions documentary about the bankers' lifestyles?

our society. When are we going to see the Bonus Mansions documentary about the bankers' lifestyles?

This programme's image fits well into the Tory agenda. It further dehumanises the very people who are paying the price of the ruling class's

failure by attempting to turn working class people against one another. As they try to do with immigration or single parent families, it is part of a long line of scapegoating propaganda in much of the media.

Such propaganda aims to turn people against one another, an age-old tactic of divide and rule. This attempt to demonise those most adversely affected by failing capitalism will need to be challenged so more people can see the real enemy.

Benefits Street is not the first programme to make scapegoats of the poor for the crime of being poor and it won't be the last. But the viewers' backlash proves that resistance is growing against the government and their attempts to divide us.

Robert Burns, insurrectionary poet

Brent Kennedy

Every year the narrow-minded, conservative Robert Burns establishment ritually recite the same few poems and repeat ancient propaganda myths about him (invented by his political opponents after his death) and get drunk.

Yet the real Burns opposed all they stand for. He listed their traits: "Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy - all bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence!"

A poor farm labourer and later public sector worker (today he'd be on working tax credit and denounced as a scrounger), he was a radical, independent minded, fighter for democracy and equality who was hounded by political police spies.

He died not from drink and debauchery but from poverty and hard toil in the fields in all weathers since childhood, compounded by the fear of unemployment and eviction. Although government agents and propagandists assassinated the dead poet's character and then sanitised him (burning much of his writings), enough of his passionate hatred of injustice shines through to make him a voice for working class folk today.

Anyone feeling exploited by long

hours, or zero hours, today will readily understand "Man was made to mourn". If you want to know about racism, read "The slave's lament"; on republicanism, "The Washington Ode" or "A dream".

Burns supported the American and French Revolutions and opposed the Hanoverian monarchy and the corrupt, undemocratic



Burns, in the style of Che Guevara

"Parliament" of bankers and landowners. When a spy reported him for singing a French revolutionary song he was threatened with the sack from his exciseman's job and told to be "silent and obedient".

But recent books by Patrick Scott Hogg (The Lost Poems, The Cannongate Burns and The Patriot Poet) prove he then went underground, building a secret network to get his "seditious", anonymous poems and

articles published in radical papers in Edinburgh and London. He was a member of the "Friends of the People" in Dumfries and personally sent four cannon to the French revolutionaries.

This was his answer to Pitt's Tory dictatorship and its wave of repression, including martial law and the outlawing of trade unions. When Burke, the father of modern Conservatism, supported France's feudal aristocracy and opposed votes for 99% of ordinary Britons, dismissing the people as "the swinish multitude", Burns wrote:

"Burke, both passionate and rude, Calls us a "Swinish Multitude", Which some think defamation, But I his meaning thus define - That, if the People are all swine, Hog-drivers rule the nation."

And then there's the best anthem to an internationalist, classless society ever written in English - A man's a man for a' that.

Carlisle Socialist Party Alternative Burns Night Supper and Ceilidh

Saturday, 25 January, Royal Scott pub, Morton, Carlisle.

Starts 6.45pm prompt - haggis, neeps and tatties (or vegetarian option) served at 7pm.

Suggested donation of £5.

Tickets from David 07717 625184

Bedroom tax loophole: Can legal tactics be effective?

Steve Score

East Midlands Socialist Party secretary

As reported in last week's Socialist, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has confirmed that tenants who have been continuously entitled to housing benefit since at least 1 January 1996, and who have occupied the same home since that date, are exempt from the bedroom tax. This is because of a flaw in the drafting of legislation.

It means that possibly 40,000 tenants and their families have suffered who didn't need to, many may have been forced to move or have even been evicted. As the Socialist pointed out last week, Stephanie Bottrill who committed suicide because of the bedroom tax, would not have been liable if this loophole had been known about.

Tenants now need to appeal to recover the money they have had illegally docked from their housing benefit. Campaigners need to put pressure on councils to identify affected tenants, because otherwise tenants may be left unaware.

Fair play to the people who discovered the loophole and every person affected now needs to be compensated. But of course the bedroom tax should be scrapped completely and all of those affected by it should be compensated for

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which is standing candidates in May's local elections, says that councils should refuse to implement the bedroom tax. "Councils should write off all bedroom tax-related arrears, withdraw all court proceedings and eviction orders where the bedroom tax has been a factor, and call on housing associations to do the same." If you agree, why not stand as a TUSC candidate? See www.tusc.org.uk

what they have lost.

But the campaigning needs to be kept up because the DWP, referring to the loophole, threatens it "will however be taking steps to remedy this shortly."

Legal tactics are a useful and important part of any mass campaign. They were used for example in the successful campaign against Margaret Thatcher's poll tax. Part of the strategy was to clog up the courts system with people who refused, or were unable to pay their poll tax (a single-rate tax on every adult). Millions of cases were held up.

"Mackenzie Friends"

The anti-poll tax campaigns went to court to provide assistance, and used a legal precedent to go into the courtroom with defendants to assist even when they were not trained lawyers. Early in the campaign, a court in Leicester refused to recognise these "Mackenzie Friends". The decision was appealed, and as a result anyone who asked for a Mackenzie Friend had their cases adjourned for long periods while the appeal went through the system.

Sometimes legal loopholes can even be used by governments to exonerate themselves from mass pressure. In 1972, striking dockers were jailed because of the anti-union laws introduced by the then Tory Prime Minister, Ted Heath.

In response, preparations for a general strike started to build from below, pressurising the TUC to threaten one officially. A legal loophole was then used as a means for the government to climb down without openly admitting the reason for their defeat: mass action. The dockers were released after the intervention of an interesting and previously little-known figure called the "official solicitor" and a decision by the Law Lords to overturn the jailings on a legal technicality.

Successful legal tactics can be the by-product of mass campaigns. In fact the right to a Mackenzie Friend is still accepted in cases today, going



Protesting against the bedroom tax in Hull photo Lash

far beyond the use of it in poll tax cases. However, there is no substitute for building struggle with maximum involvement of working class people.

Various different tactics can and should be used at the same time, but ultimately it is the power of working class people that can defeat bad laws and governments. This was the case with the poll tax, the organised refusal to pay was what defeated it and brought down Margaret Thatcher.

The bedroom tax campaigns will still need to be built to defend those threatened with eviction, and the struggle against the bedroom tax needs to be linked up to the wider struggles against this government and the system of capitalism that all the main parties defend.



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Leeds' forgotten dispute: The 1913-14 Corporation Strike

Iain Dalton

During the 1911-14 Great Unrest many strikes took place in and around Leeds, including the lockout of textile workers in Aireborough (see the Socialist 765).

The Leeds Corporation Strike was a pitched battle between the Tory-led council (corporation) and its employees over pay.

After sectional strikes achieved increases of one to two shillings a week for most strikers. A Federal Council of Municipal Employees was established between eight trades unions to push for across-the-board rises.

The employers played for time, delaying the dispute for several months until after the November local elections.

Although those elections saw Labour gain seats, the Liberals were given a disproportionate amount of the undemocratic aldermanic seats which were elected by the councillors themselves.

On 1 December 1913, the council

offered increases to a large number of workers, but not the across-the-board increases demanded, the first of a series of divide and rule manoeuvres the council would pull.

At a mass meeting of 3,000, the workers voted to go on strike within a week. The strike began on 11 December with 3,000 workers on strike, with another 1,000 employed by the council thrown idle.

During that day the tramwaymen, who had a separate agreement with the council, deliberated on whether to join that strike. When they did so at midnight, they swelled the ranks of the strikers to 4,292. This meant only a skeleton tram service ran, gas supplies were limited, street lamps weren't lit and waste wasn't collected.

Yet as the city ground to a halt, the ruling elites plotted their response. Preparations had begun during the run-up to the strike to set up a Citizens League of Law and Order.

The conservative-orientated Yorkshire Post established a fund for non-strikers and, like the other four local daily newspapers, was incred-

ibly hostile to the strike. Even the liberal Yorkshire Observer justified attacking the workers as "legitimate journalism".

Police forces from all along what is now the M62 corridor were drafted in and attacked several of the striking workers' demonstrations. 200 out of 660 students from the recently established Leeds University were used to strike-break.

Special Committee

But the key force in defeating the strike was the Tory-Liberal Special Committee appointed on Wednesday 17 December by the council consisting entirely of aldermen.

Its first action was to issue an ultimatum for workers to submit applications for reinstatement to the committee by 6.30pm that Friday.

Mistakenly, the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union (GGLU) treated this as a toothless ultimatum and ignored it.

But the tramwaymen agreed to go back on condition of not having to cover other strikers' work. The unit-

ed front among the council workforce crumbled.

2,028 workers, mostly tramwaymen, were reinstated with the rest remaining on strike. Protracted negotiations began on 20 December.

The drift back to work continued and a few days before Christmas only 1,000 jobs hadn't been filled by those returning to work or scabs given permanent jobs. Too late, the strike leaders increased strike pay and tried to appeal for further solidarity action.

GGLU president and Labour MP JR Clynes went to negotiations for four days with the corporation, reporting back to a 9am mass meeting on 13 January. But Clynes quickly left the meeting and took the 11am train back to London. He had failed to secure even the minimum measure of reinstating all strikers.

Like many other disputes, this bitter strike showed the determination of working class people to struggle, but also the need for a leadership that understands the lengths the bosses will go to in securing their interests.



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STOP THE NHS SELL-OFF

Oppose all cuts and privatisation

Roger Shrivess

The National Health Service is still being privatised bit by bit but the process is speeding up rapidly. The NHS has put many contracts out to tender and private firms are winning an increasing proportion of them.

The NHS Support Federation, which opposes this market turn, says that between April and December 2013, private firms won 39 - 70% - of the 57 contracts, worth a total of £510 million. Fifteen went to the NHS, two to charities and one was shared by NHS and non-NHS suppliers.

The privatised contracts included mental health, GP and out-of-hours services. The amounts involved may be relatively small but the implications are enormous.

This government will shortly be selling off everything that moves and can make a profit to some private concern.

And there will now be greater legal back-up for this robbery. The European Union (EU) has just passed new "rules on public sector procurement". That will mean that a health market amounting to £450 billion a year will be opened up to private contractors.

All EU member states are sup-



Marching to defend the NHS photo Alison Hill

posed to introduce parallel legislation within two years. Cameron's Tories, friends as ever of the rich and greedy, are pushing ahead early with plans to outsource far more services as quickly as they can.

Privatisation is still very unpopu-

lar but the government will try to sell off NHS services, social care, education and prison services quicker with a new 'light touch' regime. It's not as if the 'giveaway' sale of Royal Mail was at all 'heavy touch'.

The privatised company's total

share value has gone up by £2.74 billion since the Royal Mail sell-off. Bankers that advised the government on the sale will be among those now enjoying the loot.

Companies ambitious for health profits won't even need to prove

conclusively that they are covered for insurance. Companies that have a dodgy record on compliance with the law will find it easier to get new contracts if they promise to be 'good'.

As NHS campaigner Louise Irvine told the Financial Times on 16 January: "This will speed up the process of privatising NHS services. The NHS will still spend increasing amounts on transaction costs which can account for 20-30% of healthcare budgets in a marketised system."

This is naked capitalism carried out by a Tory government. The trade unions must take these plans as a threat to the very existence of the National Health Service and organise a fightback. The best way to hurt the piratical bosses of Moneybags Inc. is through industrial action including preparation for a 24-hour general strike!

If you are determined to fight back, join the Socialist Party. We are fighting to stop all privatisation, to bring privatised services back into public ownership under democratic control and to fight for a high quality, free NHS under democratic public ownership and control.

www.socialistparty.org.uk/join - 020 8988 8777

What we stand for

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

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in 45 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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