



STOP CUTS CARNAGE



Organise coordinated strike action
Challenge the austerity parties in May's elections

Wolverhampton workers 'devastated by the cuts'... In Birmingham 'running statutory services will be difficult'... Highland council cuts may 'damage communities'... These are just some of the headlines that indicate the horror contained in the latest round of council cuts. Here **Dave Nellist**, national chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and previously a socialist councillor in Coventry, shows that these cuts are far from necessary and can be stopped.



tusc.org.uk

As we go to press a Coventry council meeting votes on another £19 million of government cuts resulting in further devastating deterioration in jobs and services.

Last year Labour and the Tories voted unanimously for the cuts budget. This year, even if amendments on the margins of the debate are proposed, the outcome will be the same - we will be forced to pay for the bankers' crisis. Cuts with enthusiasm or with Labour's claimed 'aching heart' hurt just the same.

There is no voice on the council representing the real interests of Coventry people. No voice defending council workers' jobs, pay, pensions and conditions. No voice

arguing against cuts in essential services.

Forty years ago Coventry had plenty of well-paid factory jobs where strong trade unions policed employers and not the other way around. Now thousands of people in our city are victims of low-paid insecure work, or of arbitrary benefits sanctions, denied even the basics and forced to turn to charity to survive.

We are apparently still the seventh richest country on the planet, yet nationally over the last 12 months, homelessness and the use of food banks has doubled! That's because the riches of this country are not in the hands of the majority, or spent on their needs.

Two basic things need to be done.

Firstly, the trade unions in Coventry, particularly the council unions, need to plan serious industrial action that will force council management to withdraw the attacks on jobs and services.

That means they should campaign with bodies like the National Shop Stewards Network - now supported by eight national trade unions - for coordinated national strike action against austerity.

Secondly, there looms a simple, but crucial, question - what do we do this May when councillors or candidates from the main, austerity parties want another four years, receiving a minimum of £50,000 in pay and expenses?

How can working class people vote Labour when Labour offers no resistance to austerity - indeed Labour leaders have loyally promised not only will they carry out the same public spending cuts in 2015/16, but they intend to be tougher than the Tories on the welfare budget!

The Socialist Party believes every councillor or candidate who supports austerity should be opposed. We're working with the RMT transport union and leading trade unionists to stand over 600 candidates on 22 May, including here in Coventry, in the biggest left of Labour challenge since World War Two.

Across England we already have over 400 activists, including from Unite, Unison, RMT and other un-

ions, as well as those from anti-bedroom tax campaigns, and students, prepared to stand and pledged to oppose cuts.

Could you be a candidate, or help us in our campaign?

We have our warning. Like other councils, Coventry's budget document predicts "national spending plans mean that local government will not be able to sustain the current range and level of services in the future". That will happen - unless we do something about it!

Join us in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition challenge in the May elections.
Join us in the Socialist Party to build the socialist alternative.



the Socialist

The paper of the Socialist Party. Issue 800.

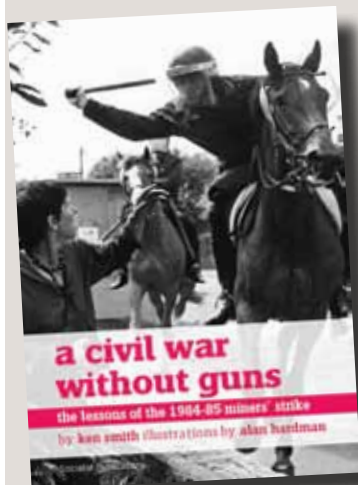
The Socialist, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Published by Socialist Publications, printed by Sharman & co Ltd. ISSN 1366-9621

Out soon

A civil war without guns

by Ken Smith

The Socialist Party's history of the 1984-85 miners' strike, *A Civil War Without Guns*, by Ken Smith, is being reprinted with a new introduction in time for the 30th anniversary of this colossal struggle. Watch this space for more details.



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Great 1984-85 miners' strike remembered

Thirty years ago, on 1 March 1984 the closure of Cortonwood pit was announced, with five years' production still to go. In response 55,000 Yorkshire miners were called out on strike under Rule 41 from a ballot result in 1981. On 5 March Yorkshire NUM called a total stoppage from 12 March. This was the start of the great 1984-85 miners' strike.

The strike was one of the most momentous events ever in the British labour movement history and had a huge impact on virtually every subsequent industrial and political development. Over 27 million working days were lost in strike action in 1984 (mainly among miners).

On the 20th anniversary we wrote:

The fight against pit closures in 1984-85 was a heroic attempt to use the organised power of workers to stop Thatcher's attempts to destroy manufacturing industry. Thatcher tried to break the unions because their defence of workers got in the way of profit.

Huge support

The miners had huge support among working class people in the coalfields, throughout Britain and across the globe. Despite attempts to starve and intimidate them back to work it was this working class solidarity that allowed the miners to fight on for 356 days.

But the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC - fearing the



photo D Pearson

power of the organised working class almost as much as the Tories - refused to show such solidarity and abandoned and betrayed the miners. If the TUC had supported the miners with backing for strike action from other unions, and repaid the solidarity the miners had shown other workers, then the strike could have been won.

Yet, despite the TUC betrayal the strike came so close to defeating the Tories. It could have been won if workers had been organised from below to defy their right-

wing leaderships and take action alongside the miners. A miners' victory would have given a huge boost in confidence to the trade union movement and all workers.

The main lessons of the miners' strike still remain: that, united in decisive action the working class can win, and that we need a genuine socialist leadership throughout the trade union movement prepared to see workers' struggles through to victory.

Today's tasks for the trade union movement are clear - to build

genuinely democratic fighting trade unions and for the unions to begin the process of building a new mass workers' party.

In 1984-85, working class people in this country saw a window onto the future, a future that lies in our own hands, not the bosses or the capitalist class. We must remember and learn from the miners' strike to ensure that future workers' struggles on the scale of the miners' strike achieve a victory that brings forward the establishment of a socialist society.

A Salford ex-miner remembers

As part of the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the miners' year-long strike, Paul Kelly, formerly of Agecroft NUM, Salford spoke to the Socialist.

As a boy I went on the picket line with my Dad in the 1972 and 1974 strikes. When I started work at the pit we had a tradition of supporting anybody in struggle. Prestwich Hospital and North Manchester Hospital nurses came down, we walked out one day in support of Prestwich nurses and held a collection for them. It was just normal to show working class solidarity.

The 1984 strike started in Yorkshire at Cortonwood. At Agecroft

our canteen meeting explained how Cortonwood walked out. We had a debate, with a show of hands to walk out ourselves. The night shift was coming off and the day shift going on so most workers were there. We voted, pretty unanimously, to strike.

A week later I got a call from the branch secretary for a meeting about a ballot. I'd seen pictures of Yorkshire miners picketing in Nottinghamshire. I voted against going for a ballot, we already had a mandate. The NUM in Sheffield told me most workers were on strike, and that was good enough for me.

After the Agecroft men eventually started going back to work. I phoned the NUM for direction and they said "we're going to have a picket, come along and talk to them." The next morning there was a mass of men across the road.

An NUM official said: "The cops won't let us near the gates because none of us work here, but they'll let you go because you work here." So I told the copper, "I just want to explain to them why the Yorkshire lads are here, no provocation, no intimidation." So he said, "Alright, six of you."

But at the gates, the cops just laid into us. I got punched in the face, lost a tooth, cut my neck, was manhandled across the road and thrown into the fence at the old brickworks



and told to "f***ing stay there!"

The pit closed in 1990, it was butchered really, there's still 100 years of coal down there. I used to plant flowers every Workers' Memorial Day where the pit had been because it's been totally obliterated from the landscape. So I set up the Irwell Valley Mining Project to get a memorial stone with an inscription and garden which was completed in July 2013.

It commemorates everyone who died there, women, children, including those who died there in the disaster of 1859. We aim to get every major pit a memorial to remember the miners, all the wealth they created, and why we're here today, be-

Facebook page shows ongoing support for miners' strike



Mel Hepworth, an ex-miner from Askern pit in Doncaster, started a Facebook page called the **30th anniversary of the miners' strike**. In eight weeks it has already passed 18,000 supporters. Mel told the Socialist:

"I left school in 1979 when Thatcher came to office. I had my 21st birthday on the picket line. I remember eating food at soup kitchens provided by other working class people's generosity.

"We have thousands of ex-miners on the page and thousands of miners' kids and grandkids. We've people on the page who were literally at the coalface and people who've never seen a piece of coal. We're organising events to mark the anniversary. 37% of the support for the

cause of them.

We need to show the spirit of 1984 today to fight for our communities. There are politicians today in certain parties, who patted me on the back on the picket line, who are now pushing through disgust-

page is from women and we've got international support, echoes of key aspects of the miners' support at the time.

"There's dozens of meetings organised and we're linking up with others as well. I interviewed a picket from the London Underground strike on the page. We've been at the Atos demos. A lot of younger people are bitter about austerity and the lack of fightback from the trade union and Labour party leadership.

"We're just a Facebook page. The success is because what we're doing is rooted in the working class and in the mining community. People still want justice and still remember the solidarity of the miners."

See the facebook page here:
<http://on.fb.me/MqOd10>

ing cuts, when they should fight. As a member of Salford Against the Cuts, I've done a lot of work against so-called austerity cuts. For me the miners' strike has never finished, it never will. We need to keep fighting for our class.



Brutal policing

Floods show planning and investment needed

Kate Jones
Socialist Party Wales

Britain has just had its wettest winter ever recorded. A couple of years ago it had one of its coldest. The weather is ever more unpredictable, and extreme weather seems to come more often and to last longer. A year ago, farmers were digging their livestock out of the snow. Now many of their fields are under water.

Floods are nothing new - remember Cumbria 2005 and 2009, Hull 2007 and 2013, York 2000 and 2010, North Wales 2012, the Severn Valley year after year? But this year's floods in the Thames Valley have really hit the headlines, and seeing Tory heartlands under water has kicked the government into promising action. But what action?

Tory clown Eric Pickles tried to blame the Environment Agency (EA) for the floods, but in reality the EA has seen its flood prevention strategies abandoned, and £100 million a year cut from flood defence budgets since the last election.

At the same time millions are spent every year on agricultural subsidies that actually make flooding worse, encouraging upland farmers to replace trees with grazing for livestock.

Planting of trees in the uplands could actually reduce downstream flooding by nearly 30%.

But we are unlikely to see any such sensible policies from Environment Minister Owen Paterson - a climate change 'sceptic' who refuses to accept that man-made global warming is the root cause of Britain's increasingly extreme weather patterns. But as this is the man who famously said badgers "have moved the goalposts" when his cull failed to kill enough of them, it's hardly a surprise!

Real action

A letter in the Daily Telegraph from 17 heads of institutes of environmental management, forestry, landscape architecture, agriculture, hydrology and others, called on the government to take real action on floods, as emergency measures are not enough.

They argue for long-term management of water. This means planning forestry and land management schemes to hold back water in the upper reaches of rivers, and enforcing sustainable drainage systems for both old and new buildings, especially those on flood plains. They call for cooperation between the water companies, local authorities, the EA and Natural Resources Wales, landowners and communities.



Far from blaming the Environment Agency for the floods, these experts call for more resources - a demand we would support. The Environment Agency (and its Welsh equivalent Natural Resources Wales) need the staffing and the physical resources to address the real causes of the flooding, as well as to deal with its immediate effects.

This call for coordinated planning and more resources is what socialists have long argued for. But to secure this planned investment over the longer term, the blockage of the profit system needs removing through the socialist transformation of society - the only way to provide for the needs of all people and of the wider environment.



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Tony Blair: The not-so-secret adviser to the rich and powerful

Ben Norman

Some establishment politicians become so adept at defending the indefensible during their time in office that they can amass a fortune from the skill after leaving. It therefore comes as no surprise that prior to News of the World editor Rebekah Brooks' arrest in connection to the phone hacking scandal, that it should be Tony Blair who phoned her with 'unofficial' advice.

With words which insult everyone who marched against the Iraq war, Blair advised Brooks to publish a 'Hutton style report' into the allegations, a reference to the 2003 whitewashing inquiry following the death of weapons inspector David Kelly.

A 2011 email from Brooks detailing Blair's advice surfaced as she appeared on the witness stand. In it, she told former News International chief James Murdoch that Blair was available to him, his father Rupert, or Brooks herself 'as an unofficial adviser'.

Duplicity and spin has always been at the heart of Blair's career. As John Rentoul revealed in his biography, Blair was the self-proclaimed 'socialist' who advised the Labour leadership of the 1980s how to conduct its witch-hunt of supporters of Militant, the forerunner to the Socialist Party.

As party leader he abolished Labour's 'Clause 4' constitutional

commitment to 'socialism', before launching business friendly New Labour, while as prime minister he



Blair and Brooks

extended the neoliberal policies of Margaret Thatcher and launched a series of disastrous wars.

Blair ended his political career as

a walking parody of international diplomacy by accepting the role of Middle Eastern Peace Envoy, while wars that he presided over continued to bloody both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet, it has been the business of selling advice which made Blair his millions, touting his services via Tony Blair Associates, to despots and bankers alike.

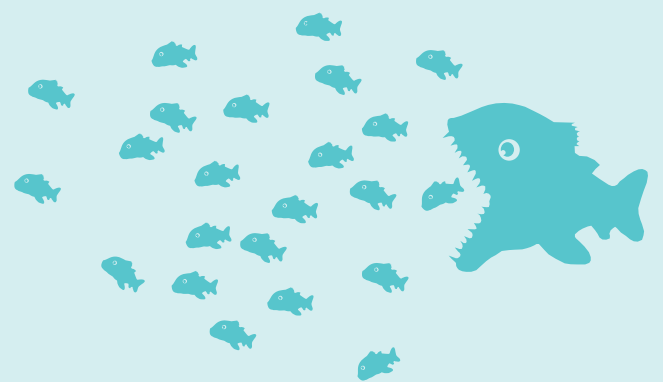
In 2008 Blair became an adviser to JPMorgan the investment bank, which called, with audacious honesty, for the curtailment of Spain's democratic institutions, which they blamed for hindering austerity.

By 2009 the Times reported that through his consultancy work and lectures, Blair had become the highest paid public speaker in the world. It therefore wasn't a need to pay the bills which drove Blair to advise Kazakh dictator Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev, whose authoritarian regime was responsible for the Zhanaozen massacre of striking oil workers in 2011, paid an estimated \$13 million for the services of a man who had always claimed his first commitment was to promoting democracy.

That Brooks can be a close friend of David Cameron and a confidant of Tony Blair lays bare the connections between Britain's elites. It reveals that we need more than a Hutton, or Leveson, inquiry to truly expose the corrupt dealings of both Blair and his powerful clients.

Them...



M&S-style austerity

Former Marks and Spencer chief executive Sir Stuart Rose has been appointed an adviser to the NHS. The Tory press sang hymns of praise to Rose's 'big business expertise'.

The press were quieter about Rose's current job as chair of private equity firm Bridgepoint Capital. This company owns at least three private health businesses in Britain including one of the private care giants Care UK.

One of Britain's biggest private health companies, Care UK was paid £190 million a year from public money to treat NHS patients in 2012. Its profits soared up to £38 million in 2010 while its staff pay dropped by an average 1%. In 2010, Rose was one of a gaggle of big business types to write a public letter congratulating Cameron's Tories on their plans "to institute widespread cuts in public services and state benefits."

It's not just austerity and privatisation, of course, it's M&S-style austerity and privatisation. But it's bad news for the NHS and we must fight his plans.

income. They can enter joint ventures with commercial companies and raise commercial loans.

Under the Tories' Health and Social Care Act the cap on FTs income from private patients was lifted from 5% to 49%, raising the suspicion that NHS patients will go to the back of the queue.

Without foundation

Five disabled social housing tenants have lost their Court of Appeal case to have the iniquitous 'bedroom tax' ruled unlawful.

Lord Dyson ruled that the court could only intervene if the government's cut in housing benefit for such tenants "were manifestly without reasonable foundation".

Solicitors representing the five are baffled by the judgement as these disabled adults' position is indistinguishable from that of disabled children who cannot share a room, who are now exempt from the bedroom tax. The group is considering an appeal.

Meltdown

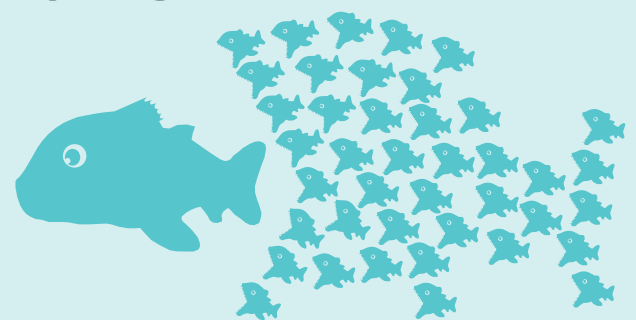
The number of NHS Foundation Trusts in England facing financial meltdown has almost doubled from 21 to 39 over the last year according to Monitor, the regulatory authority which guards against 'anti-competitive' practices.

Two-thirds of NHS hospitals in England are Foundation Trusts (FTs). Established by Labour, FTs aren't directly accountable to the health department and 'compete' with one another for

No caps

While capping the payment of benefits to low-income households, the government is opposed to caps on bankers' bonuses. Consequently they have argued against the EU 'limiting' bonuses to a mere 100% (or 200% if agreed by shareholders) of salaries. But fear not for the hard-pressed 'masters of the universe', the big high street banks have rallied to their cause by suggesting additional share payments so that no fat cat is worse off.

...& Us



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



What we saw

Protest comes to Albert Square! Residents on Eastenders took to the streets against the closure and development of the market. Even the Poll Tax campaign got a mention... "Do you reckon any of this is going to make a difference?" "Do you know, the last proper march I went on was against the Poll Tax and that made a huge difference."

PCS enters Scotland independence debate

Opposition to all cuts vital

Philip Stott

The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) has voted overwhelmingly to put opposition to all cuts at the centre of the debate on the referendum on Scottish independence. PCS branches in Scotland voted overwhelmingly at a special consultative conference on 22 February that the union would not make a recommendation to its members about how to vote in the referendum in September.

Following weeks of branch consultations, debates and mandating meetings 18,025 backed the 'no recommendation' proposition, 5,775 supported calling for a Yes vote and, significantly, there was 0 votes for the No position.

PCS assistant general secretary

Chris Baugh opened the well-attended conference. He explained that whatever the outcome of the conference, PCS would seek to put centre stage "opposition to all cuts, an end to welfare 'reform', and a decent social security system, repeal of the anti-union laws, tax justice and support for public ownership."

PCS Scottish secretary Lynn Henderson, in moving the No recommendation proposition, emphasised that it was "not a neutral position, it's a campaigning position and an active engagement in the debate around the referendum on PCS industrial demands."

Scottish National Party (SNP) deputy first minister Nicola Sturgeon spoke in favour of the Yes position. She argued that under independence Scotland could be a "progressive beacon" in tackling

social inequality. "The big issue at the heart of this debate is not that Scotland is not a wealthy country, but why don't people share in that wealth. Voting for independence is the only way to change this."

Neil Findlay, a left Labour MSP, argued for the No position. He is chair of the PCS group in the Scottish parliament. He began by pointing out that "on the four occasions that the PCS has had a picket line at the Scottish parliament, I have never crossed it, and never will."

This was a reference to the fact that SNP ministers have routinely crossed PCS picket lines.

It was very significant that none of the 82 PCS branches in Scotland were prepared to support the No position. This reflects the overwhelmingly anti-working class platform of the Better Together campaign.

The doubts among PCS members in backing a Yes vote reflects the different views among working class people generally. It's also, crucially, a reflection of the SNP's pro-business approach that seeks to make an independent Scotland a bastion for business interests, while also promising to reduce social inequality. Only decisive social measures can offer a way forward for the working class under independence.

This vote will allow the union to play a central role in advocating and campaigning for a pro-working class, trade union and anti-cuts voice during the referendum debate. Left Unity, the socialist grouping in the PCS that Socialist Party members play a leading role in, supported a Yes position and will continue to encourage PCS members to vote Yes in September.

In brief

PCS elections



photo Paul Mattsson

The elections for the PCS leadership will start soon, with nominations closing on 6 March. The election will run from 8 April to 8 May. Socialist Party members in PCS are part of Left Unity, which is standing candidates with the PCS Democrats – as the Democracy Alliance. Socialist Party members who are standing include Chris Baugh for Assistant General Secretary, Janice Godrich for President and John McInally for Vice-President. The union's Democracy Alliance-led leadership has a proven track record of fighting the Con-Dems' austerity attacks by fighting for jobs, services and working conditions. PCS branches are being asked to nominate Democracy Alliance candidates – a full list is available on leftunity.org.uk

No boots - no work

It appears that workers employed by Carillion at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford have been told to buy their own safety boots – which they have to have to work. Most of these workers are on the minimum wage and are on contracts with limited rights. But it's OK if you can't afford a pair of boots out of your meagre wages – the company will let you hire a pair by the day, with just a £10 deposit.

NUJ strike

Striking NUJ members took to the picket lines on 18 February at three Newsquest titles in the North East. Up to 25 jobs will be lost at the Northern Echo, The Press and the Bradford Telegraph and Argus if plans to move subbing jobs to Wales go ahead.

Staff from all departments of the T&A were at the picket line in Bradford, all aware that a reduction in numbers won't be followed by a loss in workload, meaning less people doing more work. There was also frustration at the idea of moving an entire department 250 miles, to Newport, yet continuing to advertise themselves as a 'local' paper.

Many were equally wary of the practicalities of working with such a chunk of the newspaper being made away from the main building, and being done by staff who will be given multiple papers to sub within any one shift.

With other Newsquest titles facing a similar fate, as the company create a 'super hub' for subbing in Newport, this is unlikely to be the last action they face if they push ahead with their plans.

Ian Slattery

Hospital workers fight for fair pay

Chris Newby

On 19 February workers at and visitors to Ealing hospital in west London were left in no doubt of the determination of striking Compass Medirest workers, members of the GMB union. This was the first day of the second 48-hour strike in the last weeks.

Alongside the noisy mass picket loads of GMB flags festooned the entrance to the hospital. The staff on strike are employed as domestics, caterers, porters and help desk workers

Workers' anger at management's refusal to seriously discuss their pay demand was shown in the 98% vote for strike action.

The workers are demanding a £2 an hour pay increase on their miserly £6.31 an hour current minimum wage pay levels.

Several of the workers said all their costs had increased but their

pay hadn't. Staff doing similar jobs in other hospitals in London where Medirest have the contract, such as Chase Farm and Barnet in north London and Kings College hospital in south London are being paid over £9 an hour for the same work.

What has also angered the GMB members on strike is that Medirest have brought in agency workers on strike days at a cost of £100 per worker per day.

One of the picketing workers also raised the question of the continuing funding by the unions of the Labour Party while Labour refuses to make a stand against cuts. Several of the workers are supportive of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition standing candidates in the upcoming council elections.

These workers are clearly determined in their struggle and are prepared to take further strike action if management refuse to meet their demands



Part of the lively picket line photo Chris Newby

Defending Mark Harding



Around 50 RMT members and supporters turned up to protest outside Hammersmith tube station on 25 February. They marched to the local courts where RMT rep, Mark Harding, is up for a preliminary hearing after being arrested on the picket line during the recent tube strike

photo Neil Cafferky

Striking seafarers make gains



Fighting poverty wages for seafarers photo Nick Chaffey

Nick Chaffey

A solidarity demonstration organised by the transport union RMT took place at Portsmouth ferry terminal on 18 February to support striking deck crew who had organised a sit-in on board the Condor Ferry 'Rapide' in St Malo.

Condor are notorious for their super-exploitation of crews, paying just £2.35 an hour for 12 hour shifts. Local RMT seafarer Kevin asked: "As an unemployed seafarer in Portsmouth how can I take a job at £2.35 an hour?"

Mark Carden, RMT seafarer rep, speaking at the demonstration explained: "We are here to support French seafarers fighting for the

same rights as any other seafarer in France. Social dumping is a sustained attack on terms and conditions. The RMT has been fighting this for two years, now is an opportunity to escalate this issue and mobilise support for the campaign."

Condor ferries are owned by Australian banking group McQuarrie, which also owns Wightlink ferries that are run from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight. Wightlink ferries are run with workers receiving proper pay and conditions. Why are Condor able to get away with this exploitation? It is no accident that RMT is well-organised and recognised at Wightlink. The strike action ended on 21 February after two weeks, with management conceding to some of the strikers' demands.

FIGHT ALL CUTS AND JOB LOSSES

For more workplace and trade union news see: socialistparty.org.uk

Send us your reports to editors@socialistparty.org.uk

'Welfare reform' - an avalanche of misery

"We must, as a society, face up to the fact that over half of people using foodbanks have been put in that situation by cutbacks to and failures in the benefit system, whether it be payment delays or punitive sanctions." These aren't the words of an opposition politician or an angry protester. They come from 27 bishops in an open letter attacking the government's welfare attacks for creating a "national crisis". 'Welfare reform' is now well and truly

underway, and people are struggling. But the Tories are ploughing on regardless. In fact, David Cameron had the cheek to respond to the bishops by saying that the brutal benefit cuts are in fact offering people "a new hope". The system is in such disarray that Atos, the private benefit assessor, is trying to pull out early of its contract with the government. Doncaster advice worker Mary Jackson explains the reality of the situation.

The safety net of benefits has been eroded so fast under this unelected government that it has stunned people.

Lies and distortion about the benefit bill, the demonisation of disabled, sick and unemployed people, getting rid of Legal Aid, reduced funding for advice agencies, introduction of the bedroom tax - an avalanche of misery on the most vulnerable and isolated.

A few facts that are hidden by the government and their lackeys in the media need shouting from the rooftops.

The biggest part of the benefit bill is paid to pensioners who have worked and paid their taxes and National Insurance. It's their deferred wages really. Next highest is low-waged workers, then sick and disabled. The smallest group is the unemployed.

The cost of living has increased 25% since the world economic crash and neither pay nor benefits have kept up with inflation, the vast majority of us have taken an effective pay cut.

13 million people are living in poverty, 3.5 million of them children, 1.5 million pensioners... in Britain, the seventh richest country in the world.

Low pay, zero-hour contracts, under-employment, slave labour workfare are a big cause of poverty in Britain but the government benefit sanctions coupled with the work capability assessment test and subsequent fitness for work decisions are causing the most misery.

Tales shared on the recent protest against Atos in Doncaster (see report below) included a sad story of a local man, suffering anxiety and depression who was found fit for work. He didn't know what to do - he killed himself. His friend was on the demo.

A very articulate woman in a wheelchair with severe breathing difficulties had been put on the work-related group. She explained the mental torture she was subjected to by the private training that she had to attend.

She was struggling to breathe one day on her way in and one of the staff told her to get a move on, adding: "if you had learnt to read and add up at school you wouldn't be here!" Her answer was "well no one pointed that out to me when I got my degree".

Another told me of a workfare

programme she was forced to attend, working in a warehouse. The place was infested with mice, health and safety non-existent. A pile of boxes fell on her, knocking her down - she was bruised and shaken. Her boss shouted at her "get them all stacked up again before you return to your job" ...this for no pay.

She complained to her adviser and said she couldn't possibly go back there, she was crying and distraught. She was told "you work to the end of the placement or lose your benefit". She had no option but to return or starve.

Claimants are getting organised, Unite the Union is recruiting sick people, pensioners and the unemployed to Unite Community.

But we need to unite the struggles of claimants to the firefighters, teachers, lecturers, civil servants and other workers and demand the TUC name the day for a 24-hour general strike as the first move to stop these attacks and the threat of more to follow. This would show this government and any future Labour government that we are not prepared to pay for the financial crisis caused by the bankers.

5,500 have been admitted to hospital with malnutrition in the last year

Protesters find Atos 'fit for' nothing

Leicester

On 19 February there were demonstrations nationwide against the infamous DWP contractor, Atos. Over 140 Atos offices across the country were picketed by disabled protesters and their supporters. In a contract worth £110 million a year, Atos has been carrying out ruthless disability benefit examinations which have resulted in tens of thousands of disabled people being thrown into poverty.

Recently, a freedom of information request submitted to the DWP revealed that 10,600 disabled people had died within six weeks of being declared fit for work by Atos in 2011 alone. The response of Atos and the DWP to this revelation was to stop counting the number of people "fit for work" who die. The anger, frustration and discontent among disabled people is palpable. The recent demonstrations were the inevitable outcome of this.

In Leicester, around 100 people gathered outside the Atos assessment centre. We had around 12 speakers, music and poetry. The atmosphere was upbeat and defiant.

The event was initiated and run by disabled people from our area like myself, and we were given logistical support by our local Socialist Party branch. We have organised a follow-up meeting and we think that the confidence boost given to all who took action on the day will provide us with momentum for going forwards.

Nick Wright

London

Protesters leafleted and spoke to people going for their assessments at the Atos centre in Marylebone for an hour before we headed over to the main London protest. Outside Atos headquarters 100 campaigners had gathered with an open mic. Protesters used the opportunity to tell their personal stories of Atos failings but

also made points about where the campaign should go next.

London Socialist Party secretary Paula Mitchell urged Disabled People Against Cuts campaigners to keep protesting but also consider standing as anti-cuts candidates in the local elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

The National Shop Stewards Network brought solidarity from trade unions and workers up and down the country and were asked to speak. One protester said "its brilliant to see we have the trade unions on our side".

Helen Pattison

Carmarthen

In Carmarthen Socialist Party members started the day with a lobby of the council, opposing the £33 million in cuts, alongside Carmarthenshire Unison.

There was a crowd of around 30 activists, many of them young people, from several organisations outside the office building that houses the Atos centre (and the offices of the local Labour Welsh Assembly Member). Afterwards, we held a lively discussion about the cuts, disability rights and the role of socialists.

The day ended with a successful meeting, led by Les Woodward of the Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party branch and former Remploy worker.

Following the successful demonstration, plans are now underway for a May Day march, and more coordinated action in the town.

Gareth Bromhall

St Helens

One protester in St Helens, Olivia Short, who has the genetic disorders Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome and a Pituitary Adenoma said: "Over the past few years I have had multiple Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and the results have

varied from being found Fit For Work (FFW), to being fit for work in the future and put in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) which meant I got benefits for 12 months and then it was stopped.

"I am scared that when I go through the assessment again I could again be found FFW or even if I am put in the WRAG I will not receive any income as I have had my 12 months of payments."

Debby Howard

Warrington

Warrington residents and a few councillors were campaigning outside the Atos work assessment centre in Tantery Court, Warrington, on 19 February.

Anti-cuts councillor Kevin Bennett said: "We are calling on the government to stop this degrading policy and introduce a fairer, transparent system that restores dignity to the sick and disabled."

Warrington Socialist Party

Plymouth

The anti-Atos demo in Plymouth was supported by Socialist Party members as well as Plymouth TUSC candidates for the local elections in May. Atos decided to shut their office for the day. With not a Labour councillor in sight, we know it is up to TUSC to challenge the attacks on people with disabilities.

Tom Taylor

Doncaster

We had a great demonstration in Doncaster against the company running the 'work capability' test designed to find people fit for work. About 30 hardy activists started the day off at 8am and gradually throughout the day we were joined by scores of others. A film crew dropped by to interview and film the protest.

Doncaster Socialist Party



Examples of recent job application figures:
 • 11,000 applied for 1,500 jobs at Centre Parcs
 • 600 applied for 15 jobs at a new Tesco in South Wales

Leicester photo Steve Score



In the year to September 2013 a record 897,690 people had their benefits sanctioned

St Helens photo Hugh Caffrey



20% of mothers are "skipping meals to better feed their children"

Carmarthen photo Socialist Party



A recent leaked DWP document showed that the government is considering charging benefit claimants for appealing against decisions to stop their benefits

Warrington photo Kevin Bennett

PRESIDENT OUSTED: WHAT NEXT FOR UKRAINE?

Niall Mulholland

The latest developments in the Ukraine saw the dramatic overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovich and his flight from Kiev. Mass discontent at grinding poverty and a corrupt, brutal regime finally erupted into a revolt in Kiev and many parts of Ukraine last November.

But the lack of a working class alternative allowed reactionary forces, with western imperialist backing, to dominate the protest movement. As a new pro-western regime is being consolidated, ethnic divisions dangerously deepen among the 46 million-strong population.

Following bloody clashes between protesters and police in central Kiev, which saw over 80 killed and hundreds injured between 18 and 21 February, leaders from Germany, France and Poland negotiated a deal with the crumbling Yanukovich regime. The EU-mediated agreement envisaged forming a 'national unity' government, holding presidential and prime ministerial elections in November and re-instating the 2004 constitution, which would strip the presidency of some key powers.

But the agreement quickly collapsed as the right-wing opposition, which includes ultra-nationalists and fascistic elements, went on the offensive and pushed their advantage home. Parliament impeached Yanukovich and appointed the Fatherland Party figures, Arsen Avakov and Oleksandr Turchynov, as Interior Minister and Speaker of the Rada (parliament).

Turchynov, a close ally of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who parliament released from prison on 22 February, is also Acting President. Turchynov is attempting to form a new coalition government and new presidential elections will be held on 25 May. Arrest warrants were issued for Yanukovich and other former ministers.

New regime

Even MPs from Yanukovich's Party of the Regions voted for the measures, as his former party colleagues desperately tried to distance themselves from the deposed regime. The parliamentary leader of the Party of the Regions condemned the ousted president for having made "criminal orders". Powerful oligarchs who until recently were close allies of Yanukovich, and who saw his alliance with Russia in their interests, have opportunistically swung to the new regime.

The Kremlin reacted furiously to events and denounced what it considers a western-backed "coup" led by "armed extremists and pogromists". The removal of Yanukovich represents a serious setback for the Putin regime, which regards Ukraine as strategically vital.

The Kremlin has made big efforts to bring its close neighbour into further economic and political alliance. Last November Moscow agreed a \$15 billion package with Kiev after Yanukovich rejected an EU 'association agreement'. This intensified the international struggle among imperialist powers for influence over Ukraine, which is also an important geo-strategic territory for the US and Nato.

The rejected EU deal sparked opposition protests in Maidan Square, central Kiev, which were, to begin with, mainly made up of middle class people and students. Many have illusions that closer association with the EU will bring prosperi-

ty and democratic rights, despite the fact that the November EU deal was linked to a harsh IMF austerity package, which Yanukovich correctly feared would have led to an explosion of mass protests.

It was riot police brutality against protesters that led to greater numbers taking to the streets in Kiev and Lviv and across the Ukrainian-speaking western part of the country. Unrest over the cancellation of the EU deal soon evolved into mass anger at poverty, economic stagnation and the corrupt, incompetent and authoritarian Yanukovich regime.

While working people have become increasingly impoverished, Yanukovich and the 'Family' of cronies that surrounded him became enriched. There were even anti-regime protests in industrialised, mainly Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine, which was Yanukovich's political base.

The corrupt regime was quickly exposed as having very little popular support. This was underscored when protesters opened the gates of Yanukovich's main residence and exposed his opulent lifestyle (although the western media chose not to shed light on the similarly obscene wealth of pro-western oligarchs and politicians).

Working class limitations

But in the absence of strong workers' organisations it was not possible to harness this mass opposition to Yanukovich for a united mass movement of the entire working class of Ukraine, that could straddle all ethnic, religious and language divides.

Although many individual workers went onto the streets, the revolt, at root against the brutal and corrupt Yanukovich regime and rule of the oligarchs, was not led by the working class, acting as a class for itself. The majority of the working class opposed the regime and the oligarchs but they were largely passive - it did not leave its imprint on events in an independent and organised fashion.

Instead, from the start, reactionary forces were able to step into the vacuum, with western powers' backing, and to cynically exploit the masses. Right-wing, pro-capitalist opposition politicians, like Vitali Klitschko, the former heavy weight champion boxer, and Arseniy Yatseniuk, who is linked to the Fatherland Party, took the lead.

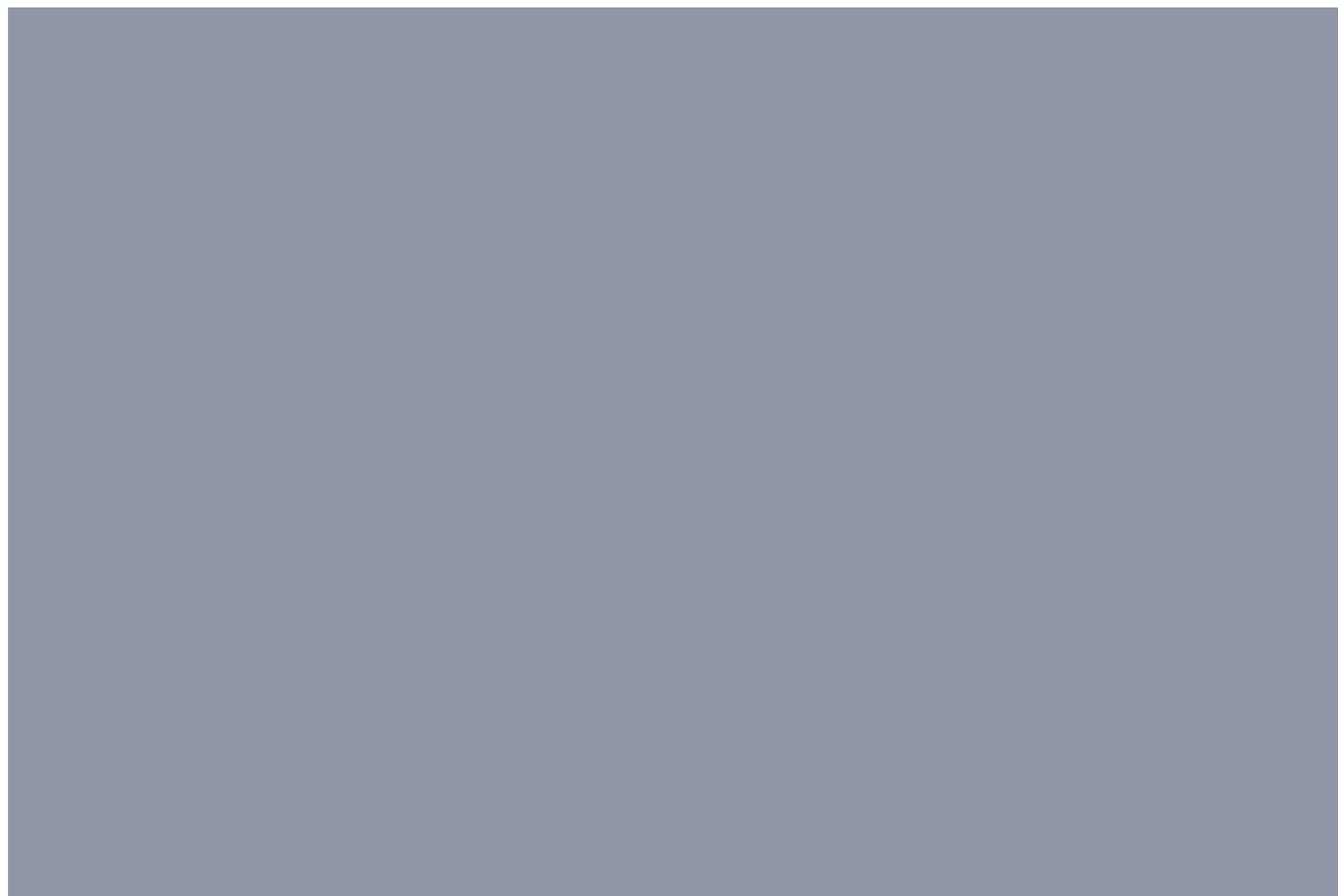
They closely allied themselves with ultra-nationalists, the far right and the neo-fascist groups. Over the last three months, the anti-Semitic Svoboda party and the far-right Right Sector played a key role in orchestrating street fighting and the occupation of government buildings.

Reaction

The thoroughly reactionary character of the new regime and the fears it engenders can be seen by the call by Rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman for Kiev's Jews to flee the city. The new interior minister stated that the Maidan 'Self-Defence Forces' will be incorporated into the new regime structures.

Parliament's provocative decision to reduce the status of the Russian language led to more calls for secession in the Russian-speaking south and east of Ukraine. Thousands protested in Sevastopol, in Crimea, a crucial naval base for Russia's Black Sea fleet, waving Russian flags. They voted to set up a "parallel administration" and "civil defence squads".

Over the weekend, Susan Rice, the US national security adviser, warned Putin that it would be a "grave mistake" for



Over 80 were killed in bloody clashes between protesters and police in Kiev

Russia to intervene militarily. The head of Nato's military command in Europe held talks with Russia's top general on 24 February, as western countries tried to ease tensions with Russia.

Moscow has encouraged eastern Ukraine regional leaders to oppose Kiev's rule and to move towards greater 'autonomy'. It remains to be seen how far this process will go, but if significant regions were to secede the wounded Putin regime could well raise the stakes and carry out armed intervention.

Competing oligarchs and aggressive meddling by western and Russian imperialism have pushed Ukraine dangerously closer to a messy process of disintegration, if not outright bloody partition or 'cantonisation'.

Neither Brussels nor Moscow

Putin retains powerful economic influence over Kiev. More than half of Ukraine's exports go to Russia and Russia supplies Ukraine's gas. The Moscow regime could cause real hardship to Ukrainians by revoking a 30% cut in gas prices within days.

Neither Brussels, with US backing, nor Moscow and its oligarchs, are act-

ing in the interests of working people in Ukraine. Whether it is Yanukovich or the new pro-western regime in power in Kiev, they act to defend the interests of the super-rich, including by enforcing austerity policies on the mass of Ukrainians.

With Russia signalling it will freeze its \$15 billion bailout for Ukraine, western leaders talk of putting together a financial "rescue deal" to save the country from bankruptcy. The new Kiev regime says it needs \$35 billion over two years to stop the economy "heading into the abyss". Economic growth in 2013 was zero and the currency, the hryvnia, lost more than 8% of its value in three months.

The Financial Times reported that the EU and US made clear that "no bailout would be agreed without a new government willing to commit to economic reform". Jack Lew, US Treasury secretary, emphasised the need to "implement reforms that could be supported by an IMF programme" (synonymous with austerity and privatisation).

A striking feature of the mass revolt over the last weeks was that despite the ethnic divide working people everywhere expressed strong opposition to the entire political elite and their oligarch backers.

Julia Tymoshenko was "received politely but by no means rapturously" according to a Guardian reporter, when she addressed crowds at Maidan Square, following her release from Kharkiv prison hospital. Many Ukrainians well remember that Tymoshenko, the hero of the 2004 'Orange Revolution', went on to become prime minister in a corrupt regime that carried out cuts to their already low living standards.

Protracted process

The new pro-western capitalist rulers will hope for a honeymoon but sooner or later will come into collision with the interests of the Ukrainian working class. The crisis of the last few months brings home the urgent need for working people to build their own class organisations, including genuinely independent trade unions.

This has proven to be a protracted and difficult process so far. This is not surprising given decades of rule under Stalinism, which did not countenance any genuine working class self-organisation, followed by the collapse of the former USSR and the 'shock therapy' restoration of capitalism. Political consciousness among the masses is bound to be disorientated and confused under these circumstances.

Yet working people are drawing important lessons from events. They have gone through the deeply disappointing 'Orange Revolution' and the rule of Yanukovich. Now the likes of Turchynov, Klitschko and Yatseniuk and other pro-western big business politicians will be exposed.

Increasingly more sections of the working class will realise that only way forward is to build an independent mass, multi-ethnic workers' party that rejects reactionary nationalism, the oligarchy and all imperialist interference.

A socialist party with mass support that forges the unity of all workers across Ukraine, would campaign for a workers' government to take over the huge wealth of the oligarchs and to nationalise the big banks and corporations, as part of a democratically planned economy run for the benefit of the vast majority. Such a struggle would find a ready response from the workers of Europe, Russia and the region.

GDP per head is the third lowest in Europe, beating only that of impoverished Moldova and Kosovo

Unemployment is officially 9% but this is a vast underestimate

Between 2008 and 2009 the Ukrainian economy dropped by 15% and has not yet recovered

The average wage in Ukraine is €250 a month, and this tends to be lower in the western part. The average wage in neighbouring Poland, which is in the EU, is twice as much



Socialism TODAY

The sections below are extracts from an article in the Socialist Party's magazine by Rob Jones

The March issue includes:

Ukraine

Rob Jones looks at the forces behind the crisis

British economy

Claims of recovery are greatly exaggerated writes Hannah Sell

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Protests start

The spark for the protests was the unexpected decision by the Supreme Rada (parliament) on 21 November to suspend the signing of the 'association agreement' with the European Union, scheduled to take place at the EU summit in Lithuania at the end of November. This was not a proposal for Ukraine to join the EU. The association agreement was intended to encourage Ukraine to adopt EU 'values of democracy and justice' and, most importantly, enable a free-trade agreement to be reached.

According to the then premier, Mykola Azarov, who was sacked in January as part of Yanukovich's concessions to the protesters, the decision to delay the association agreement was taken following the receipt of a letter from the IMF on 29 November. This out-

lined the conditions for the refinancing of the rescue loans taken out in 2008 and 2010. Azarov said: "The terms were an increase of gas and heating tariffs for the population by approximately 40%, a commitment to freezing basic, minimal and net salaries at the current level, a significant reduction of budget expenditures, the lowering of energy subsidies, and the gradual curtailment of VAT exemption benefits for agriculture and other sectors".

The desperate situation in which many Ukrainians live explains why the movement took on such a pro-EU colouring, at least in the early stages. Many, particularly youth, look on the EU as a haven of relative wealth and freedom, especially when compared to the alternative - Russia.

East-West tug of war

Underlying the original Orange revolution, and playing as significant a role in the recent protests, is the national question. There are sharp divisions between the Ukrainian-speaking west and the Russian-speaking east of the country, where most heavy industry is located.

But exacerbating the language division has been a no-holds-barred struggle by the different imperialist powers to reap economic gain from the exploitation of Ukraine and achieve geopolitical advantage.

Yanukovich is usually seen as pro-Russian but, since his return to power in 2010, he has been pragmatic in his relations between the powers. His first visit was to Brussels, where he confirmed that Ukraine would remain as part of Nato's outreach programme. Shortly after, he visited Moscow, where he

promised to restore previous good relations. He resisted, however, any attempts by Vladimir Putin to recruit Ukraine to the Eurasian customs union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Until December's shock decision, it seemed that Yanukovich was enthusiastic about the EU's association agreement.

As the date for signing it came closer, Russia stepped up its restrictions on trade. The trade volume between Ukraine and the EU is about the same but, given the state of the EU economy, it has not been able to increase its trade to make up for the loss from Russia. The €1.8 billion aid over ten years offered by the EU to compensate for such losses was clearly nowhere near adequate. In addition, Russia uses the gas pipelines crossing Ukraine as a further lever.

Who is the opposition?

From the beginning three figures, representing the coalition of opposition parties in the parliament, have been the political face of the protest.

Arseniy Yatseniuk represents the party of the jailed former premier Yulia Tymoshenko, once known as the 'gas princess' from the time when she controlled most of the gas imports from Russia. She was one of the leaders of the Orange revolution. In power, her government followed an economic course based on a dish of pro-Europeanism and neoliberalism served with a mild populist sauce.

Vitaly Klitschko, a world boxing champion, leads his party Udar (punch or blow), which argues for European integration and is linked to the European People's Party, the Christian

Democratic bloc in the European parliament. The third leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, represents the Svoboda party, which has 37 seats in parliament and controls local government in three regions. This party is ultra-right wing. Until 2004 it used a Ukrainianised swastika as its party symbol. Tyahnybok himself virulently hates anything left wing and justifies those who collaborated with Hitler as fighting "Moskals, Germans, Jews and other unclean elements".

For electoral reasons Svoboda has attempted to moderate its image but has, together with the even nastier union of ultra-right wing parties and football hooligans (the Right Sector), played an increasingly dangerous role in the protests.

Financial appeal: Help the Socialist Party offer a real alternative

Ken Douglas
Socialist Party national treasurer

We are appealing to all our members and supporters to donate to the Socialist Party's Congress 2014 fighting fund appeal. Hundreds of Socialist Party members will be coming together from every corner of England and Wales to discuss the latest political developments in Britain and worldwide.

We will discuss events in Ukraine. The pictures of ordinary Ukrainians walking through the elected dictator's palace and taking pictures of the trappings of incredible luxury conjured images of the sans-culottes in the French revolution gaining entry to the palace of Versailles.



We'll discuss the fightback against austerity in Britain - we're preparing the biggest ever Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition challenge in the local elections in May - and Kshama Sawant's inspiring election victory in Seattle, and the preparations in South Africa for the new Workers And Socialist Party (WASP) to stand in the general election there.

We need the resources to meet all the challenges ahead and to maintain our ability to offer people an anti-austerity alternative. For instance, the rollers on our press urgently need to be replaced at a cost of £1,600 in order to maintain the quality of the printed material we are producing. That's why we are asking our members

and supporters if they can make a financial sacrifice to help build the Socialist Party.

Branches are also raising funds to send their delegates to Congress. A supporter of the Socialist Party, Roger Ingham, has already made a fantastic donation of £500 to "help support delegates and visitors attendance costs to congress".

Can you do the same? Can you make a donation of £5, £10, £50 or £100 or more? Every donation, no matter how big or how small, makes a difference and we can promise that every penny will go towards building support for socialist ideas.

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Nuneaton: Support for youth fightback

Aidan O'Toole

After weeks of preparation, young Socialist Party members led a Youth Fight For Jobs protest outside the office of Nuneaton's Tory MP. It proved popular among young people, with a good turnout for the 21 February protest and a lot of support from others.

While we were outside protesting against exploitative zero-hour contracts and Tory cuts to youth services, the MP, Marcus Jones, invited us in. We explained our demands for a proper wage for proper working hours as well as an increase in job opportunities for young people.

After this success we moved on and marched around the town centre shouting out for fair pay and work hours. This took passers-by by surprise but it captured their imagination.

Throughout the march we gained supporters. They joined in with the chanting, a sign that better employ-



Youth Fight for Jobs protest outside Marcus Jones MP's office

ment opportunities and the scrapping of zero-hour contracts are popular ideas.

This protest has already gained our Socialist Party branch some

prospective members who see us as an organisation that fights for them and stands up for their beliefs. I would recommended organising similar events in other areas.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2014	Deadline 31 March 2014
West Midlands	2,100	1,087	█	█
North West	1,200	535	█	█
Wales	2,300	933	█	█
Northern	600	233	█	█
East Midlands	1,600	551	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	725	█	█
Southern	1,200	268	█	█
South West	1,400	311	█	█
London	6,100	1,079	█	█
South East	750	91	█	█
Eastern	1,200	73	█	█
England & Wales	3,650	530	█	█
TOTAL	25,000	6,416		

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Budget bloodbaths show TUSC needed

photo Paul Mattsson



Socialist councillor Keith Morrell addressing TUSC conference

Southampton

By 46 votes to two, with Labour, Lib Dem and Tory councillors all voting for cuts, the Southampton council budget meeting on 13 February showed only socialist councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas offer any alternative.

All hopes that the election of a Labour council would bring a respite to the cuts in Southampton have been dashed since their election in 2012. Labour's promise to be "Your friend in tough times" has fallen to three Labour cuts budgets, destroying jobs and services and attacking the very trade unions whose strike action in 2011 bought the Labour council to power. Their only promise now is to deliver a further £30 million cuts next year!

Don Thomas berated the Labour group: "You are betraying the people who elected you. You say, 'We have no choice'. We don't accept that. A bold stand against this government could force another u-turn. The money is there. We will vote against the cuts today and call on Labour councillors to do the same."

He was followed by Keith Morrell who outlined a clear alternative: "In 2013 we proposed a balanced legal budget to protect all jobs and services, which could buy time to mount a campaign to win back money stolen from the city. We showed you what is possible. There is nowhere to hide, £30 million cuts next year will destroy frontline services and jobs. It is time to take a stand."

Keith and Don have continued to receive strong support for the position they have taken. TUSC candidates will stand with Keith in May in every seat up for election in the city to build support for such a campaign.

Nick Chaffey

Swansea

Cowards flinching and traitors sneering a plenty but not a single principled Labour councillor willing to vote against £26 million of Con-Dem cuts in the coming year and £45 million in the next three years. That tells you everything worth knowing about the full-council budget meeting in Swansea on 18 February.

Labour councillors quickly scurried past our lobby, others shouted abuse at us, while some pretended that the council isn't making cuts. Most tried to claim that cuts are Con-Dem cuts. But if Labour councillors vote for Con-Dem cuts then they become their cuts.

Unison is calling for Labour councils to raise the council tax by the maximum. Swansea's Labour councillors have done that, raising council tax by 5% and still making millions of pounds of cuts to our members' jobs and services.

In the last couple of weeks, in the face of a public outcry, the council has announced delays

in some of the cuts. However it's clear that all these measures are still on the agenda. This was spelt out when the Finance Officer announced if three residential care homes were not shut down the savings projected would have to be found from elsewhere.

The budget is peppered with variations on the phrase "alternative delivery model" ie outsourcing. Outsourcing invariably means less job security, poorer pay, harsher terms, worse working conditions for staff. This inevitably leads to poorer services for those that rely on them.

Swansea's Labour council is also making a liar of Wales' Labour First Minister, Carwyn Jones, who was applauded for pledging at the Wales TUC, last May, that "...there is no room for outsourcing of public services in Wales".

In 2012, people in Swansea elected a majority Labour council because they didn't want Con-Dem cuts. Less than two years later, they're getting Con-Dem cuts and outsourcing at the hands of the same Labour councillors.

A Unison member

Bristol

Bristol was dealt a huge blow as the council agreed a budget with over £80 million cuts to jobs and services. Despite a shocking lack of detail, the budget proposed by the 'independent' Mayor and his cross-party cabinet made for chilling reading. At stake were up to 1,000 jobs and vast swathes of council services, including libraries and care services.

Panic set in as the Labour, Lib-Dem and Green groups realised voting against the budget would mean the budget being rejected. Clearly this was intended as a gesture to try to keep themselves 'clean', it wasn't meant to actually stop the cuts!

The meeting was adjourned and frantic horse-trading began to try and get the budget through. Suddenly an extra £1.3 million was rustled up in just half an hour. This was the cost of buying Labour's support.

Despite councillors' crocodile tears about the 'tough decisions' they're being forced into, they do have the power to oppose cuts.

The night before, at a meeting organised by Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts, Southampton anti-cuts councillor Keith Morrell explained how the council's budget should reflect the city's needs, not Tory demands for cuts.

Campaigns for needs budgets could force this unpopular government back but we'd be far stronger with political representatives that were willing to take a stand. Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts will be standing across Bristol in May to offer a genuine anti-cuts alternative.

Tom Baldwin



Venezuela: Chavism and the Right call for 'peace' amid polarisation

On 12 February, three people (two right-wing supporters and one government supporter) were killed in Caracas and dozens injured and arrested in the protests and demonstrations that took place around Venezuela to commemorate the annual 'Youth Day'. Since then tensions have escalated and violence continues. So far eight people have died as a result of the protests and many more have been injured.

Some right-wing leaders have stated it is a 'popular' protest, which represents the majority of Venezuelans. But the right wing represents class interests that are alien to the majority of Venezuelans.

There have been hundreds of protests in the last year about housing, crime, for collective contracts, to name a few. Additionally there have been occupations of factories and calls by workers for the government to nationalise the factories and give the workers control and management.

Gabriela Sanchez

Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Venezuela)

Most days there are different marches of both the government and the right-wing opposition. At night numbers dwindle and the so-called 'student faction' of the right wing mount barricades and burn rubbish. In Caracas this has mostly, but not exclusively, been confined to well-off neighbourhoods that are in the hands of the opposition.

In Caracas, Altamira's 'prestigious' plaza, a long time favourite meeting place of the right wing, especially during the coup and bosses' lock-out of 2002-2004, is looking a little worse for wear. The usually well-maintained flowerbeds are trampled. Rubbish and graffiti demanding 'freedom' and the fall of the 'dictatorship' cover the streets. In some states the violence has been significantly worse, for example in Tachira state, which borders Colombia.

While many on the Right have complained and spoken out against the violence generated as a consequence of the student protests and called for peace, images showing the use of tear gas and depicting the arrest of the reactionary opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez have given much of the Right a point of focus.

The Right calls for the disarmament of the collectives that support the government, who they claim are responsible for the recent violence. Many of the Right's supporters attempt to make a broader appeal by calling for an end to crime among other issues.

However, it couldn't be clearer that the right wing remains without a unified direction or plan about how they will take forward their objective of ousting Chavism, besides demonstrations.

Lopez, attempting to make himself a martyr, dramatically handed himself over to the National Guard in a clearly orchestrated show during the opposition march on 20 February. His ongoing detention remains a point of contention for the government and the Right and it is clear that negotiations regarding the charges are well underway.

The government has dropped the charges of murder and terrorism, but other charges that could see him imprisoned for up to ten years remain. The exact date of the hearing is yet to be confirmed. The government has claimed to have negotiated with Lopez to take him into custody for his own protection, as there were sectors of the far right that wanted to assassinate him to start a coup.

The arrest of Lopez and repression of protests could see the more



Protests rock Venezuela

moderate 'democratic' Right under the leadership of Capriles, the Right's candidate in the 2012 and 2013 general elections, be forced out onto the street. Capriles has participated in many of the large demonstrations, but continues to distance himself from the student protests and the clearly prepared plan of Lopez and others to create chaos in the country with the hope people will rise up against the government.

US imperialism

Capriles continues to call for non-violence, peace and democracy, although he has called on supporters to convert the protests into a social movement. In a recent interview he stated that the Right needed to adapt to appeal to all Venezuelans, especially the poor. He doesn't, however, clarify exactly how he plans to do this or the tactics and strategy that may be used to do so.

In recent days three US diplomats have been expelled for their alleged role in the unrest. This is not, of course, the first time US diplomats have been ejected from Venezuela. However the act has started a war of words between President Maduro about the Obama government's intentions in Venezuela and, on the other hand, Obama and John Kerry in the US about how 'democracies should behave'.

Correctly, Maduro has highlighted the hypocrisy of these statements and the role of US imperialism in Latin America. However, he has also called for dialogue between Kerry and Venezuelan Chancellor Elias Jaua to discuss the situation in Venezuela! The US remains the biggest importer of Venezuelan

oil, which makes up 80% of the country's total revenue.

Obama's agenda at this moment is to secure the ongoing importation of oil. Undoubtedly Washington would be very happy to see the end of Chavism, but they are unlikely to publicly support any kind of armed struggle or intervene militarily. Aside from dealing with their own national economic and political problems they know that any kind of intervention in Latin America would be extremely unpopular both nationally and internationally.

As the Right has been mobilising, so too has Chavism. On 20 February they used the signing of the new contract with workers at the state oil company PDVSA to mobilise hundreds of thousands on the streets.

Maduro has spoken of the need for the state to intervene in the protests of the opposition students, which it has done with tear gas and water cannon, while also claiming to guarantee the right to peaceful protest and denying repression.

Repression

On the other hand one of the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela - the governing party) vice-presidents of the National Assembly, Blanca Eekhout, has come out and said that there will be "no Arab Spring" in Venezuela. In doing so she is emphasising that the government was opposed to the popular uprising in many of the Arab countries dogged by repressive regimes (many of these regimes have trade agreements with Venezuela).

It also indicates that a popular movement, which they clearly believe would come from a right-wing

perspective, would not be tolerated. Such talk should be opposed by revolutionaries who could tomorrow be faced with the repressive tactics used against the Right today.

The PSUV leaders have recently met with their partners in the electoral alliance Gran Polo Patriótico (GPP) after a period of six months of not meeting. Just a month ago the Communist Party of Venezuela publicly stated that the GPP was not working due to the PSUV dominance and bureaucracy. But after an 'emergency' 24-hour meeting to discuss the current situation, the Communist Party has decided to put aside differences and even calls for a new alliance to support the government 100% in the face of a new "fascist" threat.

The situation remains critical and the perspectives for a further degeneration into violent conflict are real. It would also be incorrect for revolutionaries both nationally and internationally to believe that all that is necessary is to support Chavism. The reconciliation by Chavism with at least moderate sectors of the Right is possible.

For these reasons the working class, the poor and the revolutionary left must also struggle for their own mass representation, at this time most likely under a left front, to fight for a revolutionary programme to end capitalism and implement socialism. This is the only way the Right, and capitalism as the root cause of crime, inflation, food scarcity and so on, can be defeated and the Venezuelan revolution be defended.

For further analysis of events in Venezuela, read 'An analysis of 12F' at www.socialistworld.net

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

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



Germany: Left Party shifts to the right

Need to build Left Party on clear anti-capitalist basis

Sascha Stanicic, national spokesperson SAV (CWI Germany)



Pakistan: Chaotic ruling class, determined religious militants and suffering masses

No end to violence in sight

Khalid Bhatti SMP (CWI in Pakistan), Lahore



Hong Kong: Newly formed Refugee Union stages sit-in protest

Interviews with refugees fighting injustice and official high-handedness

Vincent Kolo, chinaworker.info

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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

Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

10 year olds v bankers

My 10-year old son, Harry, wrote a letter saying: "In school today, people came from HSBC bank to talk to my class about what makes a good business. Then we talked about what makes a bad business, they used McDonald's as an example and asked us why it might be a bad business.

"I put my hand up and said they try to prevent their staff from joining a union. The HSBC people said that they did not think it made 'bad business' to not allow people in a union, because 'customer service is better if the workers are not in a union'.

"I told them that I did not think that was correct. Staff who are unable to unite in a union are under more threat, they don't earn as much money to care for their families, and unhappy staff would not improve customer service."

I'm proud of Harry for standing up for unions. I will challenge the school and the LEA as to why anti-union rubbish is being taught in a primary school by representatives of banking and financial institutions who did so much to trigger the economic crisis.

Ronnie Job, Swansea



Sexist equality minister

"There are some wonderful sports which you can do and perform to a very high level and I think those participating look absolutely radiant and very feminine such as ballet, gymnastics, cheerleading and even roller-skating." These words from Helen Grant, the sports and equalities minister, have sparked a backlash. As usual a Tory minister proved totally out of touch with reality.

The assumption that all women need to look "radiant" during sporting activities and that this is more important than their athletic skills is insulting. Grant's idea that women only want to take part in feminine sports reinforces the idea that women shouldn't want to, or be free to, take part in "unfeminine" sports.

I haven't heard her concern that the low paid sectors where women make up the majority of workers aren't jobs where you can look "very feminine" and "absolutely radiant" cleaning, cooking and serving.

Helen Pattison

Book reviews:

Wales: A Land of Whose Fathers? Marxism in Today's World

Scott Jones
Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party,

Geoff Jones provides a bite-sized Marxist analysis to answer his question, "Wales: A Land of Whose Fathers? (LWF)" Very little has been written about the Welsh working class, though Wales was the world's first industrialised region and so home to one of the oldest working classes.

During the 1831 Merthyr Uprising, the world's first red flag was flown, a white sheet soaked in a cow's blood! Class struggle is woven into the fabric of Welsh history since the industrial revolution. This book charts the battles fought by early trade unionists and workers of the valleys who were owned body and soul by ruthless ironmasters.

Their struggle for votes and political representation help the reader interpret Welsh history from the worker's viewpoint during the development of capitalism and Welsh society.

The book analyses events in 20th century Wales, discussing the role Wales played in the Spanish Civil War and chronicling the titanic battles fought by miners throughout the decades. This culminated in the 'civil war without guns' in 1984/85, between Thatcher and the van-

guard of the British working class at the time, the miners.

LWF takes up political and economic aspects of Welsh working class history by examining the Labour Party's creation and growth, its role in the 20th century's major events and its eventual abandonment of class politics.

So now, the Con-Dems in Parliament load bullets in the gun of austerity while the Welsh Labour government and their councils willfully pull the trigger. We need to understand Labour now and how it was created as we look to build a new mass workers' party.

LWF demonstrates that Wales is a land built by our working class forebears, a land now facing similar problems to before. We need to overthrow this rotten capitalist system by realising our full power through struggles to fashion a new, socialist world.

Andrew Price
Cardiff Socialist Party

This Christmas, one of my presents was the book Marxism in Today's World by Peter Taaffe. This is an extended interview originally given in 2003 to an Italian Marxist, on the politics of the Socialist Party, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) and the Socialist's forerunner, 'Militant', with additional comments from Bob Labi of the CWI.

Peter Taaffe, Bob Labi and I all became Trotskyists in the 1960s; I first joined Militant in 1968. In fact, a decisive factor in my joining was Peter's capacity to explain some of the complex ideas of Marxism in a way working class men and women could understand.

In 1969, I was elected as Welsh representative on the National Committee of the Labour Party Young Socialists, and later, when Marxists became a majority of the Committee, I became National Vice-chairperson of the organisation while Bob Labi (the London representative) became editor of the LPYS newspaper (then known as 'Left').

'Marxism in Today's World' is divided into the following sections: 9/11 and after; the world situation; the Middle East; Ireland and the National Question; the Permanent Revolution today; Russia, Eastern Europe

and State Capitalism; China; the history of the Militant and the CWI.

I am unable to make detailed comments on most of these sections except to say that there is important commentary on a difficult period from roughly 1985 to 1995, a period that saw the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-85, the collapse of Stalinism across Eastern Europe, and the Labour Party's shift to the right.

Some chose to deny social reality and remained within the Labour Party, deluding themselves and a few others that things had not fundamentally changed. Some of these went on to pursue Parliamentary ambitions that some of them probably had when they described themselves as Marxists. Some, including Peter, me and many others, were expelled from the Labour Party, helped to establish Militant Labour and remain today as members of the Socialist Party and the CWI.

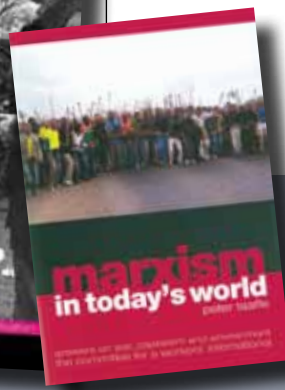
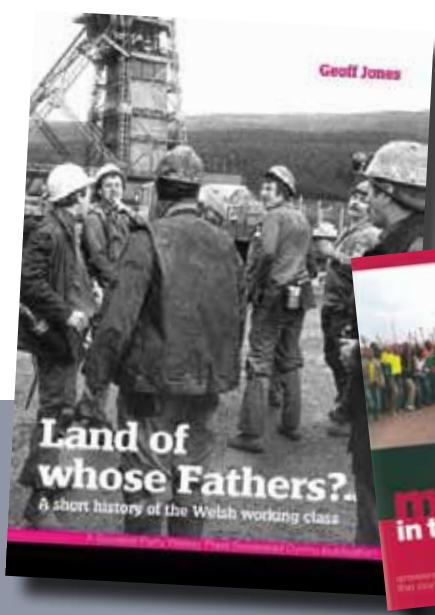
I hope every member of the Socialist Party and the CWI reads Marxism in Today's World, including young comrades not even born when many of the events analysed took place. To work properly as a party member in today's world you need to understand how we have cherished and defended at each stage our most important legacy: the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Buy this book, read it, organise branch meetings around it and help develop your own political understanding to the point where you can play a decisive role in ridding the world of the scourge of capitalism.



Land of Whose Fathers?

by Geoff Jones
Just £4 plus P&P



Marxism in Today's World

by Peter Taaffe
Just £8 plus P&P

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Film review: The Lego Movie

When anti-capitalism sells

Iain Dalton reviews *Lego: The Movie*

A movie about Lego, the interlocking brick building toy? Is it some kind of joke? But the right-wing, Rupert Murdoch-owned, Fox News said the movie's 'anti-capitalist' message is 'pushing an anti-business message to our kids'.

The main villain, President / Lord Business, presides over a world where people are encouraged to follow the rules and consume his goods. Our hero, Emmet Brickowski, is a construction worker who follows all the rules but all this changes when events bring him into contact with a 'relic', a distinctively non-lego object that has fallen into the lego world from the outside.

Needless to say in this big Hollywood production, anti-capitalist themes fade away as the film goes on. The movie pokes fun at the Lego brand itself - the police cannot find Emmet because his mugshot looks like almost everyone else. Some characters, especially the female characters, are one-dimensional but it is an enjoyable film, and may even tug at your emotions at times.

Ultimately, the film-makers aim to say Lego can be played with by all the family, so go out and buy it. The movie has grossed over \$50million already, and will probably boost sales of other Lego products.

But Lego is a relatively creative toy, requiring people to use their imagination and by tapping into genuine frustrations and anger at a society so clearly organised to satisfy the likes of Lord Business, many people may leave the film with much more than the film-makers want.

Matt comments:

Oddly "The Lego Movie" was the most scathing criticism of capitalism I've seen from a mainstream film. The film is set in a world where one large business holds a monopoly, and controls the state, suppressing opposition.

The workers in the film receive daily instructions about how to live their lives, and are told this is the best way for things to function. They are hypnotised by mindless TV and music - instructed to "enjoy popular music", for example, with messages about how great everything is in the current system.

This leads to a stifling of creativity, and ultimately no real happiness. And to Lego struggle. The film was produced by mainstream corporations and its revenue still ends up in the hands of the capitalists but it was refreshing to see.



Emmet: Working class hero?



Genetic modification

a means of making profit, not feeding the world

traditional crossbreeding which farmers have been practising for thousands of years by choosing the best traits and crossing different varieties of the same species.

GM is an alteration that can only happen in a science lab, made possible with the advances of genetic science in the last century.

The discovery of DNA has brought about many useful developments but in agriculture, what we are witnessing is a corporate use of biotechnology as a tool for domination and takeover of the global food system. There is talk about GMOs being needed to feed the growing population, so much so that it might appear that biotechnology was born out of some great need, and good intentions on the part of the food industry or governments. But nothing is further from the truth.

Enough food is produced to feed the world right now. In fact, enough food is produced to feed a much larger population. The problem is not the amount of food, but in distribution of food. People are hungry because of poverty which prevents access to food, not because there isn't enough food produced.

The phrase 'feeding the world' was in fact coined by what is now the largest GM corporation, Monsanto. Their intention from the start has not been to feed the world, but to conquer a monopoly position in the world's food supply.

Monsanto developed an agricultural herbicide called Roundup in the 1970s which became their best selling product; however, as the patent for Roundup was going to expire, they needed something to replace its revenue.

Market monopoly

One of the first GM crops they developed was GM soya resistant to Roundup, so that farmers could spray it without killing the crop. This is how Monsanto insured increased sales of Roundup, and also how Roundup was saved from competition once the patent expired, because they could now sell the herbicide and the GM seed as a package.

As Monsanto moved into biotechnology they began to portray genetic engineering as ground-breaking technology necessary to feed the world. Incredibly, they also managed to get a patent on GM seeds, which was the first ever case of patent being awarded to a life form.

After less than two decades from the introduction of GM crops in the US in the 1990s, around 90% of all soya and cotton grown, and 80% of all corn is GM, mainly Monsanto's. This is a staggering example of the market monopoly. They could not have done this without the help of a succession of US governments. The film, *The World According to Monsanto*, shows Presi-



Fruit of the future?

dent Bush Senior telling Monsanto executives "we're in the de-reg [ulation] business".

Since then, there has been a permanent revolving door between the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and Monsanto.

There is very little evidence of any benefit of GMOs for farmers or consumers. Quite the contrary, there is a lot of evidence worldwide that GMOs deepen poverty and hunger and dependency. Farmers get locked into stringent contracts when they buy the seeds; they are banned from saving seeds, which is a normal practice, but have to buy them anew every season. Seeds are becoming corporate owned and controlled.

Considering that there is no food without seeds, the enormity of this situation becomes apparent. By losing the possession of the seeds, small farmers are losing their livelihoods; this is especially detrimental for poor countries where small farmers feed their own families and whole communities.

In countries which have adopted GMOs full-on, small farmers are often forced to become labourers on their own land, or move to city slums. Farmers are not growing food for their own use, but animal feed for exports; it is a contradiction that half of the world's hungry are made up of farmers. Around 270,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide since 1995 due to indebtedness.

GMOs are a political issue rather than a strictly agricultural one and therefore we as socialists need to discuss this international phenomenon and develop our programme on agriculture.

Although a small percentage of commercial GM crops grown globally are actually grown in the EU (mainly in Spain, Portugal and Romania), people in the UK are very much exposed to them through animal feed imported from South America. Recently almost all UK

supermarkets lifted the ban on GM feed citing increasing difficulty in sourcing non-GM feed.

No independent thorough studies have ever been done on GMOs. Not just that - the only assurances of GMO safety come from the industry itself. They in effect ban any independent research by making their seeds inaccessible to independent scientists. Any responsible government would stop approval of GMOs until thorough, publicly funded research was accomplished. But the Con-Dems are in bed with the industry.

We are also seeing constant attempts to 'harmonise' seed laws in the EU. That is, an increase in regulation of sharing, exchanging and trading in seeds. This leads to a loss of traditional seeds, because growing them becomes unviable for small seed companies, with the consequence that only certain commercial varieties remain available.

This results in poorer diets on one hand, loss of biodiversity and nature's ability to evolve or guard itself against climate change, but also to an ever increasing consolidation of the global seed market to a very few commercially orientated seed companies - including Monsanto. Of course, the same companies are lobbying hard for the changes of the EU seed laws.

Opposition

In 2012 the G8 launched the so-called 'New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition', which African countries are bullied into joining, and which uses private and public funds (US and UK aid!) to 'invest' in African agriculture. Many in Africa are rightly calling this initiative 'a new scramble for Africa', or 'new colonialism'.

There is a lot of opposition worldwide to GMOs, and growing, among small farmers (La Via Campesina is

a movement that organises small farmers around the world) but also ordinary people who are concerned about food they eat.

In Argentina activists have just managed to halt the construction of a Monsanto seed plant. Tasmania extended the ban on GMOs indefinitely. In Hawaii, due to pressures, a judge has signed into law a measure that prohibits biotech companies from growing any new GM crops.

In the US there is a growing awareness and pressures to have GM food labelled. The EU Parliament has just rejected approval for another variety of GM corn to be grown in Europe. These are all recent victories due to anti-GMO activism, but the pressures from the powerful GM lobby are relentless and are unlikely to be seriously weakened any time soon.

Capitalism's monster

There is a united global anti-GMO movement called March against Monsanto, and there have been two marches so far on the same day in hundreds of cities worldwide, including London and other UK cities. The next march is being organised for May 2014.

It is a shame that, although they have a somewhat anti-capitalist tinge, it is not recognised fully that the problem is not simply some greedy GM corporation, but a capitalist system that has created this monster. On the other hand, the working class and socialists haven't so far taken up this issue in a major way either.

But with agriculture politicised by GMOs, it has become very relevant, not just politically but also more directly through the food we eat: it is the working class and the poor who are most exposed to GMOs in the food we eat.

Have you got any comments on these issues? Write to: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Mira Glavardanov

The Environment Minister Owen Paterson, in his speech at this year's Oxford Farming Conference, said that Europe is risking becoming a 'museum of world farming' if it doesn't open the door to genetically modified crops. He also said that decisions about adopting GM technology have to be based 'on science', and called all opposition to GMOs (genetically modified organisms) and 'politically motivated'.

Politically motivated

US capitalism and imperialism have been nothing but politically motivated to use GMOs to boost big business profit. GMOs are an extreme model of capitalist, industrial, chemical agriculture. Food is already commodified, dependent on the world markets and speculation, and seen as a means to profit, rather than a source of life.

GM seeds are patented, which by definition means exclusion of 'unauthorised' use. Big corporations like Monsanto get a monopoly position and control farmers' practices, forcing farmers to buy new seeds every season.

GMOs are plants whose DNA has been altered by inserting the DNA from other species of plants, animals, bacteria or viruses. Genetic modification (GM, also GE - genetic engineering) is very different to

Anti-Environment Minister Owen Paterson



End the housing crisis:

MEGA-RICH LANDLORDS ARE THE REAL SCROUNGERS



TUSC campaigners in east London demand rent controls

Bob Severn
Newham Socialist Party and TUSC

Britain's richest MP, Tory Richard Benyon - 'worth' £110 million - has slammed benefits as "something for nothing". Yet who is living a life of luxury thanks to benefits? He is!

Benyon is piling up £625,000 a year from housing benefit claimants. So if he wants to cut the benefit bill, he should start by cutting the rents he charges.

Another member of the idle rich creaming the public purse is Prince Charles. His Duchy of Cornwall estate and the Crown Estate banked more than £200,000 in housing benefit payments from low-income tenants last year.

Landlords will collect £9.2 billion from housing benefit this year alone - in many cases for doing very little. One million privately rented homes

fail to meet basic safety standards.

Meanwhile almost one million people who require housing benefit are in work but have to claim due to low pay and high rents. In many cases they still don't have enough money to pay the rent without going into debt.

Ukip's housing spokesperson, Andrew Charalambous, collected £745,351 from housing benefit, again showing how his party is just another group of hypocritical millionaires.

Housing benefit for a private tenant costs 29% more than for a social-housing tenant. And this figure is likely to increase, especially in London where property prices are ballooning.

Newham is one of the cheapest boroughs in London for rent - yet it's now difficult to get a two bedroom flat for less than £1,000 a month.

It doesn't have to be like this. Newham Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is campaigning

for rent controls. Rent controls and regulations used to exist in different forms until 1989. They are desperately needed by Britain's nine million private-sector renters.

What is desperately needed is a crash programme of quality council home building and renovation, with really affordable rents - as opposed to the government's definition which now means 80% of market rates.

Unbelievably, London Mayor Boris Johnson, the reactionary Tory buffoon, underspent his affordable housing budget by £120 million last year - resulting in 50% fewer homes being built than in 2011!

We also need councillors who will fight for policies to meet people's housing need, rather than having councillors who are also landlords, like many Labour councillors. TUSC is standing in seats across Newham - and across England - to fight for affordable housing.

see also www.tusc.org.uk

We demand:

- Rent control - cap rents not benefits
- Council-run, not-for-profit letting agencies and local fair rent councils
- Job creation and a genuine living wage
- Axe the bedroom tax. Tax the bankers and the billionaires - not bedrooms!
- A mass programme of council house-building and renovation

High rents, low pay and austerity measures have contributed to a situation where more than 4,400 households in London were declared homeless in just three months. That represents a 13% increase on the same period in the year before.

In Newham, East London, the council, with every seat held by Labour, has found a solution to homelessness. Send people hundreds of miles away! Last year it was reported how 40 homeless Newham households had been pushed out to temporary accommodation in Birmingham. Others were sent to Stoke.

The latest victims are young mums and their children, being evicted from the Focus E15 Foyer, who are being pushed out into short term private sector housing. The home is being closed thanks to budget cuts by the council, headed by Labour mayor Sir Robin Wales.

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!