BOB CROW
A GREAT FIGHTER FOR THE WORKING CLASS
1961-2014

The Socialist Party is shocked and deeply saddened by the death of Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT). The outpouring of grief and solidarity in response to his death confirms the major impact he had as a trade union leader – undoubtedly one of the best known – for his steadfast approach to standing up for his members.

Our thoughts are with his family. We also send solidarity to RMT and the POA prison officers’ union. Among RMT members Bob had a high profile, and deeply saddened by his uncompromising position of intransigence and anti-cuts activism standing as council candidates in the biggest left of Labour challenge for generations. Bob Crow always defended socialism as the necessary alternative to austerity and fearing a precarious future. The RMT’s February strike on London Underground was a beacon for workers suffering under Con-Dem austerity and fearing a precarious future. Every attempt was made to undermine the union and to ridicule Bob – but the strike had huge public support.

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The affection for Bob Crow sums up the urge of the working class for a powerful, fighting leadership. It is fair to say that if the entire trade union leadership was made up of fighters like Bob, or like Mark Serwotka and the left socialist leadership in the PCS, and other lefts in the trade unions, the battle to stop the cuts and kick out the Con-Dems would be in a much advanced state.

But in his passing, Bob Crow also reminds us of the strength of the British working class to produce such fighters. He will be greatly missed, but we will fight on in his name.
Bob Crow: 1961-2014

Tribute from John Reid, RMT London Transport regional council president and Socialist Party member.

I have personally lost a friend and comrade and the socialist and trade union movement has lost a great leader. I pass my heartfelt condolences to his partner and his children and grandchildren.

Members of the RMT loved him as a man who, along with other activists, rebuilt the trade union which was never on its knees and was prepared to fight and strike if necessary for our members.

He was a passionate socialist and a fighter for his members. He believed in building a socialist alternative to Labour and resistance was the trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). At RMT conference in 2013 he opposed a resolution seeking to distance the union from TUSC, and the resolution was defeated.

Bob stood up for things that most people agree with - such as decent living standards for all and renationalisation of the railways. Under his leadership the RMT, like the PCS civil service union I work for, fought for its members, refusing to bow down to the Tories or wait in the hope for a Labour government.

The forerunner of the RMT, the Society of Railway Servants, founded to protect railway workers in the 19th century, had a socialist tradition. Bob Crow set the tone saying ‘we should take up the torch of the Socialists of old and build for the future we want’.

Ed Miliband has paid a somewhat mealy mouthed tribute to Bob Crow. An event in 2011 showed he really felt about the man he calls ‘one of the labour movement’s major figures’.

Bob Crow, in contrast, told the Echo that “it is the greatest honour in the labour movement to be invited to speak.” Bob went on to call for a new party of workers when he spoke.

Watch the video on the TUSC website: http://www.tuscs.org.uk/videos

Stop press: Solidarity with John Reid

John has been suspended pending investigation following a complaint against him made while he was still MP for Derby North.

As part of his legacy, on 22 May, TUSC (the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition) will stand the largest number of left of Labour candidates seen in this country for over 60 years.

Dave Nellist, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition national chair

Tribute from Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool 47 and Liverpool Socialist Party:

Demobilised in life by the right-wing media, in death Bob’s qualities as a fighter for his members are now given massive coverage. Bob displayed courage and impatible opposition to the cuts policies of the Con-Dem government. He recognised that the Labour Party embraced policies little different from the Con-Dems and no longer represented the interests of the working class.

Bob will be sadly missed and difficult to replace at a time when working class leaders of such conviction are scarce. We send our deepest condolences to Bob’s family at their terrible loss.

Lenny Hickey, branch secretary, Unison, Waltham Forest health branch at Whipps Cross Hospital

Members of Unison at Whipps Cross Hospital would like to pass on our sincere condolences to the family of Bob Crow. He passed away at our hospital and we offer our full support and solidarity to the RMT trade union.

Members at the hospital, including porters and domestic workers, that attended meetings, nationally and in Walthamstow, east London, at which Bob spoke over the recent years, have drawn encouragement and inspiration at the speeches Bob gave.

Bob’s life and activity is an example for our class and our movement to emulate in the battles we must win for a socialist alternative to Labour and internationally.

Lois Austin, TUSC mayoral candidate for Newham:

A few years ago I met Bob Crow. Our anti-cuts group was due to have a meeting at the RMT office. Unbeknown to me, we were double-booked by the Medway Campaign for a March AGM. I was coming straight from work at the hospital, running late and in uniform. I decided to run downstairs and pack full of RMT members, listening to Bob Crow in full flow about the McNulty report. I was just like “oh, I’m from the anti-cuts group... have we double booked?”

Crow set the tone saying ‘we should be honoured to be joined by our sister from the radical union.’ He invited me onto the platform to address the meeting about NHS cuts and privatisation. What a legend!

In July 2011 Bob was among the 10,000 people who took part in a march and rally in Derby, which called for government support Bombardier. I remember Bob speaking that day and he was the best speaker on the platform. Chris Fernandez Unison rep, personal capacity, Derby

Spontaneous solidarity

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The forerunner of the RMT, the Society of Railway Servants, founded the Labour Party. But today Labour is just like the Tories. Today, the RMT is helping to build TUSC, which was founded in 2010, to get back the political voice for workers.

Since Neil Kinnock in 1989, Kinnock himself, followed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, broke the tradition of Labour leaders attending this celebration of working class solidarity in 1989, during the anti-poverty tax movement, as part of the long march of transforming Labour into New Labour.

In 2013 - days after Miliband’s attack on Ulster over Falkirk - and for the first time in 115 years, there was not a Labour MP on the platform.

Bob Crow, in contrast, told the Echo that “it is the greatest honour in the labour movement to be invited to speak.” Bob went on to call for a new party of workers when he spoke.

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 photographed by Paul Mattsson

Tribute to Bob Crow taken at the Durham Miners’ Gala by Dave Carr

Best tribute is to fight on

Ed Miliband wouldn’t share Durham platform with TUSC supporter

Bob was also closely involved in initiating the National Shop Stewards Network in an attempt to rebuild the left fighting traditions of the trade union movement.

Our task is to honour our fallen brother by building the trade union and socialist movement.

The representatives of the ruling class in our statutes have stated that the RMT has grown from around 50,000 members to just over 80,000 in the 12 years of Bob’s leadership, bucking the trend of falling trade union membership.

Bob’s brand of socialism and trade union militancy has been a resounding success resulting in thousands of our members receiving decent pay and conditions.

The RMT will continue to defend the traditions built by Bob and others, of building a union committed to socialism and trade union militancy.

Tributes to Bob have come not only from RMT members who have in their hundreds posted moving tributes and have put up notice boards at stations, but also have come in their hundreds from working class people in Britain and internationally.

A tribute on a QPR football site sums this up: “London has lost a son. Bob cared for the members of the RMT, didn’t matter if you swept a platform, cleared a tube car or drove the tube, Bob got those workers a safe environment to work in, in a trade that led to a better standard of living for the ordinary man/woman... I for one believe he was right to stick up for his members. Why should his members suffer for the mistakes of city bankers?... RIP’
**NHS - under attack from private vultures**

*Andy Bentley*

The government has launched its biggest single privatisation of NHS services so far by inviting private companies to bid for £1.2 billion worth of contracts to provide frontline cancer treatment in district hospitals and care for the terminally ill across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Private companies will compete to deliver cancer and end-of-life treatments for children and adults across the area - involving diagnosis and treatment such as radiology, radiotherapy, breast screening, chemotherapy, nursing and surgery for patients in hospitals, hospices and at home.

After the government and media's four-year barrage of largely untrue attacks on Stafford District Hospital they think the ground is well prepared.

Such a campaign would receive the support of millions across Britain, have the potential to stop the privatisation juggernaut in its tracks and herald the end of this government even before the next general election. It would also be a warning to any incoming government to keep their hands off the NHS.

The Socialist Party is calling for:

- Immediate trade union-led action to stop large scale privatisation of frontline services across Staffordshire
- A full Health and Social Care Act. Stop the destruction of the NHS. End the postcode lottery. For a high quality, fully funded and publicly owned service
- Scrap the dodgy PFI privatisation deals and cancel the debts. Kick big business out of the NHS
- Support for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as the first step towards a new mass workers' party to defend the NHS
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**Poority sav社会化**

The idle rich used to go on big game safaris. Now it seems that ‘poverty savs’ are all the rage. Privately schooled, Oxford graduated and former editor of the world’s poshest magazine, the Lady, Rachel Johnson (sister of Boris Johnson, Tory mayor of London) has had a chastening experience by spending time with a low-income family in south London.

Aferwards she thinks her chums are envious of her: “Blizzarding! I think there’s a lot of envy. ‘Lucky old Rachel, she went on a poverty safari!’ Where’s my elephant gun?”

**Benefits Castle**

At least ten wealthy people enough to make the Sunday Times rich list are coining in money from housing benefit (HB) claimants. The Times reports that GMB has researched this question and the Duke of Westminster, Britain’s eighth richest man, possessor of a £7.8 billion personal fortune, gets paid £243,000 a year by a council paying out HB. There may be more than eight of these rich individuals increasing their fortunes by dipping into the tiny benefits of the poor. In 60% of cases, HB is paid directly to tenants so researchers cannot identify the landlord who receives this benefit. It is hoped that the government will still run programmes like Benefits Street with the aim of showing the blatant Benefits Castle.

**Bankers**

In 2013 Barclays and Lloyds banks made more new millionaires than lottery organisers Camelot. 335 punters shared £2.5 million from the lottery. But Barclays laughed off declining profits, a lobby for a new ‘banking police’ and into the SDS’s successor organisation, the Blacklist Support Group. 

**Caprita**

Privatising giant Capita (often called Caprita by some reason) has, shall we say, a patchy record on competence in their businesses. But Capita now has a new cunning plan designed to remove all doubts. It’s a VRA ide detective analysing voice patterns, which is supposed to detect ‘benefit fraudsters’. The government’s benefits-bashing plans tend to encourage crooked schemes and some councils have already used VRA techniques. But does the VRA machine prove anything at all? One expert said the whole idea was “closer to astrology than to science.” Profitable for Capita, maybe, but very dangerous for benefit claimants.

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**Police spy inquiry must not be another whitewash**

Under enormous public pressure Theresa May, the Tory Home Secretary, announced in the Commons last week that the government would establish an ‘independent judicial inquiry into police spying and corruption.’

It follows revelations last year that officers of the Metropolitan Police’s now disbanded, Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) had spied on the family and friends of Stephen Lawrence, who was murdered by racist thugs in south London, in 1993, and others.

Campaigners for justice will now have to fight to ensure that this inquiry is not another whitewash. It has also come to light that the Met covered up information that John Davidson, an officer on the one-bedroom flat, was murdered, was connected to the father of David Norris, one of the racist gang who stabbed Stephen to death.

The government’s announcement and the subsequent statement of the current Met chief Bernard Hogan to fully cooperate with the inquiry, comes just days after an oversubscribed public meeting of COP5 - the Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance – had demanded an independent public inquiry. Several trade unions, including the PCS trade union, have also backed this call.

The campaign has brought together members of the Halalite Socialist Party of Lawyer, anti-racist campaigners, environmentalists and trade unionists.

Last year a former spy, Peter Franck, who had infiltrated the Socialist Party’s former Militant and Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) in the 1990s, revealed that the SDS wanted to smear the Lawrence family and denigrate the anti-racist movement.

Another SDS officer, Mark Kenney, had targeted and acted as a provocateur among environmentalist groups.

Lois Austin, the former national chair of YRE and Militant supporter, spoke at the COP5 meeting and demanded a public inquiry. Lois called for an investigation into the role of politicians including former Labour and Tory home secretaries and into the SDS’s successor organisation, the Blacklist Support Group.

The Group echoes others in COP5 that the victims of undercover police surveillance can have no faith in the police investigating themselves. Socialists demand the involvement of democratically accountable representatives from the trade unions, anti-racist groups and other organisations affected.

The revelations of police spies highlight the role in the capitalist society to undermine and divide the working class and its organisations in order to prevent social change and maintain the status quo. Please note that the phrase ‘the fishes’ is not appropriate for publication.
Building a fighting union leadership
Chris Baugh re-elected PCS assistant general secretary

Chris Baugh has recently been re-elected as assistant general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

He has written to Left Unity members:

Thank you all for my nominations for Assistant General Secretary. No other nominations were received. After the consequence of the 15 nominations needed to stand and so I have been declared elected with 166 nominations.

I believe the current leadership of the union is the best in the trade union movement. I am proud to be part of this leadership. I am plugging away at the long-term term in office and look forward to working with Mark Serwoska and Janice Godrich [the union’s general secretary and president] over the next five years dealing with the many challenges that face PCS.

I urge you now to turn your efforts to the election of the Democracy Alliance President and national executive (NEC) slate.

- A strong democratic and fighting leadership
- A union which seeks to defend jobs, services, pay and conditions through negotiation but, where necessary, by taking action
- Opposition to the self-defeating coalition austerity programme which is driving working people into abject poverty
- There may be those in the union who disagree with the current leadership, what we are doing and what we stand for. But at no time do they say what, if anything, they would do differently.

On 16 April ballot papers will be sent out for the President and NEC elections. I hope you will do everything you can to secure a decisive victory for the Democracy Alliance slate.

This will send a clear message to the coalition government that we reject and will continue to resist their attacks on the union and its members.

Thanks again for supporting me. I ask you to support, vote for and work for the election of the Democracy Alliance candidates Chris Baugh

Chris Baugh speaking at an NEU conference photo Senan

Shared services

John Mcinally
National vice-president Public and Commercial Services union (PCS)

Knowing that the general election is only 13 or so months away the Coalition government has embarked on a ‘scoched earth’ policy to cut and privatise as many of the civil service as possible. They are pressing even the halls of departmen
tal and agency shared services.

Shared services cover functions such as staff records, personal details, payroll information. These services have been or are about to be privatised and the jobs and conditions and closure of offices. Businesses are making rationalisation details of civil servants are to be off-shored. Avarto and SSCL/Steria, have a record of cutting jobs and off-shoring work. SSCL have already taken over shared services work in DWP.

Defra and the Environment Agency (EA). SSCL have announced the closure of 14 DWP sites at Sheffield, Cardiff and at the former EA site in Leeds with the loss of 400 jobs.

PCS members took industrial action last November when the privatisation took place, with PCS winning concessions, but the company is rushing ahead with job cuts now it is in the private sector. SSCL made it clear to the government that the only way the contract could be delivered within the financial plan was by off-shoring. It is re
cruiting 200 staff in India on pay rates comparable to those earning in the UK.

While David Cameron talked to the world elite at Davos, the government aims to sell their own public sector and do anything to cut services or sell off what it can for profit. There are no good privatisations and these are no exception. PCS will continue to campaign to defend the jobs and conditions of members already privatised and fight to prevent further planned privatisations.

We are taking the campaign direct to the politicians, including Nick Clegg, the deputy prime min
ister, whose own Sheffield constituency faces substantial losses. PCS will work with Union who represent staff in Leeds, continue to negotiate with the employers and government, and organise and campaign among our members to resist further sell-offs.

Twitter: @johnmcinlaypcs

In brief

Knowsley College

Unison members in Knowsley Community College took further strike action on 6 March, in sup
port of their sacked senior steward Barry Dunne. The strike was solid and caused major disruption to the running of the college. Members’ anger was high as a result of the fact that an apparent commitment by the college to re
engage Barry had come to nothing following an ‘interview’ for a post that had already been promised to another candidate! Unison is preparing to take legal action in Barry’s defence.

Crosstown death

A worker was killed on the Cros
town construction site in London on 7 March. Unite has demanded urgent talks with contractor BFK about health and safety on the site. The campaign against black
listers on sites such as Crosstown has always argued that the rights and safe work
ing conditions go hand in hand.

The importance of continuing this campaign is shown by the death of another worker on 2 March on a site in Stratford, east London. Another was seriously injured by a crane on 7 March on a site in Docklands.

Labour council removes trade union facilities

A Carmarthenshire County Union member

On 1 April Carmarthenshire La
bour-led council will be remov
ing the trade union secondments for Unison, GMB and Unite. Carmarthenshire County Council was already one of the worst councils for trade union second
ments.

Unison has by far the most members and has one full-time secondment. Two lo
cal authority Unison branches have been sent secondment letters to Carmarthenshire and were removed. Two trade union secondments and anoth
er Unison branch which is much smaller has two full-time secondments!

This is clearly a politi
cal decision to stifle the union branch’s oppo
sition to the £30 million cuts in cuts being imple
mented by the council.

Our branch has always opposed all cuts and has never been shy of criticising the council for implement
ing the Con-Dem cuts passed on by a passive Labour government in the Welsh Assembly.

Branch officers seeking reason
able time off work, so it would be
unfair to use those submitted as emergency motions, were best left at the bottom of the agenda. There was a real possibility that in a one
day conference, the debate would not take place.

As the day wore on and delegates’ frustration grew, the conference chair finally overrode the SOC, and allowed the six motions on pay to be moved.

The debate was passionate, with many speakers on the left urg
ing for continued action, hopefully alongside the teachers at the end of March. We called for a clear and de
termined strategy to win the dispute.

But the strike reinvigorated many branches. Many reported an in
crease in members and activists, with many young people joining and striking for the first time.

The SGE elections taking place in May will be the next opportunity to increase the influence of the left on the SGE, as Unison members recog
ise the need for a fighting leader
ship armed with a clear and deter
mined strategy to win.
Probation workers to strike again

Chas Berry
Kent Napo branch chair, personal capacity

Around 400 members of the probation workers’ union Napo met in Birmingham last week where a second national strike in our campaign to defend the probation service was announced. The action takes place from 31 March to 1 April. It happens at a critical time, when Probation Trusts are being wound up and many will be asking whether it’s too late to stop the privatisation bandwagon.

Our answer to this question is unequivocally ‘no’! Although staff have been told whether they will transfer to a government-owned Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) or become civil servants in a drastically smaller National Probation Service (NPS), no jobs have yet gone over to the private sector and plans to do so are in serious jeopardy. Already the privatisation timetable has slipped by two months as it was deemed ‘too risky’ by the senior civil servant advising Justice secretary Chris Grayling.

We should also be talking to PCS and Unison about how we can co-ordinate future action across a range of issues such as pay and pensions. Members’ resolve in taking strike action last November and action short of strike since then has been crucial in causing this delay. Without this resolve, Grayling would have ploughed ahead last summer and the probationers would be rubbing their hands with glee. Privatisation plans are in chaos and the profit hungry private contractors must be wondering how they could ever make money with such a non-compliant workforce!

Napo has done well to sustain this pressure but how can we ensure that the whole of probation remains in the public sector? Undoubtedly, the decision of Unison and the GMB to settle their separate disputes is a setback for coordinated action and it cannot be denied that we have lost some momentum since our last strike. Nevertheless, Napo’s strength has been its willingness to take an independent position.

General secretary Ian Lawrence acknowledged the central importance of collective action to our strategy when he said, “We stand together or fall together… that has to be the rallying cry from here on in as we seek to show society and Chris Grayling what we are truly about.” And when he addressed the 2,000-strong legal aid protest outside parliament called for joint action when Napo strikes on 31 March and 1 April. Members have been buoyed up by this action and the prospect of teachers on strike later this month.

Looking beyond 31 May when Probation Trusts shut down, it seems clear that the focus of the campaign will shift, with a new mandate for action in the CRCs to take the fight all the way up to the planned share sale in October.

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Napo has done well to sustain this pressure but how can we ensure that the whole of probation remains in the public sector? Undoubtedly, the decision of Unison and the GMB to settle their separate disputes
The underfunding of social care and the cuts in pay and conditions of care workers as a consequence of the government’s austerity measures is a national scandal. In the following articles, campaigners and workers in the profession speak out about how these attacks are wrecking the provision of social care and also how to fight back.

A North West social worker

Social work, in essence, is about protecting and helping the most vulnerable and needs to be made a priority. There has been a great deal of social work over the last three years, but the current funding cuts to social care have from £38 million to £400 million. This is a background where demand for services is growing as people live longer. The number of people aged 65 is expected to rise from 18.5 to 20.2 million by 2020.

Meanwhile, children have their futures thwarted by these cuts. The government announced in November that the birth rate increase, so will the demand for short-term and long-term care. Mental Health Services are particularly under threat in the next few years.

Privatised care People often classify, who are in receipt of home care or residential care services, as the apathy of councils to protect their provision of care and the monitoring of care. We are not in this together.

For those using social care services, the future appears to a living wage, and trade union conditions, for all working in social care.

Common struggle Social care services in England have been cut by £1.2 billion (13.4%) since 2010. This has resulted in an average age of over 65 growing by one million between 2010 and 2020. The government has reduced £440 million from the NHS but this still leaves an £800 million shortfall. The care staff have been subjected to a much diminished environment for residents. Where will there be a plan that would have led to a reduced environment for residents? Instead of a living wage. Low motivation in social care services is desperately needed, and there are the few signs of a solution.

For the staff it means low morale and low motivation in social care services. The second is that under capitalism we will be forced to provide for the staff wages. Nearly a third of all mental health care workers are on less than the minimum wage.

M&S style austerity

I have worked in residential care homes run by the public, voluntary and private sectors. I want to draw a few of the consequences I see in the care for groups of people who really are ‘all in this together’, the residents and the staff.

In social care the central care ceased to function services should be provided. It is not just the care packages and costs that can lower the staff means damaged relationships throughout an organisation; it means a much diminished environment for vulnerable residents.

Where will there be any scope to provide for private mental health care service? Instead of a living wage. Low motivation in social care services and employment law.

We can defend services

L andy’s bid to defend the public has been lauded. The homes sector is a key one for the future. The government has delivered its cuts with a degree of mental health services and the privatisation of the remaining services offering them for profit.

Staff were told first and immediately to accept substantially lower wages and in the current crisis. People who use the services are among the most vulnerable in society.

We need to stand up for our communities, even before the current crisis. People who use the services are among the most vulnerable in society.

Despite the political rumblings and private companies are on their plans “inistles widespread cuts in social care and support, including a new commission and wider service cuts under the Health and Social Care Bill.”

Where there be any scope to provide for the staff wages. Nearly a third of all mental health care workers are on less than the minimum wage.

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Where will there be any scope to provide for private mental health care service? Instead of a living wage. Low motivation in social care services.
The congress showed enthusiasm throughout the Socialist Party for building from the opportunities we face, which was particularly shown in the sessions on finance and party building. Over £13,000 was raised in a fighting fund collection and the congress launched an election appeal to help towards the costs of campaigns for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, No2EU yes to workers rights and the Workers And Socialist Party in South Africa (donate at www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate).

Here we report from some of the sessions.

**Preparation for a mighty upsurge in class struggle**

On 8-10 March the Socialist Party held its annual national congress in Clacton. Around 300 delegates and visitors attended the very successful event. Branch delegates voted on resolutions and amendments agreeing both political perspectives and organisational aims.

A cauldron of anger in Britain

Dave Carr

"Why the hell hasn’t there been a revolution?" exclaimed Doncaster delegate Mary Jackson, after she catalogued the vicious government attacks on workers’ livelihoods and standards. Earlier, Hannah Sell, deputy general secretary of the Socialist Party, had introduced the discussion on Britain by detailing the social crisis in the country, where average real incomes have plummeted by 7% in three years due to capitalist recession and austerity.

Despite Chancellor George Osborne taking up the ephemeral and anaemic growth in the economy, the recent Office for Budget Responsibility report says growth will be insufficient to close the budget deficit. Therefore, at least £200 billion of spending cuts is likely. As Matt Gordon said in the discussion, the strategy of the ruling class is one of "endless austerity".

Even the Council of Europe says the Con-Dem government is no longer providing a basic standard of care for its citizens. However, as Hannah pointed out, at the other end of the social scale there are more super-rich residents here than in any other country.

This enormous inequality is accumulating a mass of socially combustible material in Britain. But it hasn’t yet ignited, largely due to the role of the right-wing trade union leaders in holding back workers’ struggles, not least in blocking the call for a 24-hour general strike. The absence of widespread strikes has led to a "sullen anger" amongst the organised working class. But this won’t last.

Localised struggles

As Socialist Party industrial organiser Bob Williams pointed out when summing up the discussion, there has been an "industrial hall" since the setback in the pensions struggle of 2011. Nonetheless, there have been localised struggles, which will continue.

Moreover, when a determined fightback has developed, such as in the recent London Underground 48-hour strike by the RMT and TSSA unions against the closure of ticket office closures, then the heads of workers have been lifted. However, a widespread understanding of how union members can push leaders to act has yet to develop, but this is being created by the experience of recent years.

Politically, there is widespread disillusionment in politicians and parliament. Only 41% say they’d definitely vote in the next general election - in effect a "voters strike".

The Labour Party is no alternative to the Con-Dems. In the local councils they control they simply act as "agents of austerity". The recent Labour Party special conference took only two hours to remove the last remnants of trade union influence - willingly assisted by the trade union leaders themselves.

Such are the political shortcomings of Labour that an outright majority following the next general election is not guaranteed.

**Political voice**

We urgently need a political voice for the working class, which the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is preparing. A delay in the development of such a party can leave space for right-wing populist parties to try to partially fill the vacuum.

Delegates during the discussion and debate on Britain referred to many other important issues such as the European Union, immigration and its impact, the floods, bedroom tax, zero-hour contracts and poverty, fracking, the NHS, trade union blacklisting and the police (see page 3), legal aid cuts, and union blacklisting and the police.

Philip Nellist pointed out the CPS has recommended that trade unionists, who have been the rebels’ lead we are aiming to stand in the biggest left-of-Labour electoral challenge in generations.

**Campaigning**

Demand-led campaigns are being taken up in a number of areas. This follows the example of Kibama Sawane’s election campaign in Seattle, which was linked to the fight for a $15 an hour minimum wage.

Nancy Taaffe showed how the example of Seattle is being applied in Waltham Forest with the campaign to “imagine a socialist city”, trying to show what Corbyn would look like under a fighting socialist council. Imagine if you had 54 Dave Nellists, Socialists Party member and former Coventry City councillor) fighting your corner!

Dave Nellist, national chair of TUSC, came in to the discussion himself and took up the issue of the battle for visibility in the media and the need to stand as many candidates as possible to break the blackout. John Reid from the transport union RMT spoke on the importance of maintaining and building on the support in the RMT and also the importance of being other trade unions on board.

The biggest appeal from Paula Mitchell, closing the session, was to get candidate nominations in as soon as possible. TUSC is a federal body and each nomination is agreed on by the constituent members of it, so get them in ASAP! Suzanne Beilinon
A world readying for revolution

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

Setting the scene for all the congress discussions, general secretary Peter Taaffe introduced the first session on world events and analysis. The need for preparation for big eruptions of struggle was a key theme. Anxiety multiplied, suffering and the experience of capitalist crisis, is stoking up mass rage that could erupt almost at any point - as it already has in some countries.

The experience of struggle, and its absence, will provide priceless lessons for the working class. "The fundamental Leninist insight still holds: absent, will provide priceless lessons for the working class..." Peter Taaffe introduced the discussion.

Introducing the session on youth work, Ian Pattison outlined the opportunities to build the Socialist Party among young people, particularly given the devastating impact of unemployment and cuts.

In his contribution, Matt from Darley summed up the frustration felt by some young people when he said: "Sometimes we can wonder, where’s our mass movement?" Matt went on to describe the hope and inspiration we should draw from international movements where young people have taken the lead - such as in Chile, the US and Greece. He pointed out that far from being apathetic, young people are driven to change things but have been failed by a lack of leadership, which young Socialist Party members should aim to provide.

Several contributions talked about the important work being done by Youth Fight for Jobs with the Bakers Union in the Fast Food Rights campaign, and of the day of action against tens of thousands of cuts on 29 March.

George from Plymouth spoke about the difficulties of working in a low-paid, unorganised sector. "I know what it’s like to rely on the overtime. I feel the fear that making yourself stand out will make those extra hours dry up."

But the CWI group there acted as the catalyst for a workers’ movement that fought back a privatisation attempt in the council there.

"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 in struggle and to fight for a socialist world. The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world: www.socialistworld.net"

Peter Taaffe introduces the discussion

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The horror that was World War One

Britain, though, was being over-taken by others. It no longer had the ‘economic clout’ it had, as the USA and Germany exploited new technology. It could no longer ‘rule the waves’ as Germany was fast catch- ing up in warships. Conflict between the capitalist powers was inevitable.

Britain’s strategy was to support France and Russia against the alliance of Germany’s Austria-Hungary and (before 1914) Italy just enough, hoping they would all exhaust each other, making Britain the victor. Only a small expeditionary army was sent to France in 1914. But Brit- ish imperialism underestimated German capitalism’s power and was forced to conscript rapidly to pre- vent a German victory.

True picture

This is the true picture of ‘democratic’ Great Britain. Germany was no less ‘democratic’ than Britain. The vote was available to more men in Germany than in Britain, and votes for women came sooner. Germany may have invad- ed Belgium and started war in the West, but it was imperial interests that governed and caused the war. British imperialism wanted war.

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Pete Watson

House clearing recently, I found a will written by hand by my grandfa- ther dated 28 June 1916, three days before the Battle of the Somme. He lived through that battle but, 20,000 British soldiers were killed in its first day with 40,000 wounded.

By the battle’s end that November a total of 1.2 million soldiers were dead and wounded on both sides. Over ten million soldiers died or were wounded, and countless oth- ers just lived their lives during World War One.

Tony Education Secretary Mi- chael Gove defended Britain’s role in this slaughter, claiming it was a ‘just war’ to combat aggression. He attacked Germany’s ‘pitiless’ ap- proach to occupation, saying they were ‘aggressively expansionist’ and scorned the international order. Britain, he said, was ‘defending the Western liberal order’ by resisting Germany.

Gove said that General Haig, Britain’s commander in chief at the Somme, was not a butcher but a patriot. Haig was in fact both a cold-hearted, arrogant and ruthless representative of his class.

On the battle’s first day, 1 July 1914, British troops walked slowly in daylight across “no man’s land” under orders and to their death. Haig ordered the battle to continue to November, even after it became a quagmire of mud where no gain could be had. The battle’s futile nature was shown when only five square miles of land were gained af- ter months of fighting.

World War One was no victory for British workers. Many working class towns were emptied of men by 1918. And Britain came into debt to the USA which hastened Britain’s de- cline as a world power.

The centenary of WWI will grab media time this year. I won’t wear a red poppy but I will remember my grandfather and all who fought and died on both sides.

The best honour socialists can give to the millions who died is to remember that a small voice of Marxism resisted patriotism and nationalism in 1914. They stood for a new world where imperial conflict would end. Against all the odds they laid the basis for revolutions across Europe that toppled monarchies and brought fear of revolution to the architects of trench slaughter.
Stop cuts and police repression in Tottenham!

The trial is currently taking place of Nicky Jacobs, one of those charged with the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riots in 1985. The riots happened in the aftermath of the death of Cynthia Jarrett who suffered a heart attack during a police search of her home.

The original investigation into the murder saw teenagers interviewed naked and with no guardian present, evidence tampered with and hundreds arrested, with many violently attacked while in custody. Relations between police and residents in Tottenham, particularly young people, have deteriorated over three decades during which a long list of people from or living in the area have died while in police custody. The Mark Duggan ‘lawful killing’ verdict has contributed to this.

When discussing with young people in the campaign to defend jobs, education and youth services in Tottenham (involving Youth Fight for Jobs, Day-Mer youth, Unite the Youth and Voice of Youth), police repression is a big issue. The cuts are making the problem worse. As schools become academies, students express feelings of being constantly under surveillance.

The police commissioner has said he is open to ideas from local community leaders and young people interested in getting involved in the Socialist Party. Two women comrades who hadn’t been involved in activity or meetings for a while came to help on the stall with their children and a young member did her first stall and sold her first paper.

The atmosphere was light-hearted despite the seriousness of the issues, some of us dressed in Victorian women’s outfits and we played mu-sic through the megaphone.

Comments we heard on the stall included: “I agree with everything you’re doing and I really want to help but I have two young children and I can’t go out in the evenings,” “I want to get involved but I can’t come to a meeting in a pub,” “I wouldn’t usually come over to talk to you because politics is all about men and doesn’t seem to have anything to do with my life.”

Several women said they would try to come to our follow-up meeting on women fighting back against the cuts.

We have already decided to do a rota of Saturday stalls in three towns in the county, in addition to our Saturday stall in Leicester and our Friday stall outside the council offices.

As well as meaning the branch does activity in new areas, this will enable comrades who can’t travel to take part. If women can’t get us to us, then we have to go to them.

The day after the stall I had discussions and free education.

Campaigning on International Women’s Day

I am a single mother on a low wage, living in a village and relying on expensive public transport with no buses after 6pm or on Sundays. So I understand some of the problems facing women affected by this government’s attack on a whole range of rights, particularly affecting women.

On International Women’s Day Leicestershire Socialist Party decided to hold a stall aimed at these women, campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage and free childcare – which struck a chord with many women and men. A man walking past with a baby in a pushchair did a u-turn when he heard us talking about fully-funded childcare.

We sold 14 papers, raised some fighting fund and met four young people interested in getting involved in the Socialist Party. Two women comrades who had been involved in activity or meetings for a while came to help on the stall with their children and a young member did her first stall and sold her first paper.

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The day after the stall I had discussions and free copies of the paper to four women in my village.

Turkey solidarity protest

1,000 people from the Turkish and Kurdish communities in London gathered in Trafalgar square on 13 March before spontaneously marching to parliament. This was in protest at the death of Berkin Elvan, the 14 year old boy who fell into a coma last year during the Gezi Park movement.

There was a minute’s silence for Berkin, who had been out buying bread when police fired a gas canister at him, which hit him on his head. He lay in a coma for 269 days before losing his battle for life. The silence was also dedicated to Bob Crow.

A speaker from Haringey Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition spoke, urging workers to take Turkish and Kurdish people’s lead and carry on the fight against cuts and attacks. The crowd then chanted ‘Stand up Turkey, London is with you’.

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) activists took part in the protest. We highlighted that young people everywhere have their lives destroyed by police violence, poverty and austerity.

Capitalism has shown it can offer no future for young people. That’s the court during the seven week trial and YFJ campaigners plan to attend, along with Socialist Party members.

Going forward, we will continue with our campaign for decent jobs, access to education and for the return of funding to local services.

Our first meeting had 50 people at it from the different youth groups. The main problem is that everyone’s talking about Tottenham, but no one is asking young people what it’s like to live in Tottenham. We are discussing bigger actions in the coming months, such as a protest march on 19 April from a job centre to a local college.

Helen Pattison

Anti-fracking campaign steps up in Lancashire

On 9 March hundreds of people marched through Manchester to protest against the plans for thousands of oil and gas wells throughout Lancashire. This is one of the largest anti-fracking protests held so far in Britain.

A recent survey by Manchester Evening News found 73% of people were against oil and gas fracking. The march was lovely and high spirited and culminated in a rally at Cathedral Gardens.

There were several speakers from the Barton Moss anti-fracking camp.

One of them said that the way to stop the drilling at Barton Moss was mass civil disobedience. He called for hundreds of people to turn up every day to stop the drilling trucks.

The same speaker also criticised the unions for funding the Labour Party which is pro-fracking.

Cameron has promised a ‘fracking revolution’ in Britain that will see oil and gas fracking wells all over the country. We must stop him.

Dylan and Jo Murphy

Huddersfield Socialist Party

Progressive Workers Federation Pakistan, and BLLF’s Mirpur Khas Sindh Women Group (CWI in Sindh, Pakistan) hold a rally against religious fundamentalism on International Women’s Day. The protest was covered by local and national television. There were speakers and performances by children photo CWI Pakistan

YFJ campaigning in Tottenham after the 2011 riots photo Paul Mattsson

A Rape Is No Joke anti-sexist comedy night took place in Cardiff on International Women’s Day. The very successful event was attended by 60 people. See www.socialistparty.org.uk for a more detailed report

On the stall in Leicester photo Hannah

On our Saturday discussion group for women and holding regular meetings and campaign stalls on issues particularly affecting women.

Helen Gadsby

Leicester Socialist Party

A more detailed report on International Women’s Day
Care workers in Doncaster are on their second seven-day strike against massive pay cuts. Around 150 nurses and care workers in the learning disability supported-living service were outsourced to the lowest bidder by Doncaster Labour-led council last September. Since then they have been battling against Care UK’s attempts to cut their pay. But they are determined to fight back, as this report of the first strike shows.

Allister Rice

“The miners have drawn us into the line in the sand in the face of a profeet who thinks they can bully us into submission. Give yourselves and the miners of ‘84 a massive cheer!”

With that the roof came off as 295 strikers and supporters got in their feet at Jim’s flogging introduction to the final day rally of an international seven-day strike.

They have been striking against Care UK tearing up the TIPPE transfer protection of NHS terms and conditions and axing enhanced payments for unsocial hours, which will lead to around 50% pay cuts. This strike is against the privatisation of the NHS and in defence of the welfare state. What these professional and skilled care workers mean to their service users was explained by Sandra, a 70 year old with a mentally ill daughter.

“You are part of their lives,” said Sandra, “but where are the ‘bosses’? Collecting their Mercs or at the bank counting their money? For me, you’re not just carers but superheroes!”

Kirstine Carbutt, a Unison shop steward speaking as a striker, said: “This company doesn’t care about us or about the service users – it only cares about this,” rubbing her hands together, meaning money.

“To illustrate that point, a Care UK advert in the local jobcentre was read out. It invited applicants with their own vehicle for £6.73 an hour with no enhancements.

Even worse, since the transfer, new staff have been taken on for £6.50 an hour. This is only pennies over the minimum wage. They were on strike as well and got a special mention.

Unison branch secretary Yvonne Burcher, and John Caffery, the union regional secretary, brought full support for the strikers.

Daily Mirror columnist Paul Routledge has written a very supportive article. He spoke, saluting the strikers saying: “There’s no guarantee of success if you strike, but there is the certainty of failure if you don’t have a go.”

And then the strikers voted to have another go, for another seven-day strike as soon as possible, in an inspiration to other workers facing similar attacks. This will start on 19 March.

The Mid-Yorkshire NHS Trust branch, which took nine days of strike action last year against down-sizing, has already donated £1,000 to the strike fund and a Doncaster Unite branch another £1,000. £825 was raised by strikers at the demo against the Lib Dems on 5 March and £593 at a miners’ strike anniversary meeting in Sheffield.

The 28,000 strong, “30th anniversary of the miners’ strike” Facebook page is publishing the strike. Send messages of support to admin@unison-dab.org.uk and send donations, cheques, made out to: “Doncaster, District and Bassetlaw Health Branch”, to Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5GJ.