

**1-0 to the workers!**  
**Brazil 2014**  
 See pages 6 & 7

# the Socialist

www.socialistparty.org.uk

19-25 June 2014

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# STRIKE BACK FOR A LIVING WAGE



photo Paul Mattsson

"What happened in Seattle is an inspiration for what could happen here!" said a delegate to Unison local government conference, drawing attention to the Socialist Party bulletin

**Mike Forster**  
 Unison local government service group executive member (personal capacity)

Last week I got a text from a worried workmate: "1,400 redundancies, what we going to do mate?" "We will have to fight" was my response as we discussed the announcement that 1,400 jobs are to go from Kirklees council. Across the country, councils - Labour and Tory alike - are continuing the jobs slaughter as they settle back into office after the local elections.

To the question: 'when are we going to get a pay rise?', the stock response is 'at least you have a job'. But how much more can we take? The politicians, financiers and the media tell us that the recovery is well underway

and will be long-lasting. So why should we have to endure further wage restraint and an escalation of redundancies in the public sector?

Our Labour council has ripped up almost every agreement with the union, and accuses us of being 'out of touch' for wanting to negotiate a policy of no compulsory redundancies. A storm is brewing, and workplace meetings indicate that staff have had enough.

The pending pay strike on 10 July cannot come soon enough. The Unison ballot result is expected on 23 June but all indications are that we will have a yes vote. The National Union of Teachers will join us on the day, hopefully along with Unite, GMB and PCS who are also balloting.

Council reserves are at an all-time high. Kirklees has underspent every year for the

last seven years. After the local elections, the Local Government Association is now under Labour control. If Labour is serious about a living wage, it will negotiate with us for a better deal - our claim is for a £1 an hour increase to make up for the 18% fall over the last three years.

Several Socialist Party members have been elected to Unison's service group executives (see page 9). We will be fighting for the full claim and for a clear calendar of action which can restore confidence in the fighting ability of the union.

It's time to put Labour to the test and, more importantly, to claw back a decent living wage from local authorities which have got away with way too much in axing vitally needed jobs and services.

**"Fight together for a pay rise"**

**Come to the National Shop Stewards Network conference**

11am-5pm  
 Saturday 5th July  
 Conway Hall - 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL  
 Delegate/visitor fee £6  
 See page 2



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# the Socialist

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photo Paul Mattsson

## Build effective action for a living wage

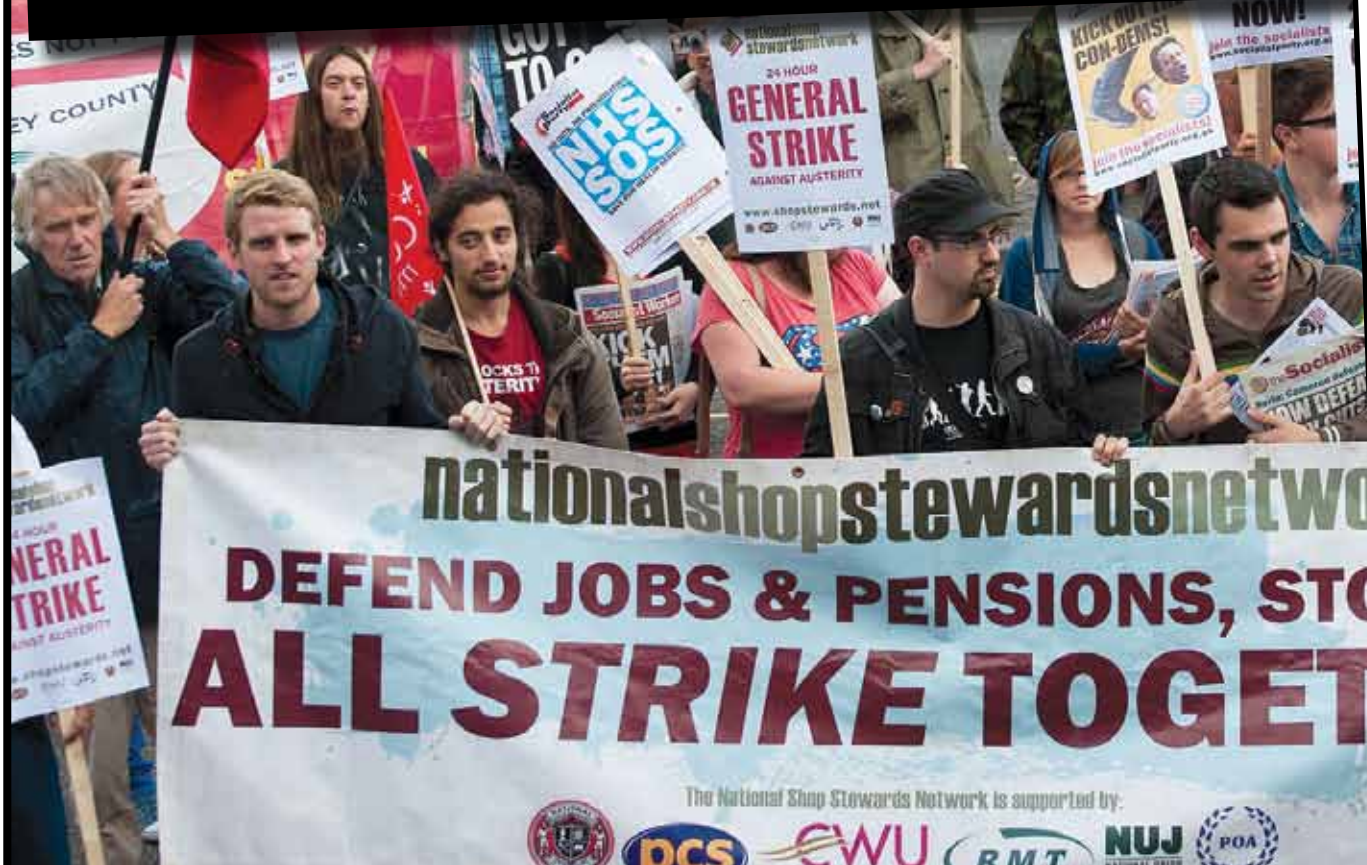
### Come to the NSSN conference on 5 July

11am-5pm, Saturday 5 July  
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square,  
Holborn, London WC1R 4RL  
Delegate/visitor fee £6

#### 15 Now activist to speak at NSSN conference

NSSN is pleased to announce that Ginger Jentzen will be speaking at our national conference. Ginger is one of the leading organisers for 15 Now, the campaign which mobilised the grassroots effort to win a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle. She organised the 26 April national 15 Now conference in Seattle, attended by hundreds of activists from across the country, and was an elected coordinator of one of the eleven 15 Now action groups, made up of neighbourhood activists who organised the ground campaign for \$15. Ginger is a member of Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) and in 2013 worked in Minneapolis for the Ty Moore election campaign that fell just 200 votes short of winning a second socialist council seat, next to the successful campaign of Kshama Sawant in Seattle. Ginger got involved in the Occupy movement in 2011 and then in its successful Minneapolis offspring "Occupy Homes" that defended working class families in the south of Minneapolis against foreclosures and mobilised neighbourhoods to stop banks from evicting homeowners.

**Other confirmed speakers include RMT president Peter Pinkney, BFAWU bakers' union general secretary Ronnie Draper, POA general secretary Steve Gillan and Janice Godrich PCS president**



#### Why I'm going to the conference

The 2014 National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference will take place just days before over one million workers could be taking ac-

tion against cuts in our pay.

If the ballots are successful, members of Unison, GMB, Unite, PCS and NUT could all be taking action together - something the NSSN has been fighting for over the last few years. There are also other workers, like firefighters in the FBU, with live disputes.

But what next? Many union members refer to being 'led up to the top of the hill' in the pensions dispute of 2011 only to be left well and truly stranded by the likes of Unison general secretary Dave Prentis. Little wonder that stewards in my workplace have said: "This can't be allowed to happen again."

The NSSN conference will be the best opportunity to meet and discuss with union militants from across the public and private sectors, to exchange experiences and ideas about building and rebuilding workplace organisation in order to fight against austerity and for workers' rights.

As well as hearing from shop

stewards and some of the fighting general secretaries, a stand out highlight will be the speaker from the 15 Now campaign in the USA which scored a historic victory in Seattle (see above).

All trade union activists should attend, make sure you are there!

**A Unison shop steward**

## SOCIALIST KSHAMA SAWANT, SEATTLE CITY COUNCILLOR, TO SPEAK AT SOCIALISM 2014!

Capitalism has created a world in which just 85 people have as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity. While the rich get richer we are made to pay for a crisis of their system.

The bosses and their politicians heap austerity upon our heads. For them the lives of the vast majority are so much small change in their pursuit of ever greater profits.

This has not gone unchallenged. From Britain to Brazil, Seattle to South Africa, working-class people are fighting back to raise their living standards. If you want to hear from those at the sharp end of these struggles then Socialism 2014 is the place to be.

This weekend of discussion and debate will involve socialists, trade unionists and anti-cuts activists from Britain and across the world. This is your chance to discuss how to take the fightback forward and

build the socialist alternative to cuts, crisis and capitalism.

One of the most anticipated speakers will be Seattle Socialist councillor, Kshama Sawant. Kshama is a member of Socialist Alternative, co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US. Her election with nearly 100,000 votes has sent shock waves across the world.

Writing in the British press Will Hutton said simply: "This does not happen in the US." But things are changing.

Kshama's election victory has fed into a successful movement for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and inspired working people the world over. Workers here have taken this lead and ran with it, beginning to campaign for £10 an hour.

This is the first time Kshama has spoken in Britain since being elected so don't miss your chance to see her.

**Tom Baldwin**



photo Alex Garland

### Socialism 2014: A weekend of discussion and debate Fight against cuts, crisis and capitalism!

Saturday and Sunday  
8-9 November 2014  
Central London

#### Tickets:

Weekend: £30/£15

One day: £15/£8

Rally only: £5

► Pay before 1 September for a 20% discount

► Visit [www.socialism2014.net](http://www.socialism2014.net) or call 020 8988 8777

**PUT THE DATES IN YOUR DIARY NOW!**

# Where's our recovery? Report shows huge support for taxing rich

**Matt Gordon**

Francis Bacon, the 17th century philosopher, said that money was like muck – no good unless it is spread evenly. However, a report produced this month by the Equality Trust and Ipsos MORI shows that the rich and powerful of Britain would rather pollute all of society with their stinking midden than allow that to happen.

The report shows that there is a widespread misunderstanding about how the UK tax system overwhelmingly favours the rich.

It reveals that the poorest 10% pay 43% of their income in tax while the richest 10% get away with paying only 35%. So much for the 'we're all in it together' 'big society' of David Cameron, or the 'one nation' of Ed Miliband.

Those at the bottom also pay a greater proportion of indirect taxes such as VAT and pay four times more of their income in council tax than the top 10%.

## Who's benefiting?

The report notes that for the majority real wages are continuing to fall, while the super-rich are seeing their wealth pile up. In the past year, the richest 100 people in the UK have seen their wealth increase by £40 billion to a record £297 billion. The report asks, if there is a recovery, who is benefiting?

Most striking of all is that the majority of people not only think the tax system is fairer than it really is - 68% of people believe that the top 10% already pay more, despite the reality - but that most would go much further. 82% believe that the top 10% should pay a greater amount of tax, and 96% say that the system should



A protester's banner outside the 2013 Tory conference photo Dave Beale

be more progressive. So there is clearly huge support for a tax system that favours ordinary people.

These figures leave out the £120 billion in avoided, evaded and uncollected taxes – which is a further indictment of the gaping chasm between rich and poor.

It completely shatters the lies of Tory Chancellor George Osborne and other ministers that the rich have 'paid their fair share', and especially that his recent changes have lifted more of the poorest workers out of taxation.

The 'tax free' threshold may have changed, but income tax is only a quarter of the taxes paid by people; the other 75% of indirect taxes are levied disproportionately on the poor and the working class.

The report concludes with the

recommendation that all parties should commit to the principle that any future changes to taxation are progressive. We support this, as well as taxing the idle assets of big business piled up in bank vaults, but it is not enough.

The huge amount of avoided and evaded wealth shows that the capitalists would rather suffocate us all in manure than give up their profits.

Taxation is just one source of anger among many Tory austerity attacks, but unfair taxes sparked the English civil war in the century of Francis Bacon and a mass non-payment campaign overthrew Thatcher's hated poll tax.

The dung heap of capitalism is fertile compost for the growth of socialist ideas and for a more equal society fit for everyone.



**Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!**

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## Survey shows potential for new mass workers' party

**Simon Carter**

The Tories' much vaunted economic recovery failed to impress the voters in the recent elections. Now, a Guardian opinion poll has found that only 18% of the public believe they are benefiting from this chimera of an upturn.

Answering the question of whether the next generation would fare better only 20% of respondents agreed, while 38% disagreed. Underpinning this pessimism is a majority response (57%) which says "wages lag behind living costs".

Those surveyed revealed a mixed bag of political consciousness when it came to who they considered responsible for their economic anxieties.

Unsurprisingly, given the relentless diatribe against migrant workers by the establishment parties, including Ukip, as well as the main-

stream media's anti-immigrant agenda, 46% thought that "immigrants were undercutting British workers".

Blaming immigrants for their economic problems was more pronounced among over 45s and in the depressed former industrialised areas in the north of England.

The absence of a credible mass left-wing political alternative to the pro-austerity, anti-immigrant establishment parties, also explains this high figure.

It reinforces the responsibility of the trade unions to step up their efforts to unionise migrant workers and fight for the proper rate for the job to cut across potential racial and ethnic divisions within the working class.

More positively from a socialist perspective are the poll findings which show 42% blaming "ruthless companies", 38% blaming "rip-off" banks, and 36% blaming the coal-

ition government for the economic crisis.

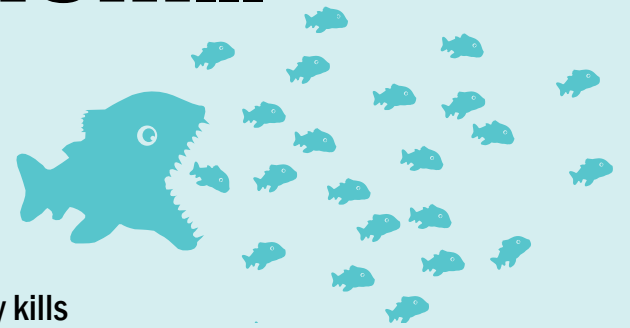
But before Ed Miliband starts thinking about redecorating No10 he should note that 40% also blamed the last Labour government for their predicament.

One set of findings confirms the long held view of the Socialist Party as to why people would not vote for establishment parties. 44% were turned off by careerist MPs who "look and sound the same", 37% who saw parliamentarians as lining their own pockets, and 26% who couldn't perceive any meaningful difference between the mainstream parties.

These findings reinforce the Socialist Party's strategy of forging a new mass, left-wing alternative party.

The promising intervention of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the recent local elections is an important milestone in the building of such a formation.

# Them...



## Austerity kills

Research in the British Journal of Psychiatry has shown that during the first two years of recession following the world capitalist financial meltdown in 2007, an additional 10,000 suicides were recorded across Europe and North America. Prior to the crash, suicide rates had been falling in Europe.

Experts point to unemployment, evictions and rising debt as the main risk factors leading to suicide during the recession.

trust executives have scooped £40,000 bonuses, pay increases of up to £30,000 and perks worth up to £10,000. Little wonder then that health workers are balloting to strike for a living wage.

## Child mortality

Among the advanced capitalist countries the UK has one of the highest child mortality rates. Bournemouth University research reckons that 1,827 children's lives could have been saved if the UK simply met the Western average. The researchers put the cause of such a high mortality rate as due to high income inequality and a poorly funded National Health Service (NHS).

## Class sizes

The mass media's fixation with alleged religious extremism in schools has been accompanied with an under-reporting of the huge rise in primary school class sizes. One in eight primary school pupils in England are being taught in classes over 30 children - above the government's statutory maximum. When the coalition came into office there were around 1,000 infant classes of over 31 pupils. This year the figure has soared to nearly 3,000.

## Discount pay

Discount chain stores B&M, headed by former Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy, pays 68% of its 17,000-strong workforce the paltry minimum wage. The company's stock market flotation prospectus says the raising of the minimum wage last October to a paltry £6.31 an hour from £6.19 had cost it £1.4 million. Yet the profitable company (valued at £2.8 billion) can afford to shell out £50 million in fees to City 'advisers' in its stock market listing.

## Waiting lists

As the NHS continues to crumble under the hammer blows of funding cuts and privatisation the number of people waiting for treatment has hit three million for the first time in six years.

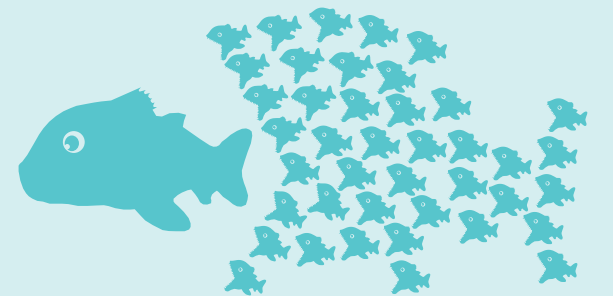
## Pay revolt

While NHS workers' pay rises are either being frozen or allowed to rise by a maximum of 1% by the government health bosses' pay continues to rocket. Some health

## Collective gains

What's the point of joining a trade union? Well, on average, a trade union member earns £4,000 a year more than a non-union worker. Non-unionised workers are more likely to suffer wage cuts, zero-hour contracts and worse terms and conditions of employment.

# ...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

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**Stop press:** One Housing Group (OHG) worker and Unite convenor Bryan Kennedy has been sacked following his suspension and a disciplinary hearing. Last week, fellow Unite members took four days of industrial action in support of Bryan. OHG has a history of harassing and sacking trade union representatives. Messages of support to [bryan.kennedy13@gmail.com](mailto:bryan.kennedy13@gmail.com)

# Bakers call for £10 minimum wage

**Claire Laker-Mansfield**  
Youth Fight for Jobs

The June Bakers' Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) conference called for a living wage of £10 an hour for all workers.

Members of the audience clapped and cheered when the union's president, Ian Hodson, made the call in his opening address to conference.

Delegates were clearly enthused by news of victory for the 15 Now campaign in Seattle, and the increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in that city.

Almost 100 copies of the Socialist, with Seattle's campaign featured on the front page, were enthusiastically snapped up by delegates.

The minimum wage demand was particularly important as the bakers' union had recently launched

the Fast Food Rights initiative, working alongside campaigns including Youth Fight for Jobs, with the aim of organising (mostly non-unionised) fast food workers to fight for better pay and conditions.

The Fast Food Rights coalition, launched a few months ago, has held a series of days of action, and called for an end to zero-hours contracts, a living wage for all workers and trade union rights.

## Youth Fight for Jobs

Members of Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) attending and speaking at the conference were greeted warmly by delegates and there was a real sense of optimism about prospects for developing Fast Food Rights.

We are fortunate in our union to have two left leaders: Ronnie Draper as general secretary, and Ian Hodson as president. Both spoke with passion calling for the TUC to push for a 24-hour strike, and calling on the Labour Party, if elected, to scrap the hated bedroom tax, end zero-hour contracts, and for a £10 an hour minimum wage.

They went on to vilify the Tories for the large rise in food banks, and attacked the right-wing press. Ian called on everyone to read the Socialist!

A motion to vote Labour in the general election to get rid of the Tories was passed. I spoke against this motion, putting forward TUSC as an alternative. Within the union I felt there was interest in TUSC.

Ricky Tomlinson spoke about the injustices done to the Shrewsbury 24. I urge everyone to find out more and to support the campaign. Overall it was an enjoyable conference and I can't wait for next year.

**Steven Nevin, Socialist Party member and BFAWU shop steward**

BFAWU members had also gained enormous confidence from a victory a little closer to home. In September, following strike action over a number of weeks, Wigan Hovis workers defeated zero-hours contracts.

As general secretary Ronnie Draper put it in his speech: "We won't accept any fudged compromises on zero-hours contracts. We want secure jobs paid a living wage."

Now the task is to fight to make this a reality everywhere. Get involved in YFJ and Fast Food Rights and help us build that fightback today.

**See the video of Claire speaking at the BFAWU conference at [www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/18752](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/18752) [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)**

# Escalation of firefighters' dispute begins

**Hugh Caffrey**

Fire Brigades Union members walked out on 12 June against pension changes which will mean they pay £4,000 more for the same or a worse pension.

Making matters worse, the same attacks from fire minister Brandon Lewis mean firefighters towards the end of their working lives will be drummed out on 'capability' grounds for being physically unable to do the job of a 20-year-old!

The 24-hour strike was an escalation of previous action, with action 'short of a strike' taking place until Saturday 21 June, when a seven-hour strike from 10am will be followed by action 'short of a strike' through until 9am the next day.

Paul Davies, FBU branch secretary at Salford's Liverpool Road fire station, told me: "If there's no movement in talks, personally I think the next strike should be for 48 hours, moving in stages of progression of further and further action and seeing how they're coping. Ultimately, it's walking out the door until something happens, and if there's no progress then I honestly believe the members would support that."

"And there needs to be more coordination. The 10 July date is ideal... I think the FBU leadership should be using that date or part of it to name the next strike."

Brigade management are supposed to be neutral in this dispute, but firefighters were banned from attending the Manchester strike rally in uniform, a condition usually applied to serving military personnel!

There's a recruitment freeze until 2017, but 10% of operational firefighters' jobs in Manchester are due to be cut 'over the next few years'.

The 'additional hours' policy, unfortunately agreed to by the FBU's Greater Manchester brigade committee, will be used to force existing firefighters into working more overtime while only being paid a flat-rate for doing it. Management themselves have admitted that FBU intransigence could have blocked this scheme.

Increasing bullying and victimisation, under the guise of 'capability' and 'fitness' assessments, are used to hound serving firefighters out of a job, even if they were seriously injured while doing their job.

The public will pay the price for all this unless these vicious policies are defeated.



**FBU picket lines in Leicester (above) and Leeds (below). For more strike reports and pictures see [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) photos Steve Score and Iain Dalton**



## Lambeth College indefinite strike

**James Ivens**  
Lambeth Socialist Party

Lambeth College teachers in the lecturers' union UCU have entered their third week of indefinite strike action which started on 3 June.

Management at the further education college want longer hours, shorter holidays and slashed sick pay.

Throughout the dispute management has behaved in an extremely provocative fashion. Faced with this the workforce responded strongly with 89% of UCU members voting to back strike action, on a 72% turnout.

To go for an all-out strike in the current climate is a bold but risky strategy. It is essential that the trade union movement comes to the support of the strike in order to do all possible to ensure its victory. In particular the UCU should call a national one-day stoppage in solidarity with the Lambeth strikers.

Lambeth College support workers in Unison joined the strike for two days on 11 and 12 June, after lengthy wrangling over action. Unison activ-

ists have expressed frustration with the union's regional leadership.

The disputed changes were initially due to affect staff starting after April. Strikers oppose management creating a two-tier workforce.

### Single tier

But principal Mark Silverman has now made clear he wants a one-tier workforce: everyone on the bottom. After promising attacks would only affect new starters, he later said existing staff would be "protected" until August next year.

Over 100 workers face redundancy. But bullying principal and "chief executive" Silverman blithely spent £35,000 on a new office for himself!

Clearly rattled by UCU's action, Silverman's tactics are increasingly desperate. A High Court injunction on a petty technicality only delayed the strike. The latest derisory offer from management? Free sandwiches if you are prepared to scab!

• Please send messages of support, requests for speakers and strike fund donations to [mandybrowncow@yahoo.com](mailto:mandybrowncow@yahoo.com).

## Tyneside Safety Glass walkout



Tyneside Safety Glass workers took strike action in demand of an above-inflation pay rise and an agreement on agency workers.

The company claims to have no money for a pay rise for its employees. This didn't stop a 14% pay rise to the highest paid director last year. It would take most of my members

five years to earn his salary! Last year £750,000 was also paid from the company's account into the owners' trust fund.

**Mark Robertson, Unite Shop Steward, Tyneside Safety Glass**

• Messages of support to: 07761421607. Read the full report at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

## In brief

### EDF energy strike

A third day of strike action by Unite members working at EDF in London, the South East, South West and Eastern region took place on 16 June.

This is the first strike campaign at EDF since the early 1990s. The dispute is about the company's failure to abide by a 2011 pay agreement and its below-inflation offer for 2013. But worker after worker at EDF has made clear that this is also about making a stand against an appalling employer.

Two days of strike action persuaded EDF to begin talks at ACAS, but these broke down before 16 June after the employer played daft games during negotiations. Unite offered to continue talks - but senior managers refused, because they said they had a planned trip to Paris!

A wide ranging work to rule began on 17 June. The campaign will be lobbying EDF HQ buildings and the French Embassy over the coming weeks.

### Visteon pensions

Around 1,400 car manufacturing workers, who lost their jobs when employer Visteon went into administration in 2009, have won back £28 million in pension compensation. Workers occupied factories in Basildon, Belfast and Enfield when the plants were closed five years ago. Since then the Visteon Pensioners Group and their Unite union have campaigned through protests and legal action to get back their pension contributions. Socialist Party member and NSSN chair Rob Williams, who is a Visteon pensioner and former convenor at the Visteon Swansea plant that was sold to Linamar in 2008, said: "This doesn't cover what we lost or deserve but is at least some compensation and a reward for a struggle by pensioners and our union Unite that has lasted over five years... starting the day the sacked workers occupied their plants."

### Transport for London

Once again members of RMT, TSSA and Unite working for Transport for London (TfL) took strike action on Friday 13 June in defence of pay and pensions.

TfL management plan to freeze our pensionable pay, with only the possibility of highly subjective one-off reward for performance payments in future.

The strike hit head office buildings, contact centres, lost property offices and closed Liverpool Street and Piccadilly Circus travel information centres.

Continued management intransigence can but lead to an escalation of this dispute, a test-case for similar attacks on London Underground pay and pensions.

**A TfL worker**

### Look Ahead pay cuts

Look Ahead care workers protested on the steps of Hackney Town Hall on 12 June over threatened pay cuts of 14% which follow recently imposed pay cuts of 15%.

The Unite members now plan to ballot for strike action. Already workers have been forced to move home because of the cuts. Now they are saying 'enough is enough'.

Another protest is planned for 19 June at 3pm. Hackney council funds the Look Ahead care service.

# How should RMT members maintain Bob Crow's tradition?

**Bill Johnston**  
RMT London Underground

The RMT AGM (conference) comes at a crucial point for the union. It follows the tragic early death of general secretary Bob Crow. Bob will be irreplaceable but the union is now in the nominations stage of elections for a new general secretary.

RMT members continue to show a determination to fight for our pay and conditions across the transport and maritime sectors.

Bob Crow played an important role in building this confident, combative mood amongst transport and maritime workers and these traditions will continue to be upheld by officers, reps and members throughout the union.

The tributes following Bob's death were an illustration of the high esteem he and the RMT are held in by ordinary working class people. It is in testimony to the fact that combative action pays, even the BBC had to admit that RMT members enjoyed "pay rises every year even during austerity, good pensions and good holiday allowances".

The important role that the RMT plays for its members and for the wider working class was shown once again this spring in the battle on London Underground.

London was brought to a standstill by militant action, which forced bully-boy Boris Johnson to the negotiating table in the first wave of struggle against £4.2 billion cuts.

The tube strikes provided an important lesson for workers everywhere: the organised working class has power - and is popular!

It is vital that the new general secretary stands in Bob Crow's tradition. As well as a resolute defence of members' interests, Bob strove for a general strategy against austerity including the call for a 24-hour general strike.

The RMT initiated the National Shop Stewards Network as a way of giving a voice to ordinary rank and

file trade unionists and to argue for a generalised strategy against austerity. Bob seconded the motion calling for a 24-hour general strike at the 2012 TUC in Brighton. He also moved the motion at the 2013 TUC to keep the 24-hour general strike on the table.

## Political voice

Bob Crow also recognised that, in order to best defend members and the wider working class, it is necessary to fight for a new political voice.

The RMT was expelled from Labour a decade ago for supporting socialist candidates in Scotland. Bob supported the creation of a "new party of labour" to challenge head on the pro-big business, anti-worker agenda of the three main political parties.

He argued in 2013: "The whole issue of the political representation of the working class now stands at the crossroads and we need to be bold enough to seize this opportunity."

Bob himself was a founder member of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and sat on its steering committee from its inception in 2010.

Two RMT AGMs agreed to support TUSC candidates and delegate representatives to the TUSC steering committee. Continuing to build TUSC as a precursor to a new working class party will be vital in the next months and years.

Not only have Labour councils up and down the country cried crocodile tears while savaging local jobs and services and implementing the cruel bedroom tax, Labour makes it clearer day by day what their intentions are in power.

Chris Leslie, shadow chief treasury secretary, made it abundantly clear when he said Labour "cannot afford to undo coalition spending cuts in next government".

Fifty-four RMT members stood for TUSC in the 2014 council elections and are determined to continue to build it.

It is notable that during the elec-



RMT members on the march photo Paul Mattsson

tion campaign, such is the support for this project amongst RMT activists, that every general secretary candidate had to declare some support for TUSC. This does not mean though that every candidate would, once elected, fight to maintain and develop TUSC.

## Staying militant

The first priority of the next general secretary of the RMT will be to defend the militant industrial strategy of the union. A key part of this will be developing an alliance of militant opposition to austerity across the trade union movement.

In a period when every main political party supports public sector cutbacks and wage restraint we need a united fight-back industrial-

ly and a new political voice for trade unionism.

The Socialist Party believes that in this general secretary election, two candidates, Steve Hedley and Alex Gordon, would best continue to promote these ideas within and beyond the RMT.

Both have a record of strong negotiating abilities and organisation. Both also have a record of campaigning for general strike action and supporting the NSSN, and of supporting TUSC and campaigning for a new workers' party. Steve was a TUSC candidate in Newham and Alex stood for No2EU-Yes to Workers' Rights in the Euro-elections.

Socialist Party members in RMT have raised the idea that an opportunity might emerge from the nominations process to come around a

single left candidate.

Whatever the outcome of the general secretary election, this process demonstrates the need for the left in the union to get organised. We are in a period of intensifying austerity with privatisation promised by the McNulty report and massive cuts to come on London Underground.

Members in all sectors from shipping, to offshore, to taxi and bus drivers face attacks so the RMT's industrial militancy and efforts towards generalised strike action must be strengthened.

It is vital that there is a vigorous fight put up against any attempts to turn the union back towards Labour.

The best way to ensure this is for all those who broadly stand in Bob Crow's legacy to come together in an organised left in the union.

## Unison local government members want action on pay

**Neil Cafferky**

Local government conference for Unison opened up in a very difficult period for local government workers.

A report given by the union's head of local government, Heather Wakefield, stated that 85% of surveyed local government workers said their workload was up and 77% said they were cutting spending on food. Council workers' debts had increased by almost 60%.

Naturally conference was dominated by the question of industrial action over pay with a great deal of debate over the action on 10 July and the possibility of action on 9-10 September.

It was clear from many of the speeches of delegates that there is a mood for action and for victory on this issue.

This mood was best summed up by Vicky Perrin speaking on a motion about celebrating the work of teaching assistants, saying the best way to celebrate the work of teach-

ing assistants is by taking strike action on 9-10 September.

The other frequently occurring issue at conference was anger towards the Labour Party. Speakers form the floor and the leadership expressed distaste at Ed Miliband's photo opportunity with the Sun.

One of the loudest cheers from the conference floor was given to Brian Debus in a debate on the impact of cuts when he asked why this union was giving millions of pounds to the Labour Party when Labour-

led councils were cutting services at a local level.

There was also an audible intake of breath when Jean Thorpe pointed out that Ed Miliband, at the GMB conference, had confirmed that he would not be supporting strike action on 10 July.

**Unison's full national conference is taking place as the Socialist goes to press. Look at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) and in next week's Socialist for more.**

## Socialists elected to service groups

Four more Socialist Party members have been elected to Unison's service group executives (SGEs), joining six Socialist Party members already on the SGEs.

Mike Forster from Yorkshire and Humberside region and Tim Cutter from South East region joined Angie Waller, Mark Evans and Jane Armitage on the local government executive.

Gary Freeman from East Midlands region joins Steve Bell and Adrian O'Malley on the health group executive.

Helen Couchman, from South East region, joins Mal Richardson on the community SGE.

All ten will fight for Unison to be a fighting democratic union that puts its members before the interests of the Labour Party.

## Unison Bureaucracy Unmasked: The Defend the Four Story

In 2007, four trade unionists from different Unison branches were publicly and unjustly accused of racism. Yet all were committed anti-racists and led well-run union branches.

All four are well-known members of the Socialist Party. But this provides only part of the explanation; the bureaucracy was also driven by a desire to make the union safe for its full-time machine, and safe for the Labour Party.

This book tells the story of the ultimately victorious campaign and legal challenge that cleared them of all charges, and which exposed the true nature of Unison's bureaucracy.

Available for £5 (plus p&p) from [www.leftbooks.co.uk](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk)



# Brazil: New upsurge in struggles of workers and the homeless as the World Cup begins



Liberdade Socialismo e Revolução (LSR) members march in solidarity with striking Metro transport workers

**André Ferrari**  
LSR (CWI in Brazil)

In the context of a wave of struggle and protests in the run-up to the World Cup, the São Paulo Metro workers began a powerful strike on 5 June (temporarily suspended at the time of writing).

This struggle, which goes beyond the fight for better salaries, and represents a fight to defend the right of public transport, has been at the centre of national attention. The striking workers have been subjected to brutal repression at the hands of the state.

The strike began precisely on the anniversary of the beginning of last year's massive June protests. Then, millions took to the streets in hundreds of cities throughout the country in a revolt which was triggered over an increase in transport prices.

## New upsurge

As a result of this social explosion, different local and state governments were forced to revoke the price hikes, but they did not stop with the neoliberal wrecking and privatisation of public transport.

From June 2013, a new upward cycle of working class struggles opened up in the context of growing economic crisis and the dead end of the economic and political model of the governments of the PT (the social-democratic Workers' Party of both former president Lula da Silva and current president Dilma Rousseff).

Struggles have been more fragmented since then but have acquired a clear class character. Innumerable strikes throughout the public and private sectors have exploded. In addition to those work-

With the World Cup there was a big increase in real estate prices (of up to 200%) and large rent increases

ers with strong trade union traditions of struggle (teachers, civil servants, bank, postal, metallurgical sectors etc.), more precarious sectors, which are more difficult to organise, have also occupied the epicentre of the struggle.

This includes the public cleaning workers in Rio de Janeiro, who staged a strike during the carnival, and faced not only the brutality and repression of the city hall of Rio de Janeiro, but also of the pro-government trade union bureaucracy.

With enormous popular support for their struggle, the "sweepers" (as they are called) won a huge victory stimulating similar struggles in other cities of the country.

This was also the case for about 28,000 workers providing services in the Rio de Janeiro Petrochemical Complex. Likewise, bus drivers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo staged strikes, going over the heads of their union leaders.

Right now, several sectors are in struggle and many on strike. One of the

stronger strike movements is in the state universities, in particular the USP (University of São Paulo) with intense mobilisations of students, teachers and staff.

## Role of MTST

In recent weeks, the focus of attention has been on the demonstrations headed by the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST), mainly in São Paulo. At dawn on 3 May the MTST led a massive occupation of land, intended by its owners for mere speculation. Dubbed the "People's Cup", the occupation in Itaquera today involves about 4,000 families.

The land is located in the Itaquera neighbourhood, less than four miles from the stadium that hosted the opening of the World Cup, east of the city of São Paulo.

Situated so close to a stadium that cost nearly one billion Real (\$400 million), the occupation contrasts the public spending intended to boost the profits of Fifa, the major builders and real estate speculators, and the precarious living conditions of workers.

With the World Cup there was a big increase in real estate prices (of up to 200% in some areas of the city) and large rent increases. Millions of workers are forced to leave their homes and live further away from their workplace, further exacerbating the problem of urban mobility in a city like São Paulo. Therefore, the demands for the right to housing and transport are part of the same struggle for the right of workers to their own city, not of the businesses and companies.

The MTST was able to organise marches of thousands of homeless workers and allies to defend their claims. The last one took place on 4 June, when 25,000 people blocked access to the new stadium a week before the World Cup's opening. This demonstration made clear the strength of the movement that could have threatened the very opening of the World Cup.

A few days before, the threat of forced eviction from the site of Itaquera warned of a bloodbath, as the movement had opted for resistance. But shortly after 4 June, the federal government of President Dilma Rousseff sought to open negotiations and indicated that the government would meet the demands of the movement.

The land occupied by the "People's Cup" should be allocated to the construction of affordable housing with public funding under the administration of the movement itself. Once this retreat of the government is confirmed, the resounding victory of the struggle of MTST will pave the way for new struggles of various movements going forward.

## Metro workers

It is in this context that the Metro workers' strike took place. In this case, the direct enemy of the workers is the state government of São Paulo led by Alckmin (PSDB), a representative of the traditional neoliberal right.

The government's stance on the strike so far has been to use extreme brutality with police repression of pickets at Metro stations, threats of dismissal and intransigence in negotiations.

The subway workers' union is led by sectors of the trade union left, generally



MTST homeless workers' movement activists stage a protest during the World Cup

linked to the PSTU and PSOL parties, and has broad support in the sector. Most of the leadership is connected to the CSP-Conlutas federation, but the union is not directly affiliated to any union federation.

Daily assemblies bring together more than 2,000 workers, out of about 9,500 in the sector. The pickets have been organised to block the activities of sections of the bosses being mobilised to operate some Metro lines, endangering the population since they are not trained.

The government tries at all costs to turn public opinion against the Metro workers, but has not been very successful. The Alckmin government and previous PSDB governments are directly implicated in a massive corruption scandal over the formation of cartels and paying of bribes to state agents, involving big companies like Siemens and Alstom, suppliers of materials and services for the São Paulo Metro.

In the preparation of the strike, the union made a series of denunciations of the Alckmin government's public transport policy. The union also proposed that, so as not to harm the population with the strike, workers would cancel the work stoppage in return for the opening of the turnstiles giving free Metro access to users! The proposal was well received by the population and even served to promote debate on the proposal for free public transport, which has gained popularity since June 2013.

But the government had the support of the Labour Court which convened on a Sunday in order to deem the strike il-

legal, on the basis that the union does not guarantee the full functioning of the Metro during "peak hours" since this is an "essential" service. What remains of the right to strike if a category of workers are supposed to maintain 100% of their work while on strike?

The courts have imposed a fine on the union of 100,000 Real (\$40,000) for each day of strike action and have declared the sacking of striking workers as legitimate.

It is necessary to clearly move towards building a 24-hour general strike, organised by the unions' ranks

Nevertheless, courageously, workers gathered at a massive assembly held on Sunday 8 June and decided to confront the government, media and courts, and to maintain the strike.

Right now, many sectors of the workers' movement and social movements, including the MTST and youth organisations, are mobilising to build mass action in support of the Metro workers.

The strength and willingness to fight of the Metro workers along with the organised popular support for the strike are factors which may be able to defeat

the government.

Active solidarity with the Metro workers leading to a victory in this fight may be a central factor for new struggles both during and after the World Cup.

## Unite the struggles

LSR (CWI in Brazil), has struggled with all its might to build the unity of the on-going struggles in Brazil today.

Building the struggles together with the MTST while acting in CSP-Conlutas, the most dynamic grouping of the trade union left, LSR has struggled to get these two movements to act in a coordinated manner, which is now beginning to happen.

As well as this, LSR has advocated in all these forums the need for a national conference of the movements in struggle to build a common platform and a common plan of action. We have also argued that it is necessary to clearly move towards building a 24-hour general strike, organised by the unions' ranks.

The united struggle of Metro workers, teachers, the homeless and all workers and youth who are rising up today, awakened by the inequalities highlighted by the World Cup finals, is a prerequisite for the reorganisation of a combative workers' movement and socialist left in Brazil.

**Solidarity messages with the Metro strike should be addressed to Sindicato dos Metroviários de São Paulo, sent to [sindicato@metroviarios-sp.org.br](mailto:sindicato@metroviarios-sp.org.br) with copies to [andre.ferrari@uol.com.br](mailto:andre.ferrari@uol.com.br)**

## International solidarity protests

On Friday 13 June members of the CWI in capitals around the world organised solidarity protests outside Brazilian embassies in support of the striking Metro workers and against the repression of social movements during the World Cup. The protests were also in support of the "People's Cup" (a land occupation organised by the MTST - a homeless workers' movement).

Metro workers in São Paulo suspended their strike after five days of an effective stoppage, which pushed management into making wage concessions. But the struggle for the re-instatement of 42 Metro workers, sacked for their involvement in the strike, could lead to a resumption of the action. Meanwhile, other protests and strikes continue in Brazil during the World Cup despite the exceptional deployment of state repression.

In Rio de Janeiro's three main airports, workers started a 24-hour strike on 12 June.

See the video produced by the LSR (CWI in Brazil) when on the opening day of the World Cup 2,000 protesters were attacked by riot police and sought refuge in the Metro workers' union offices.



## Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)



The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world.



# Trades councils conference shows that workers won't wait for TUC

Trades councils – the local arms of the TUC – held their conference in Cardiff on 14/15 June. This year, there was a pleasant sting in its tail!

The very last motion debated was on political representation for the working class, proposed by Swansea Trades Council. It noted that the “lack of a political voice representing the needs and interests of trade union members is a serious concern for the entire trade union movement”.

It then called on conference to encourage “trades councils to initiate discussions on how best to secure the kind of political representatives working class people need, considering all options.”

Socialist Party members Ronnie Job from Swansea and Katrine Williams from Cardiff TC moved and seconded the motion, explaining how both locally and nationally, Labour Party representatives were divorced from the real needs of working class people.

There was opposition, with some delegates urging conference to ‘wait’ and be patient, support Unite’s political strategy and other arguments against the motion that have been heard many times before.

But the conference decided, by 34 votes to 31, with 4 abstentions, to support the motion. The announcement was received with spontaneous applause!

No doubt the TUC leadership will not be best pleased with this resolution nor with the motion passed earlier in the conference which agreed “to restate in the 2014-15 programme of work that the TUC should facilitate a programme of co-ordinated industrial action involving unions and local TUCs, up to and including strikes”.

These decisions show that the grassroots of the trade union movement are not prepared to sit and wait for the TUC to act but are urging action and a class-based political stance.

**Kevin Parslow**  
Waltham Forest Trades Council delegate



Plymouth TUSC supporters



#DontBuytheSun read the Socialist



## One in ten vote TUSC in Salford

In Salford our highlights were three wards where we hit 20%, and in one of those wards we came second, beating the Tory by 60 votes.

These three wards were a three-cornered fight between Labour, Tory and TUSC. Does that mean we ‘stole’ UKIP votes? Not a bit of it. There is massive discontent with the mainstream parties. For some, UKIP acts as a ‘lightning conductor’ for that anger but this election showed us that a vote for TUSC, a clear anti-cuts platform, can express that anger too.

We met and discussed with working class UKIP supporters who attended a Salford Against Cuts rally. They were gutted that they had failed to get their candidate nominated but told us they’d vote for us. We put a lot of energy into that ward



Some of the Salford candidates

and were rewarded with 486 votes!

TUSC is now a standing item on the agenda of our monthly Salford Against Cuts meetings. We’ve produced a leaflet to use in door-to-door canvassing on Sundays to keep the TUSC name in people’s minds. We’re focussing on four wards, two in each of the two parliamentary constituencies and are also organising a fund-raiser – we’ll need some serious cash as we are considering a TUSC challenge at the general election in 2015 too.

**Paul Gerrard**  
Salford TUSC agent

This is an extract of a letter sent to a local paper in Lancaster

I wish to express deep appreciation via the Lancaster Guardian from the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and its supporters for the solidarity received in the local by-election for Scotforth West held on May 22. This campaign has broadened the scope of the real left and given a real independent political voice for the working class majority which the four main parties locally plus Independents treat largely with contempt. For every vote we got there will be many more people who seriously considered voting for TUSC. There is a basis for continuing to build on the growing consciousness of the need for a serious organisation that furthers the real interests of the working class majority of the population, most harried by public spending cuts.

**Steve Metcalfe**  
Local byelection TUSC candidate  
Scotforth West  
RMT Lancaster district branch secretary  
RMT assistant secretary, Manchester/NW region  
(personal capacity)

## Yorkshire TUSC campaign wins trade union support

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaign in Yorkshire was a success before a single vote was cast. Standing more broadly won candidates from the trade unions and anti-cuts campaigns: Care UK strikers and former Women Against Pit Closures activists in Doncaster, anti-bedroom tax campaigners in Barnsley, an RMT branch secretary in Hull, and an ex-Labour councillor in Grimsby.

The Labour Party were so paranoid about TUSC in Grimsby that they banned a Unite member who was a TUSC candidate from attending his union meeting at the Labour club. This backfired on them because TUSC organised a protest outside the Labour offices which got us more publicity.

TUSC candidates got support from Leeds, Hull and Doncaster RMT branches and the FBU West Yorkshire brigade committee. The POA backed their former general



Outside Grimsby Labour club

secretary Brian Caton in Barnsley, and the two Hull Labour councillors expelled for voting against cuts endorsed TUSC locally.

In all we stood 84 candidates, contesting 30% of the seats and gained nearly 10,000 votes.

### Bedroom Tax

Carole O’Keefe, an activist with Hands Off Our Homes in Leeds explains why she campaigned for TUSC in Armley ward:

“For me, TUSC stands for all that is right for the people. I became involved in campaigning in Leeds (Armley) in support of our candidate Iain Dalton. Close to my own heart is the Anti-Bedroom Tax campaign and the fight for better, more affordable housing both of which our TUSC candidate Iain Dalton has supported since we began.

It’s vital we continue to get our message out within our own communities and let the people know they are supported as they support us.”

**Alistair Tlce**

## Preparing a ‘people’s budget’ in Leicester

**Tessa Warrington**

We may not have had local elections in Leicester this year, but the need to provide a political alternative for working class people could not be more relevant.

Leicester is run by a Labour-majority city council. People are paying the cost of the bedroom tax and losing vital children’s and community services, while millions have been spent on city-centre building projects for big business and a further £154 million of city council

reserves sit unused in the bank.

The people of Leicester don’t see Labour as a party fighting for their interests, but one bending over backwards to ignore them at every consultation and council meeting.

Two disaffected councillors, sickened by the cuts and the ‘culture of fear’ the mayor has created on the council, have broken away and left the Labour party. They are now working alongside TUSC to oppose the cuts.

Our strategy is to use this summer to build for a conference bringing together trade unions, commu-

nity groups and services to call for a ‘people’s budget’. This would be a no-cuts alternative to the Labour group’s austerity budget, just as the TUSC councillors in Southampton have done.

We’ve got our banner and pink t-shirts ready to go at local festivals and events, as well as the joint strike rally planned for 10 July. With a petition to remove the anti-democratic mayoral position, leaflets and a sign-up sheet we’re asking people to come to the conference, get involved with TUSC and stand against cuts next year.

## How can local councils fight cuts?

Over 60 delegates attended the TUSC Unison conference fringe meeting chaired by Angie Waller (Unison local government service group executive) to hear speakers Roger Bannister (Unison NEC) and Steve North (Salford Unison branch secretary), all in a personal capacity, outline their views on how local councils could fight the cuts.

A wide-ranging debate from the floor took up the question of whether socialists can reclaim the Labour Party.

The Falkirk debacle showed how even the smallest advance by the trade unions was met with a fierce response by the Labour leadership.

In Warrington, the Labour council has carried out huge cuts, including job losses of Unison members and suspended councillor Kevin Bennett after he refused to vote for the cuts.

### Build for the future

Summing up the meeting Roger Bannister explained: “There is a widening gap between the Labour Party and the trade unions, especially Unite and the GMB.

“TUSC’s role is to build for the future when the cracks will grow wider and the need for a new mass workers’ party will be posed.”

**Neil Cafferky**

South East London TUSC Public Meeting:

### The Fight for Affordable Housing

Speakers include **TOMMY SHERIDAN**, Scottish socialist  
Thursday 10 July, 7.30pm  
Barnes Wallis Community Centre, 74 Wild Goose Drive, New Cross, SE14 5LG





# "Self-employed" and exploited

Who do they think they're fooling? With the number of registered unemployed reportedly at an all-time low for this recession, the government again claims their policies are working. Apparently much of this fall is due to 780,000 people now being self-employed.

So is their triumphant vision of small businesses a reality? Is this a new capitalist recovery? Having been sacked by the council, many qualified social and youth workers are now 'self-employed' consultants to charities doing the work they used to do.

Booming "entrepreneurship" isn't working for us either. I'm a "self-employed" cleaner working from home. My husband - who retrained as a teacher - usually works for an agency doing assembly work at between £7 and £8 per hour. In April he was offered £4.50 an hour - and nearly accepted.

## Benefits

We never know how much we have to live on. Claiming benefits is a nightmare: there always seems to be one rule or other to deny us. Recently, we didn't claim early enough (we waited due to the promise of work). The agency twice gave wrong details about the shifts, which not only meant lost earnings but led to each incident being deemed as a "no

show" by the respective employer.

My freelance income averages out marginally above benefits. Sometimes I am sent an assignment in the evening which has to be finished by the next morning. Every so often I have to work flat out but there are weeks and months when I earn next to nothing.

Two years ago I kept going on home-grown veg and potatoes. When the crop was bad last year only the kindness of friends stopped me from visiting the food bank. We halved our gas bill by turning off the water and central heating. Un-

Unless we have visitors it's jumpers and blankets for us. All this makes Osborne's smug statements quite nauseating

less we have visitors (when we use a heater) it's jumpers and blankets for us. All this makes Osborne's smug statements quite nauseating.

While campaigning for TUSC we met people who were far worse off and getting depressed because they



An increasing number are having to choose between things like heating and food

can't provide for their children. People say the government is full of out-of-touch millionaires. But the ruling class is not ignorant of the effects of poverty.

They are suppressing information on food banks, distort-

ing statistics on benefits, vilifying claimants and know the sad facts on suicides among jobless men. They pursue callous policies in full knowledge that the further they get, the closer they bring us to the low pay, rickets, malnutrition and de-

spair of the 1930s.

They dismissed the hunger marches then. This time we need a campaign around low pay and employment that will not only make history, but change it.

**A 'self-employed' worker**

## Book review

# The man who loved dogs

Niall Mulholland

Cuban writer Leonardo Padura's masterful novel, *The Man Who Loved Dogs*, is about the exile years of Leon Trotsky and his assassin, Roman Mercader. Acting on Stalin's orders, Mercader fatally attacked the co-leader, with Lenin, of the 1917 Russian Revolution, with an icepick, on 20 August 1940.

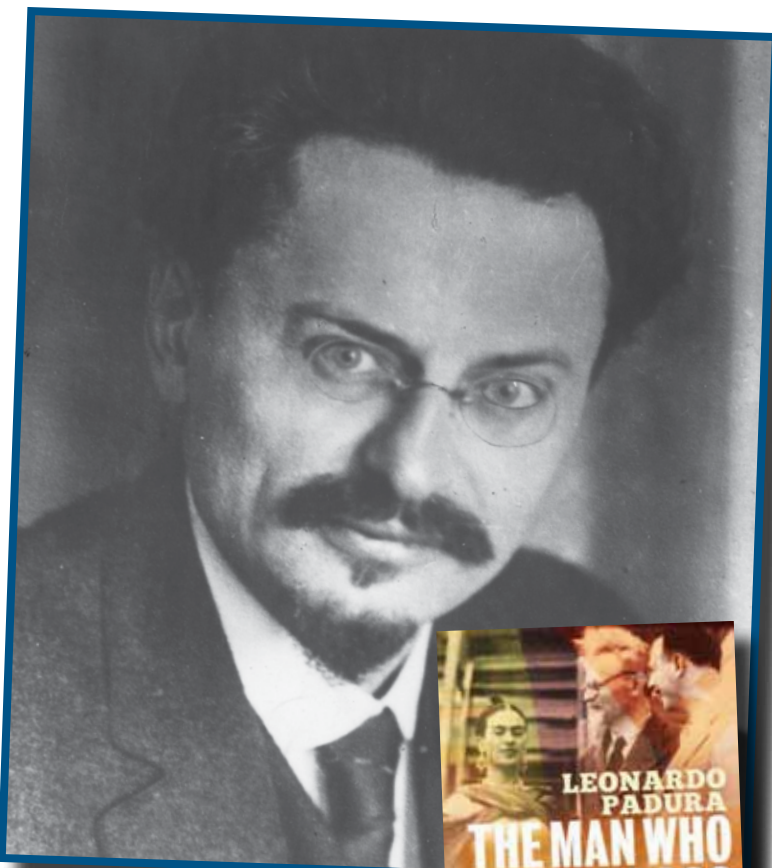
Padura succeeds in blending historical facts with character-driven fiction and brings narrative pace and a truthful feel to broad historical and political canvasses. The novel opens with a Cuban, Iván Cárdenas, recalling meeting a mysterious Spaniard, 'Jaime López,' on the beach in the 1970s.

Cárdenas admires the strangers' dogs and they strike up an acquaintance. López claims he knew Trotsky's killer, Ramón Mercader. Cárdenas seeks out the Trotsky books from unofficial channels and begins to suspect that the man who loved dogs is actually Mercader.

## Mercader

Alongside Cárdenas' story - a disillusioned communist-activist, forced to work on a veterinary magazine after petty bureaucrats censored his fiction - Padura keeps up two other biographical strands, those of Mercader and Trotsky. We follow Ramón Mercader, brought up in a bourgeois but troubled household in Catalonia, as his fanatical mother introduces him to communist politics.

While fighting for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, Mercader sees the Stalinist armed repression of the anarchists and Left, including the murder of the POUM leader, Andrés Nin. Stalin feared a successful socialist revolution in Spain more than Franco's fascists, as it would have inspired renewed struggle for workers' democracy in Russia.



Above: Leon Trotsky  
Right: Padura's book

Stalinist apparatchiks pick out Mercader for a 'special task' and he is brought to Moscow for brutalising training by the GPU secret police. Mercader's mentor brings him to a session of the grotesque Moscow Trials where Old Bolsheviks were summarily tried and executed on trumped-up charges of 'counter-revolution.'

Stalin, representing a privileged bureaucracy that emerged as the result of isolation of the revolution under conditions of social and economic underdevelopment, used the 'purge trials' to consolidate his power.

Mercader takes on the identity of a

Belgian, 'Jacques Mornard,' and is despatched to Paris to seduce one of Trotsky's young followers, Sylvia Ageloff.

## Murder

From there, Mercader is sent to New York, as a non-political businessman 'Jacson,' and finally to Mexico City. He patiently infiltrates the fortified Trotsky household, in Coyoacan, to carry out his murderous task.

## Tory Lady's advice bureau

Last year, former Tory whip Lady Rawlings made the press by advising people on low budgets to use electric blankets and hot water bottles to keep warm instead of heating their whole house. Her ladyship lives in a 38-acre, 13-bedroom, 15-bathroom stately home.

Now Lady Rawlings is offering her advice for anyone trying to run a stately pile and entertain 200 guests when finances are slightly tight. She told Tatler magazine that people should not serve guests plated food, let them serve themselves, or risk the lobster going uneaten into the waste bin.

She tells us all not to waste money on marquees for summer parties but to buy 200 Panama hats. If it rains stay inside. If it's hot and sunny give them a Panama. Other snippets of advice include planting a small orchard.

In the midst of poverty, low pay and desperate housing conditions, Lady Bountiful's advice to the lower upper classes was laughable. If we were in Lady Rawlings' advice-giving business we'd say take over underused stately homes to start solving the housing shortage!

**Keith Whitehead**

## Newark's NHS candidate ignored by media

Ignored by the media in the blanket coverage of UKIP in the Newark by-election was the good vote received by one independent candidate. Paul Baggaley received 1,891 votes (4.9%), came fourth beating the Green and Lib Dem candidates and would have saved his deposit with an extra 60 votes.

Paul Baggaley is secretary of the Save Newark Hospital Campaign that has fought for five years against the downgrading of the A&E department and transfer of some services to Mansfield,

18 miles away. As a well-known Save Newark Hospital campaigner he was elected onto Newark town council.

Spending just £2,500 on the election, he was massively out-financed by the main parties. He was not invited onto the platforms of election hustings. Nevertheless, his vote showed the potential for a party opposing all cuts, defending a publicly owned and democratically run NHS, if it also had the backing and resources of trade unions.

**Jon Dale**

Padura describes Trotsky's deportation to Turkey after the defeat of the Left Opposition, and years of exile in France, Norway and Mexico.

We witness Trotsky's grief at the murder of most of his family and closest comrades by the Stalin regime. Padura sympathetically depicts Trotsky the person - courageous and unbowed yet with his own share of human frailties - and Trotsky the Marxist leader and thinker.

Following Trotsky's assassination, Mornard (Mercader) is imprisoned in Mexico. He returns to the Soviet Union and is decorated but hidden away during the supposed 'de-Stalini-

sation' period. Mercader spent his last years in Cuba, where he died in 1978.

## Today

At the end of the novel, Padura's modern-day Cuban characters are despondent. But the ideas of revolutionary socialism, represented by Trotsky so sympathetically in this book, when taken up by the working class, can defend the gains of the Cuban revolution, sweep away bureaucratic rule and inequalities, introduce workers' democracy and see-off capitalist counter-revolution.

*The Man Who Loved Dogs* deserves the widest possible readership.



# IRAQ: OIL WAR'S BLOODY LEGACY

Judy Beishon

At the time of Bush and Blair's catastrophic and criminal invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Socialist Party and Committee for a Workers' International warned it could lead to the break-up of Iraq and terrible sectarian war that is now being played out in front of the eyes of the world.

US and British imperialism laid the basis for being faced with not one, but a number of Saddams and the rise of al-Qa'ida type terror organisations like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isis) that is sweeping across north Iraq today. The turn of events threatens to trigger a shake-up of the entire region, with profound and possibly tragic consequences for the populations.

To justify the 2003 war and subsequent occupation - in which over half a million Iraqis died, plus thousands of intervening troops - Bush and Blair claimed to be ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and laying the basis for democracy. The WMDs didn't exist and their interest was never democracy - it was the vast oil wealth in Iraq and their influence in the Middle East. In pursuing their goals, they created the conditions for a prolonged period of bloody ethno-sectarian conflict.

The overthrow of dictator Saddam Hussein and the 'debaathification' carried out, saw Sunni Muslims removed from the state apparatus and jobs. Faced with mass resistance to its occupation and to defeat Sunni insurgents, US imperialism resorted

to sectarian 'divide and rule' and imposed a Shia-dominated, corrupt government which greatly worsened the division.

Isis taking control of Fallujah in January and now Mosul - Iraq's second largest city - is seen as disastrous by the US government as it effectively reverses the driving out of Sunni militias from those cities by US marines in what were sustained, brutal assaults during the US-led war.

## US imperialism

Now US imperialism is seriously weakened in the Middle East following its catalogue of foreign policy disasters and mass opposition in the region and at home to its interventions. Obama was elected to the US presidency pledging to end the failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, so he withdrew the US troops from Iraq in 2011, and subsequently claimed that the US killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan had destroyed al-Qa'ida's core. Then last year Obama again came under mass pressure that stopped him from bombing Bashar al-Assad's forces in the Syrian civil war. Cameron in Britain was also prevented from going down that road.

As a result of this history, neither Cameron nor Obama are contemplating putting large numbers of ground troops back into Iraq. But it's a measure of the alarm with which the imperialist strategists view the Sunni militia gains that Obama is rapidly boosting supplies of arms and heavy military equipment to the Iraqi army and is considering an aerial bombardment of the Isis-held

## What was said 2003

"We're bringing order to parts of that country that remain dangerous... We're helping to rebuild Iraq, where the dictator built palaces for himself, instead of hospitals and schools. And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by, and for the Iraqi people."

**George Bush aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, 1 May 2003 - his infamous "mission accomplished" speech**

"Tension between Kurds and Arabs in the north and between Shias and Sunnis in the south, are a fore-taste of what the future could hold. Iraq could become a second Yugoslavia, with ethnic, religious and tribal fault lines erupting to cause the break-up of the country."

**the Socialist 19/4/03**

"In the absence of any mass socialist or working-class political alternative it's likely that in any subsequent elections religious parties will dominate, setting Iraq on course for religious and ethnic conflict and the possible fracturing of Iraq itself."

**the Socialist 24/5/03**

areas. Air strikes however, if carried out, will be counterproductive, inflicting massive bloodshed on civilians who would inevitably be hit, as the bombardments in Afghanistan bear witness.

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The Iraq war laid the basis for the rise of groups like Isis

## What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, 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!