

SOCIALISM2014

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After the \$15 victory in
Seattle, hear
socialist
councillor
Kshama Sawant

the Socialist

www.socialistparty.org.uk

25 September - 1 October 2014

Issue 826

Price: £1 (Solidarity: £2)



WHERE NEXT FOR SCOTLAND AFTER THE REFERENDUM?

Pages 2, 5, 6 and 7

Labour promises £8/hr by 2020

Laurence Maples

Ed Miliband has pledged that Labour will increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour. But you'll have to wait till 2020!

Even as they announce the proposed increase, weasel words about "flexibility" in the event of an economic downturn are included. In other words - maybe we'll increase the minimum wage and maybe we won't. Even if it is implemented, this measure does not begin to tackle the blight of poverty pay in food bank Britain.

A £1.50 an hour increase over six years is 25p each year, or around a tenner a week if you can get 40 hours. This is nowhere near enough to match rising prices. For those who cannot get enough hours, particularly if they are on zero-hour contracts, the situation is even worse.

As it stands, the minimum wage is so derisory that many workers have to supplement their wages with benefits. Benefits are not being uprated with inflation, so low paid workers' living standards will continue to fall. Moreover, as work income rises, benefits are withdrawn at a sharp rate - so many workers could end up keeping only a fraction of the increase.

The minimum wage is also full of loopholes, with lower rates for under 20 and under 18 year olds. The apprentice rate is £2.73! These exceptions must be abolished.

The Socialist Party and bakers' union BFAWU have been campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage right now - because the rent won't wait. As a result of a bakers' union motion, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) adopted the £10 demand at its recent conference.

Action

However, we need to keep the pressure up for the TUC to really fight for £10 an hour. This means co-ordinated strike action - not just lip service.

In Seattle, our co-thinkers in Socialist Alternative have led a successful campaign of workers and socialists to achieve a \$15 minimum wage - more than double the federal rate. Even the pro-business Democratic Party in the city was forced to concede to pressure from below.

A changing point for the "15 Now" movement was the election of Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant to the city council. Sawant played a key role in the campaign's historic victory, providing a glimpse of what is possible when we elect a genuine voice for working class people.

In Britain, Labour's pathetic pledge shows yet again it doesn't play this role. Trade unions need to break with Labour. We need a new mass workers' party - a genuine challenge to the cuts consensus.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which includes the Socialist Party and transport union RMT, stood 560 candidates in this year's local elections as a step towards such a party. We will be standing on an even bigger scale in 2015.

Strike together. Stand for TUSC. Fight for £10 now. Because the rent won't wait!



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After Scotland revolt: all capitalist parties in crisis

Build a working class alternative

"All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born." Yeats poem about the revolutionary uprising in Ireland at Easter 1916 applies, in a different way, to the electoral 'uprising' that took place in Scotland on 18 September, 2014. Voting Yes became, for many, a mass revolt against austerity. The capitalist class - major corporations, the majority of the capitalist media and the Westminster politicians - all united to predict Armageddon if a majority of Scots voted yes. In defiance of all the threats - which the Scottish National Party (SNP) was incapable of answering - 45% still voted for independence.

Across Britain capitalist politicians have spoken in awed tones at the phenomenal turnout; which proved definitively - as we have consistently argued - that working class and young voters are not apathetic but only disillusioned with the diet of pro-big business, pro-austerity parties on offer to them. In reality, the capitalist politicians' expressions of enthusiasm for the high turnout were a thin veneer painted over their real feeling - fear. The 1.6 million who voted for independence were overwhelmingly working class. The young were also disproportionately in favour - 71% of 16 and 17 year olds voted Yes. Hundreds of thousands of working-class people registered to vote for the first time or for the first time since they left the register during the mass campaign against the poll tax.

Unpopularity

The private hopes of the capitalist class that the defeat of the Yes campaign would mean a return to 'apathy' are already being dispelled. Instead a radicalised and defiant working class is searching for a way forward. All of the Westminster parties are sinking to new levels of unpopularity. Labour, which historically has dominated politics in the working class heartlands of Scotland, is hated for the role it played in fronting the No campaign on behalf of the Tories and the capitalist class. Despite this, some sections of Scottish workers may hold their noses and vote for Labour in the general election as a means to try and get rid of the Tories. Others, however, will never vote Labour again.

All the parties which supported a Yes vote are growing, with fourteen thousand joining the SNP so far, reflecting that they are seen to have stood up to 'project fear'. However, a significant section of Yes voters have no illusions in the leadership of the SNP. Support for socialist ideas is growing rapidly. Our sister party in

Scotland, Socialist Party Scotland (see pages 5, 6 and 7) is campaigning for the immediate launching of a new mass workers' party. Such a party, in the current situation, could grow very rapidly, transforming the situation.

Unfortunately, some on the left - including Tommy Sheridan who played a positive role in the referendum, putting forward a left case for independence - now seem to be calling for a vote for the SNP in 2015, with building an electoral left alternative being put off into the indefinite future. This would be a very serious mistake which cannot be justified on the grounds of 'unity' for independence.

SNP's austerity

We are in favour of the maximum possible principled unity between organisations and parties which stand in the interests of the working class. The SNP, however, does nothing of the kind and has consistently put forward pro-big business, anti-working class policies, including implementing major cuts in Holyrood. It will be putting forward a new cuts budget in a matter of weeks. The potential exists in Scotland for the development of a mass party of the working class which would be a qualitative step forward in Scotland but also act as inspiration to workers in England, Wales and well beyond.

The aftermath of the referendum is also continuing to reverberate in England and Wales. The Westminster capitalist parties are undoubtedly heaving a sigh of relief. A week beforehand, as they belatedly recognised the scale of the surge to Yes, there was genuine panic that the union was about to unravel, dramatically weakening the power and prestige of British capitalism.

Their nightmare scenario has been staved off, but all the major parties have been weakened by events in Scotland. The Tory Party was once the most successful capitalist party on the planet - with a skilled leadership reflecting the power and long-term strategic vision of British capitalism. Today's bungling, inept Tory leadership ultimately reflects British capitalism's decline.

Cameron's crass statement on the steps of Downing Street attempted to tie the No campaign's 'vow' to give more powers to Scotland to giving more rights to England's MPs to deal with 'English matters'. This was an attempt to appease the right of his party and to cut across the growth of Ukip. It was also a cynical manoeuvre to try and win votes in England from Labour. It ignored, however,



the bigger issue: the inevitable fury of the Scottish working class if the 'vow' turned out to be worthless, leading to a further growth in support for independence. Cameron has been forced to beat a hasty retreat, claiming that he never intended to tie the Scottish and English questions together!

In fact the 'West Lothian' question has been exaggerated by the Tories for their own reasons. There have only been two periods since 1919 - from 1964 to 1966 and between March and November 1974 - when the party in government had not won a majority in England. Of 5,000 votes in the House of Commons since 1997, the outcome of only 21 depended on the votes of Scottish MPs. However, a section of the parliamentary Labour Party is echoing Cameron and Ukip. This reflects their fear of the electoral consequences of the English nationalism that the Tory right and Ukip are trying to whip up, which they are responding to by joining in!

The Labour leadership, however, has called for a 'convention' to look at proposals for devolution. This is cynical: an attempt to delay dealing with the problem. But a real 'convention' - made up of democratically elected representatives of workplaces and communities - would demand to look not only at the West Lothian question and regional devolution but also issues concerning parliaments which are more important for the majority of voters: such as the endless expenses scandals and the 11% pay rise that MPs have recently voted to give themselves.

Real democracy

The workers' movement should demand that the salary of MPs be cut to the level of the average wage. Where expenses are needed, they should be strictly necessary ones only - similar to what some building workers and others are able to claim against tax as they travel the country in pursuit of their work. Moreover, rather than MPs checking and auditing their own expenses, why not scrutiny committees made up of workers, the unemployed, those forced onto benefits and small shopkeepers and business people threatened by the ongoing economic crisis?

The workers' movement should also make demands to transform the current truncated 'democracy'. The House of Lords should be abolished; there should be a single assembly which combines the legislative and executive powers hitherto divided in Britain. Members should be elected for a maximum of two years with votes at age 16, with the right of recall by their constituents. Democracy like this would lead to greater participation by the mass of the population. A change in the electoral system to proportional representation would also be an improvement.

The fact that these issues are not being raised so far in the debate in Britain reflects the absence of a mass party that stands in the interests of the working class, which is



needed as urgently in England and Wales as it is in Scotland. The Labour conference, taking place as we go to press, confirms yet again that a Labour government will mean continuing vicious austerity - a freeze on child benefit for two years, keeping the Con-Dem benefit cap, raising the state retirement age and scrapping the winter fuel allowance!

This programme will not mobilise popular support for Labour. It is an understanding that a Labour government will mean no real change which led many workers in Scotland to vote Yes. This, not the West Lothian question, is also the major factor that endangers a Labour victory. Nonetheless, the hatred for the Tories and the growing division in their ranks means that Labour may well be elected despite itself. This is a new era of four, or in fact five, six and more-party politics, in which 'stability' will be elusive.

New party needed

Whatever the political stripe of the next government, it will be weak and crisis-ridden - managing an economy which, at the very best, is stagnating. The most important lesson of the Scottish referendum is that working class people - if organised - have the power to force change. The co-ordinated public sector strike action taking place on 14 October is an important step in the battle against low pay, and also vital preparation for the industrial struggle against austerity that will be needed beyond the general election.

Ukip are making gains by posing as the anti-establishment party, while in reality they are a bunch of right-wing millionaires and stockbrokers. A real 'anti-establishment' party is urgently needed. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is working to prepare the ground for a party - a mass party of the working class with clear socialist policies - which would be capable of uniting different sections of the working class and cutting across racism and nationalism. As a step in this direction the Socialist Party is arguing for TUSC to aim to stand as widely as possible in the 2015 general and local elections.



Top right: the leaders of the capitalist parties will all be damaged in the long run; Above: Socialist Party Scotland called for "Yes and fight for socialism"

Labour to continue austerity offensive

Matt Gordon

The Labour Party conference in Manchester was the last before the general election with Labour setting out its policies for a future government.

After five years of unrelenting Tory austerity and a 'recovery' that has only benefited those at the top, anyone hoping for something new would've been disappointed.

Labour has already promised a 'binding fiscal commitment' to match Tory spending plans - a continuation of austerity. Ed Miliband and shadow chancellor Ed Balls used conference to spell out what that means; for example, freezing (in other words cutting) Child Benefit, Winter Fuel Allowance, and increasing the retirement age, a huge blow to the living standards of millions.

The pro-Tory press continue to call Labour 'spendaholics' by pointing out that its figures don't add up. In reality this means that cuts under a Labour government will be deeper and more vicious than anything they are prepared to announce now.

These policies mean that a Labour win in the general election is far from certain. Miliband's approval ratings have consistently shown him behind Tory leader David Cameron. And the lead enjoyed by Labour is far narrower than would be expected for a party planning to win, but Miliband is hoping to sleepwalk into Number Ten.

It is the promise of 'more of the same' that's damaging Labour's election chances. But opposing the current Con-Dem government's cuts programme would win more support from ordinary people.

Miliband's proposal for a £8 an hour minimum wage falls short of a living wage - the £10 an hour starting point that the Socialist Party campaigns for - and even worse it



Miliband's austerity measures will hurt workers photo Paul Mattsson

"Ed Miliband says he would put up the minimum wage to £8 an hour by 2020 if elected. But if the figure of £6.50 an hour from October 2014 was raised by just 2.5% a year until 2020 it would reach £7.54 anyway. So over six years the offer from Miliband is 46p an hour. Try not to spend it all at once."

An Aslef train driver

is not to be implemented until 2020, so gives no relief to the millions of people who are struggling on poverty wages right now.

The disregard Labour leaders have for their own conference is reflected in the fact that it was a carefully stage managed affair, with little room for real debate. All the major decisions had been made behind closed doors and were announced during carefully crafted set-piece speeches.

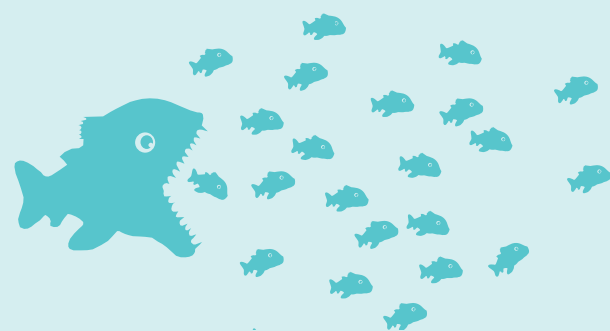
Every year a new curtailment of the remaining democracy is introduced, most recently the direct appointment of the Shadow Cabinet and of course the effective breaking of the trade union link at the infamous special conference last March.

If any resolutions challenging the leadership do get through, then conference has no binding mandate on them anyway.

The socialist 'Yes' campaigners in the referendum in Scotland have given a glimpse of what sort of movement can be built to oppose austerity in the whole of the UK, but it is guaranteed that the Labour Party would oppose such a movement. There is nothing that can be done to reclaim the party for the working class.

Instead the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, in which the Socialist Party is prominent, will be standing in the general election to give a real alternative to the pro-capitalist establishment.

Them...



Tough at the top

Spare a thought for the UK's top 1% of earners, currently struggling to get by on a paltry £370,000 a year. According to a new book on inequality by author Danny Dorling these earners actually believe they are in the "squeezed middle", (unlike the top 0.5% of 'earners' such as top company directors). But before readers get too choked up over how these people will pay for their children's private school fees, there are millions of workers earning vastly below the average salary of £24,596 a year who are struggling to put food on their tables.

£1,160 in London. Rent controls were abolished by the Tories in 1989.

Unsurprisingly, 8% of rents were either not paid or were late in August. This equals the highest level of people struggling with debt since last Christmas. According to the charity, Shelter: "Our housing market is completely out of control".

Phones fu

The mobile phone retailer Phones 4u has collapsed under a mountain of debt, threatening the livelihoods of 6,000 employees. PwC administrator has warned staff that: "You may not receive the full amount of pay that you'd usually expect to receive", despite Phones 4u having £110 million cash in the bank. Others likely to be short changed include the taxman - owed £90 million in unpaid VAT and Paye. However, one party laughing all the way to the bank is private equity owner BC Partners. According to media reports its purchasing and funding arrangements of Phones 4u has allowed it to walk away with an £18 million profit.

New NHS crisis

The funding crisis in the increasingly fragmented National Health Service (NHS) continues to deepen. Official figures reveal a £500 million deficit of the NHS in England for the first few months of 2014. For the first time self-governing Foundation Trusts have gone into deficit with 86 out of 147 in the red. Of non-foundation trusts, 33 out of 98 were in deficit. Cutbacks, especially in staffing, are leading to increased waiting times for treatments and will impact on patient care.

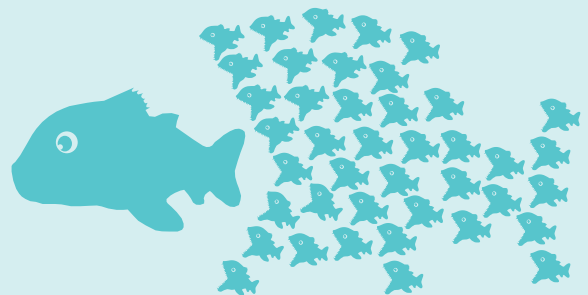
Out of control

Private sector rents continue to escalate pushing more tenants into greater debt. Average monthly rent in England now stands at £761 - or

Accounting error

Global accountancy giant PwC also pops up in the storm over Tesco's £250 million inflated profits. PwC audited Tesco's books yet the accounts were signed off despite 'irregular movements in commercial income'. Readers can draw their own conclusions.

...& Us



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Climate change: Summit for nothing

Simon Carter

Ahead of the United Nations summit, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in 161 countries to demand immediate action on climate change. An estimated 400,000 marched in New York City last Sunday where the summit was being held and a reported 40,000 in London.

While the 'great and the good' were prominent on the New York demo calling for internationally binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions, the likes of eco-politicians such as Al Gore do not explain how this can be met within global capitalism. This isn't surprising when the NY demo sponsors included corporations like BP, HSBC, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase.

Targets agreed by the United Nations up to now have either been

missed or have been set too low to make any meaningful change. And politicians like David Cameron or Barack Obama remain beholden to 'big oil' and the energy giants. Tinkering with capitalism is inadequate. We need system change to stop climate change.

That was the message Socialist Alternative Seattle councillor Kshama Sawant spelt out when she spoke at the New York protest. Kshama, was on a question and answer panel which included Chris Hedges, Naomi Klein, Bill McKibben and Bernie Sanders and was attended by 900 people in a church in Manhattan (see the full video at socialistalternative.org).

Socialist planning

Last week, the Socialist reported that record amounts of the principal greenhouse gas - carbon dioxide - are being released into the atmos-

phere by the little regulated, profit hungry energy companies, as well as transport, agro-chemical and other manufacturing industries.

The consequent increase in heat and energy in the planet is adding to the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods and severe droughts. In turn, agriculture is being adversely affected leading to price hikes in basic foods and increasing the suffering of billions of poor people globally.

Immediate binding international action to curb greenhouse gas emissions is vital to stabilise the climate but this is unlikely to happen on a capitalist basis where the cornerstone of a competitive system of production is profit.

That is why only international socialist planning of industry, based on nationalised and democratically run economies, can start to mitigate the environmental damage generated by capitalism.

What we saw

Jess Spear, Socialist Alternative Washington State legislature candidate and climate scientist, taking direct action on climate change

On facebook:



Following the People's Climate March in Seattle, Jess was part of a 200-strong protest blocked a BNSF coal train, forcing it to retreat. "We will stop these oil and coal trains putting downtown Seattle in danger and contributing to the global climate disaster," said Jess. Watch Jess declaring victory from the train tracks.

Public sector pay disputes: united action can win

NHS workers vote to strike

An NHS mental health worker

Health workers in Unison have voted by 68% for full strike action over pay, with 88% in favour of action short of a strike. We are striking for our patients and their carers, as well as ourselves.

Nurses, occupational therapists and other health staff have had enough of this government's brutal austerity agenda and we are sick of seeing our patients' lives ruined by NHS cuts.

In mental health services it is well known that psychosis patients die, on average, 14-20 years earlier than the rest of the population. Poverty is at the root of this shocking statistic. There is no more money being invested, but lots of new demands are made on NHS staff who are already overworked.

We are sick of NHS managers telling us that 'there is no money' as

our jobs being downbanded while their pay has gone up 8%! We are sick of being subjected to 'service redesign' which is a euphemism for more cuts, job losses and reduced services.

We are due to strike for four hours on 13 October - the day before local government and college workers strike.

But we want Unison and the other health unions to properly coordinate strike

action with other disputes.

13 October should be just the opening NHS strike. Next time we should come out for a whole day at the same time as other public sector workers.



College lecturers join 14 October walkout

Bill North

University and College Union (UCU) members - mainly lecturers - from more than 300 Further Education (FE) colleges in England will be joining the 14 October strike of local government workers.

This union's FE committee (FEC) decision followed an e-ballot where 85% rejected the employers' "full and final offer" of a 1% pay increase for 2014-15. The strike is a continuation of the dispute over last year's pay claim, when we were offered just 0.7%.

Like others in the public sector, FE lecturers have seen a real terms pay cut - 15% since 2009 in our case - along with higher pension contributions.

There are also pay variations across regions - the highest in Greater London, lowest in the South East and North East - and

a continuing gender divide, with average full-time pay for all staff higher for men (£27,522) than women (£25,824).

More and more courses are being run by lecturers on part time or 'sessional' (hourly paid) contracts. Students as well as staff are affected, with fees increasing while lesson times are reduced.

The FE committee will decide on dates for another round of national strikes at its next meeting on 17 October. It is also planning a campaign of targeted, escalating strike action in November. This will involve at least two branches in each region, chosen from those with the highest-paid college principals.

UCU members in FE will welcome support on our picket lines and protests, but even more welcome will be other workers taking action against this austerity government and employers who support it.

Care UK: 'We'll fight them all the way'

Doncaster Care UK workers in the Unison union, who were last year transferred from the NHS with 35% pay cuts, will start their next 21 days of strike action at 7am on 29 September. Strike committee chair **Roger Hutt** spoke to the Socialist.

"This strike will take us beyond the longest ever dispute in the health industry in the UK.

I've been in this job all my professional life. Care UK and its owners Bridgepoint are a toxic brand. They perceive the most vulnerable adults to be items to be bought and sold for profit. It's abhorrent.

If the NHS is privatised then the private sector is just going to fill its boots. The ramifications for the public sector and the trade union movement will be catastrophic.

We've already lost our contract, it's gone to Care UK so we're no longer under the auspices of the NHS. We're hoping, long term, they

lose the contract and we go back under the umbrella of the NHS.

Another one of my colleagues today handed in her notice. She said: 'I cannot physically work for Care UK and what they represent.'

They're saying we can replace you with people on minimum wage who'll do just as good a job - that's absolute nonsense.

It takes you a lifetime to get to know the people you care for. They're like my extended family.

We haven't accepted our fate. We'll fight them tooth and nail all the way. Care UK have offered 2% to new staff and basically nothing to old NHS staff, just a possible 1% pay

rise next year in line with the NHS.

At the meeting I told them: "You're taking £500 a month off me, but you may possibly, possibly, be offering £15 more a month next April. Excuse me for not jumping through hoops and doing cartwheels."

When we first went out on strike we thought we were on our own. But we're not. We're the majority not the minority.

A 93-year old man read my article in the Observer and said it was the most upsetting thing he'd ever read. He sent £25 to our hardship fund.

He said: 'I've never been involved in any trade union dispute, I've never been out on strike, but when I read your article I had to send you some money.'

Donations: Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5GJ (cheques to 'Doncaster, District & Bassetlaw Health Branch')



Fast Food Rights campaign supporters, spearheaded by the BFAWU bakers' union, demonstrated outside Labour's national conference in Manchester demanding the banning of zero-hour contracts and the introduction of a universal £10 an hour minimum wage photo H Caffrey

Rail updates

Tube overtime ban

RMT members working at London Underground (LU) stations will start an overtime ban on 24 September in opposition to mayor Boris Johnson's decimation of jobs and services on the tube.

Despite months of discussions between RMT and London Underground, and two rounds of strikes so far, major job cuts and downgrading is still planned.

Every ticket office is due to close by the end of 2015.

The RMT has threatened more strike action if the cuts aren't withdrawn.

Arriva Trains Wales

Drivers working for Arriva Trains Wales will strike for 24 hours on 26 September over the misuse of disciplinary procedures. The strike, involving Aslef and RMT members, will start at midnight.

An Aslef member

RMT election

Mick Cash has been elected as the new RMT general secretary. The election was held following the death of union leader Bob Crow in March.

Unison Bureaucracy Unmasked

The Defend the Four Story

How four Socialist Party members defeated victimisation in their own union

Available for £5 (plus p&p) from www.leftbooks.co.uk

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Croydon leisure centre strike for decent wages

Unite members working at five leisure centres in Croydon, south London, took strike action on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 September against pay cuts by their private sector employer Fusion Leisure.

The action by 48 recreation assistants, and fitness and swimming instructors follows a 24-hour strike on 10 July.

On Friday, the workers supplied council office staff with coffee, cereal bars and Unite 'freebies' as they went into work at the council offices.

The demo highlighted poor pay in the leisure industry, while supporting the national local government pay campaign for a £1 an hour pay rise.

Unite will also be organising protests at Fusion's sites in nearby borough Southwark.

Fusion is saving money by employing a 'multi-tier' workforce. Workers doing exactly the same job are paid at varying rates and have different basic terms and conditions. But when Croydon borough council awarded the contract in 2007 to Fusion Leisure it was on the



Sharing solidarity with council workers and the public photo Mark Thomas

basis of a single-tier workforce.

The strike is part of a wider campaign by Unite to organise workers in the contracted-out leisure industry across the capital.

Unite members at Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) are also now being balloted for strike action. GLL runs leisure centres across London and uses zero-hour contracts for two-thirds of its staff. The company claims to be a 'social enterprise'!

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "We have had a fantastic re-

sponse from workers at GLL. Workers told us about their zero-hour contract experiences and lack of pay. GLL withdrew the email facility from the rep who put the information out - another indication that this so called 'social enterprise' is just like any other employer.

"The organisations that promote and support social enterprises claim they are a better alternative to straight profit making companies - but in employment terms, they are just as bad."

Thirst for socialist ideas in Scotland

Socialist Party Scotland reporters

On the final day before the Scottish referendum vote, a grassroots Yes info rally mobilised tens of thousands to Glasgow's George Square. The mood was excited and energised.

Socialist Party Scotland was present in the square throughout. We stood out with our red material and banners calling for "Yes and fight for socialism". Our stall was swamped throughout the day with hundreds signing up for more information. We sold out of copies of the Socialist, distributed thousands of leaflets and raised £350.

Our speakers called for a mass mobilisation to vote Yes. We called for this to be the beginning of a mass movement in the workplaces and communities to end austerity. People stopped and applauded and entered discussion when we highlighted the brutality of this profit-driven capitalist system.

Brian Smith, Socialist Party Scotland member and branch secretary of Glasgow City Unison addressed the square at one of the busiest points.

Mood

Brian explained this was an opportunity to take control back for ordinary working people and that the economic powers of independence should be used to take socialist measures. He got huge cheers throughout the square when he pointed out the sheer wealth inequality in Britain and called for a new political party of working people.

While Yes voters are disappointed

with the vote, this mood and energy has not dissipated. Immediately after the result, Socialist Party Scotland members were out on the streets to discuss with people how the fight against the Tories and austerity can best be continued.

Joining

We have been inundated with people saying they want to join when they meet us on campaign stalls, come to our meetings, or get in touch via our website. In a typical phone call to someone who has expressed an interest in joining Socialist Party Scotland we hear: "I was inconsolable on Friday but now I think we've got to keep on fighting".

Over 90 attended our post-referendum public meeting in Glasgow on 22 September. Five people joined on the spot and many others took forms away to fill in or pledged to come back next week or meet up with our members to discuss and ask questions.

We are now turning all of our new and existing members to the urgent tasks ahead - fighting to take steps towards a new mass workers' party, building an army of 16 and 17 year olds to campaign for a £10 an hour minimum wage and an end to zero-hour contracts, and fighting for a socialist alternative to austerity.

See more analysis of the Scottish referendum on pages 6 and 7



Top to bottom: SPS stalls have been inundated; a section of the Glasgow SPS meeting; night before the vote in George Square photos SPS members



Round up: Socialist Students at the freshers fairs

Manchester

Socialist Students ran campaign stalls every day of the University of Manchester freshers fair, campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage. We signed up 110 students to the society over the week as well as raising £48.

21 people attended our first 'what is socialism?' meeting. We discussed our aims and policies, and what we have done in the last year in the Manchester area.

We asked what campaigns students would be interested in. Many said they would like to be involved in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition campaign for the general election. Some were so enthusiastic to get involved that the following weekend they joined us on an anti-fracking demonstration (see page 8).

Bridget Russell

Bradford

Socialist Students held a stall outside Bradford University on the first day of freshers week to campaign for a £10 an hour minimum wage and sign people up to join Socialist Students. We met many students having to work part-time to make ends meet, who agreed with us when we pointed out that multinationals like McDonalds could easily afford £10 an hour.

In the evening we held a 'what is socialism?' meeting, where several new people came. Despite only planning an hour long meeting, discussion went on much later as we covered issues from the Scottish independence referendum to the housing crisis.

We are determined to make a breakthrough this year and set up an official Socialist Students society.

Iain Dalton

Westminster

At the post freshers fair 'what is socialism?' meeting we discussed the Islamic State, Scotland and \$15 Now's historic victory. Three people bought tickets to Socialism 2014 and activists made plans to hand in the paperwork to become an affiliated society next week.

Helen Pattison

Queen Mary

120 people signed up. On the day of the Scottish referendum we had a poster saying "Vote Yes and fight for socialism" which got a lot of interest and sparked debate. We sold ten copies of Megaphone (the Socialist Students magazine) and four copies of the Socialist. We plan to work with the LGBT+ society to show Pride next term and are working with the film society to show Spirt of 45. One student bought a ticket to Socialism 2014.

QMUL Socialist Students

Please send reports of Socialist Students freshers stalls and meetings to editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Academies scandal: privatisation leads to nepotism and profit making

Simon Robinson
Leicester NUT member

The Socialist (issue 782) previously reported on a campaign to stop Rushey Mead in Leicester becoming an academy. The school management has never given clear reasons why an academy would benefit anyone involved in the school. But despite a strong campaign, we left for our summer break expecting that we would return to a school on the edge of the academy cliff.

However, the school has already become embroiled in the world of privatisation through a PFI-style, 'Building Schools for the Future' rebuild. The complex financial arrangements involving G4S and other parasitic elements of the private sector mean that no one is now sure when the conversion will go ahead.

To their shame the local authority has already issued TUPE notifications (to say terms and conditions will be protected after a change of employer) to all staff, despite not having a date for conversion!

Staff have been told that the directors, members and trustees of the academy trust will be populated by individuals who have been strong advocates of the academy throughout the consultation period. This includes retired head teachers who spoke to the governors about the joys of academisation and 'consultants' who were



At one academy chain all non-teaching posts are being 'outsourced' photo the Socialist

keen to speak to staff to reassure them over any concerns - all of them seem to have found themselves in some part of the management structure. The NUT will be looking very closely at any signs of nepotism!

Exposed

However, it is not just at Rushey Mead that we found ourselves surrounded by this creeping privatisation. More and more examples of 'questionable practices' within academies are being unearthed.

After a recent Institute of Education report, examples of profit making and nepotism are beginning to embarrass the Tories. Head teachers attend £50,000 'training courses' which are "run by friends", legal services are conveniently provided by the chairman of the academy trust... the list is endless.

However, it is where the big players of the private sector move into education that we should be most worried! Aurora Academy trust which has four primary schools in East Sussex is already paying

£100,000 a year to its US 'parent company' Mosaica Education for the privilege of using its 'global curriculum' called 'Paragon'!

Grace Academy Trust in the Midlands, set up by big Tory backer Lord Edmiston, paid £1 million to or through companies with either direct or indirect connections to Edmiston himself or one of the Academy trustees!

Warning

The most audacious example belongs to Academy Enterprise Trust (AET). AET runs 77 schools and has announced that all non-teaching posts will be 'outsourced' to the private sector. The whole privatisation will be overseen by PricewaterhouseCoopers! This means that a large proportion of the DfE money coming into the academies in this chain will go straight to a range of private companies - all overseen by a giant tax accountant firm!

NUT activists have been warning for a long time that before long we will be working in schools where the majority of staff are employed by the private sector, from G4S to teaching supply agencies, and where we work in privatised buildings.

All education workers should redouble their efforts to resist this privatisation of education. It is now more urgent that we organise and strike together starting in October!

1.6 MILLION VOTE YES IN A WORKING CLASS REVOLT AGAINST AUSTERITY

Launch a new mass working class party now



Socialist Party Scotland members campaigning during the referendum photo SPS

If the “strategists” of British capitalism believed that the narrow No vote in the independence referendum would allow politics to return to “normal” this illusion has been shattered by the events since. Tens of thousands of working class people, radicalised and angry, are now looking to hit back at the political elite and are seeking out a political vehicle to achieve this.

Huge numbers are now joining political parties that campaigned for a Yes vote. The SNP reported 18,000 new members in five days; the Scottish Greens have had around 3,000 applications to join. Socialist Party Scotland, Solidarity and other socialist organisations have been inundated with interest and requests for membership.

Socialist Party Scotland believes that a new working class party in Scotland should be launched without delay with the aim of building this into a mass party in a short time.

If this call was made in a clear way – including by Tommy Sheridan, leading trade unionists, Socialist Party Scotland, Solidarity and other socialist organisations in Scotland – it would attract thousands of new working class



Many have left Labour in disgust

people and young people to its banner: Including many who participated in politics for the first time during the referendum through groups like the Radical Independence Campaign and other Yes campaigns.

There is enormous and justified anger towards the Labour Party who acted as the main prop for Project Fear in Scotland. The best way to channel that anger and hit back at the Labour leaders is to

ensure a new party for young people, trade unionists, socialists and the wider working class is built: A party that can both stand in elections and help lead mass campaigns against cuts in communities and workplaces.

The SNP offers no way forward. The numbers joining the SNP, a party that has passed on the Tory cuts in Scotland, is a warning of the dangers of delaying launching a new working class party. The SNP are benefiting from having been seen as standing up against the onslaught of Project Fear.

But, in practice, their pro-big business policies and the fact that they are carrying through cuts means they do not offer any way forward in fighting for the interests of working class people in Scotland.

Indeed the Scottish government plan to implement at least £2 billion in Westminster cuts in the next two years. This act alone will repel many workers and young people who are initially attracted to the SNP.

Transforming

If a new working class party is launched it could transform the situation and allow a real socialist alternative to austerity to be built into a mass force. A party that would actually oppose cuts in practice, rather than words alone; that would stand for public ownership; for a real living wage of £10 an hour; for an independent socialist Scotland and whose public representatives would stand on a worker's wage.

Socialist Party Scotland believes that such a party should be broad and fully democratic. This means it should have a federal structure that would allow members to join as individuals as well as encouraging existing socialist organisations to take part while retaining their identity and structures.

Crucially, this would also allow trade union organisations to affiliate to a new party. The potential to attract trade union organisations to such a party is considerable.

This unique political opportunity must be seized. If it is, thousands of working class people who voted Yes in the referendum would be given a chance to carry out that struggle in a mass movement to oppose cuts and austerity and for a socialist Scotland.



Yes campaigners assemble in George Square, Glasgow photo SPS

Philip Stott

Secretary, Socialist Party Scotland

In the teeth of a ferocious campaign from the British capitalist establishment the independence campaign in Scotland won the support of more than 1.6 million people, overwhelmingly from the working class, securing 45%. No won with 55%.

According to the YouGov polling organisation, support for independence stood at 24% in January 2014. This increased by 21% in nine months as hundreds of thousands of working class people poured into the Yes camp seeking fundamental change and an escape from austerity.

There was a very real threat of a Yes majority in the ten days before the vote which rocked the capitalist establishment to its foundations. However, a combination of panicked late promises of more devolved powers for Scotland and the unleashing of “Project Fear on steroids” by big business, the capitalist media and the Tory, Labour and Lib Dem parties, to save their class interests, secured a No majority.

The fact that so many working class and young people refused to be cowed and voted Yes reflected the desire among the “victims” of austerity to use the referendum as a weapon to hit back at the political establishment.

‘Intimidation’

The charge of intimidation aimed at Yes supporters, and made by Labour and the bosses’ press, is farcical. Project Fear was real intimidation. As is the savage austerity that is destroying working class lives and communities day-in and day-out.

Moreover, the immediate legacy of this brutal intervention by the capitalist class is a radicalised and energised working class in Scotland who have been “educated” as to the lengths that the capitalist elite are prepared to go to defend their own interests.

The overwhelming mood of those who’ve voted Yes is naturally disappointment, but also that the fight against cuts and for a new political future for Scotland goes on. Indeed, that the momentum needs to be

stepped up in the aftermath of the referendum.

Many of these angry and energised working class people can be won to socialism and to a new mass working class party in Scotland. This task of establishing a new political force for the working class is something that socialists and trade unionists need to urgently turn their attention to following the referendum.

Illustrating this mood, Socialist Party Scotland received this text from a 22 year-old from East Kilbride just after the result: “Disappointed with the result but it has helped me make up my mind, so I have sent you an application to join your party. I am 100% behind the Socialist Party”

Huge turnout

A colossal 3.6 million voted in the referendum, an 85% turnout which broke all records. The turnout in working class areas was unprecedented. In housing schemes across Scotland it reached 70% plus. This compares with average turnouts in council elections of 25-30%. Hundreds of thousands of working class people voted Yes, seeking an escape from brutal austerity and the capitalist political elite who are implementing these cuts.

Working class strongholds including Scotland’s largest city Glasgow, Dundee, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire voted Yes. Working class communities in cities and towns across Scotland also saw a majority voting Yes.

Some workers did vote No, many reluctantly, when faced by the tsunami of threats and blackmail by big business and the media that jobs would go, companies would relocate to England and that working people would be worse off under independence.

The media was overwhelmingly savagely hostile to independence. Only one newspaper in Scotland, the Sunday edition of the Herald, supported a Yes vote. The naked bias of the BBC caused outrage and exposed the corporation as an arm of big business interests.

The failure of the SNP leaders to respond to these attacks, emphasising their desire to cut taxes for big business and seeking a currency union that would have caught an independent Scotland in an austerity

trap, left the propaganda of Project Fear largely unanswered.

Another key factor in the result was a lack of confidence in the SNP leadership’s proposals for an independent Scotland, which were predicated on a continuation of capitalism and no clear end to cuts. The lack of trust and confidence in Alex Salmond and the SNP was continually expressed by many during the campaign. Most people, when polled, believed that Scotland and their own families would be worse off economically under the SNP’s version of independence.

Build a new party

Had a mass working class party existed it could have mobilised far greater support for a Yes vote based on a clear policy to end austerity, for public ownership, a living wage etc. That means a socialist Scotland that would deliver for the millions rather than the millionaires. The turnouts and mass enthusiasm for Tommy Sheridan and the Hope Over Fear tour, which Socialist Party Scotland played a leading role in, underlines that potential.

It’s urgent that moves to build a new mass party are taken now to provide a new political home for the working class. The example of Spain and the rise of Podemos in the recent European elections, which came from nowhere to receive millions of votes, shows what is possible.

If there is a delay in this development there is a danger that the opportunity can be lost and the pro-capitalist SNP can gain instead. Even Labour, despite its betrayals, could pick up short-term electoral support in the Westminster elections next year, when the question of removing the Tories from government is posed.

As Socialist Party Scotland predicted, the referendum was used as a weapon by huge numbers of working class people to protest against the political elite and the austerity they are inflicting on communities across the country. There was therefore a marked class differentiation in the vote.

The more affluent middle class and rural areas of Scotland voted heavily for No. As did a big majority of the over 55’s. While the turnout was high across Scot-

land, it was at its highest in middle class and rural areas that were mobilised to try and ensure the defeat of a Yes majority. This included areas where the SNP have had their traditional base of support.

Empty victory

The outcome of the referendum is ultimately an empty victory for the capitalist class and the political elite. It has ushered in a new and unstable situation for British capitalism. The conceding of more widespread powers for Scotland is now unavoidable.

The issue of Scottish independence has not been “settled for a generation” as claimed by Cameron. The demand for another referendum will grow, especially following the Westminster elections in 2015. All the main parties, including Labour, will continue with austerity and Tory cuts.

Most importantly, this referendum has exposed the erosion of support for the main parties of big business, in particular the Scottish Labour Party.

The Tories and the Lib Dems are almost an extinct species in Scotland. But Labour’s base of support among the working class will have been undermined even further by acting as the main prop for Project Fear and working hand-in-glove with the Tories. As one NHS worker put it to us: “Labour saved the Union, but it lost the working class.”

Incredibly, Labour’s leader in Scotland Johann Lamont described the vote as a “victory”. Labour’s former working class base has been decimated and they will not be forgiven for the role they have played.

There is both disappointment and a real and lasting anger among thousands of working class people at the outcome of the result.

The feeling that the media, big business and the political establishment need to be taken on will grow in the aftermath of the referendum. There is no possibility that the huge radicalisation of working class people that has taken place through the referendum will be dissipated as long as this mood and combativity is built on.

For updates and to read full versions of these three articles go to www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

SNP - no way forward



Tommy Sheridan addresses NSSF trade unionists photo Senan

Unfortunately, instead of leading the call for a new party for the working class in Scotland, Tommy Sheridan has since released a statement to the press – in a “personal capacity” and without consultation with leading members of his own party – calling for a vote for the SNP in the Westminster elections next year.

Tommy states: “I suggest that we in the Yes movement promote continued unity by backing the most likely Independence supporting candidate at next May’s election. In concrete terms that means advocating an SNP vote to try and unseat as many pro-No party supporters as possible”.

He also adds a caveat that pro-independence parties should not stand against SNP candidates if those candidates commit to “fight all Westminster cuts to welfare and public services”. The SNP have in fact implemented the Westminster cuts to the penny in Scotland since 2010.

This statement is a terrible political mistake on every level. Not only has Tommy turned his face against building a new mass working class party, within which he could have played a leading role. Even worse, by calling for an SNP vote he is encouraging working class people who look to him to give political support to a party that is implementing Tory austerity – not fighting Tory austerity.

Socialist Party Scotland understands the huge mood that exists to hit back at Labour and the political establishment. We share that desire. However, we cannot support a call for a vote for a party that in a few weeks’ time will be implementing a budget of yet further cuts to public services in the Scottish parliament.

The SNP-led Scottish government has carried through over £3 billion in Westminster cuts since 2010. They claim they can do nothing about this: “Our hands

are tied”. But we have explained many times that if the Scottish government and local councils refused to make the cuts, demanded a return of the billions stolen from Scotland by the Con-Dem’s and helped build a mass movement for the money for jobs and public services the Tories could be defeated.

Instead we need to build our own party and stand independently against the parties who are implementing cuts, and this includes the SNP.

Tommy should withdraw this call to vote for the SNP and use the tremendous standing he has among working class people to help build a new mass working class party which would represent a massive step forward in building a mass movement against austerity and for a socialist Scotland.



Alex Salmond

Tenants threatened by ‘feudal lord’



Russell Brand is actively supporting the campaign photo Paul Mattsson

Brian Debus
Hackney Socialist Party

Tenants on the New Era estate in Hackney are faced by an unholy alliance of predatory property speculation. It comes in the form of US-based Westbrook Partners and feudalistic landlord Richard Benyon MP.

Speaking to the Socialist, New Era tenant Mrs Hammond said “we have spent thousands on the flats modernising them up and now they are slinging us out.”

Benyon, the richest Tory MP, lives on an ‘estate’ with a castle, a deer park and 20,000 acres of land. His interest is clearly in yet more profit for his vast estate and to hell with the tenants.

Westbrook also has form. The firm bought 1,600 properties in New York with the intention of driving up rents and making massive profits out of the misery of its tenants.

They were unsuccessful. They failed to maintain mortgage pay-

ments which led to foreclosure. During this period next to no maintenance was done.

“These guys took \$133 million from the bank and not one dime has gone into taking care of the buildings we live in,” said Debra Cooper, a tenants’ union leader. “We live with constant leaks. I regularly don’t

have heat or hot water. We have no mail boxes and can’t get our mail. Enough is enough.” (From campaign website thesurrealestate.org.)

A massive campaign by the New York tenants has won rent rebates of \$600 each - totalling \$1million - and an increase in property maintenance.



Socialist Party activists on the New Era estate photo Paul Mattsson

Global day of eco action

Manchester

Around 3,000 people marched through Manchester to protest against the Labour Party’s support for fracking on 21 September. The demo was part of an international day of action on climate change (see page 3).

The demonstration finished with a rally just across the road from Labour conference. Speakers called upon Milliband and the Labour Party to push for a ban on fracking.

Greater Manchester Police kept a relatively low profile - which is in sharp contrast to the aggressive approach towards protesters up at the nearby Barton Moss fracking site.

The youth contingent on the demonstration, alongside Socialist Party members, chanted anti-capitalist slogans. This was despite stewards from the pro-capitalist Green Party objecting to them.

There is overwhelming evidence coming out of the United States to show that fracking poisons water and air for communities close to the drilling.

Over the next year the big oil and gas companies will seek drilling licences all over the country. The workers’ movement should put time and resources into combating this growing threat from the fossil fuel industry.

Dylan and Jo Murphy
Huddersfield Socialist Party



photo Paul Mattsson



London

Thousands attended a demonstration in London against climate change on 21 September, in solidarity with events taking place around the world. The global day of action coincided with the United Nations climate change summit in New York, where 400,000 demonstrated.

Socialist Party members took

part and argued for the nationalisation of the energy companies and other socialist policies to tackle the climate crisis.

Twenty four people gave their details to find out more about the Socialist Party and 28 copies of the Socialist were sold.

Sarah Wrack
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

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West Midlands fire engine cuts

Pete McNally
Worcester Socialist Party

Hereford Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is faced by management plans to reduce the number of fire engines in the county. Worcester Socialist Party members supported their protest against these cuts on 20 September.

It was an impressive effort by the FBU, with about 20 members leafletting and getting petitions signed. They had flags and placards and got a lot of public support.

The petition called for a referendum on raising council tax to fill the apparent shortfall in funding. We argued that it would be better to

call for more funding from central government.

Herefordshire shares its fire and rescue authority with Worcestershire and only elects councillors every four years - so the chance to mount a no cuts challenge in 2015 must not be missed.

We asked FBU members to consider being candidates next year for the anti-cuts Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which includes the Socialist Party. We found that one member followed TUSC on Twitter and another had previously stood for TUSC in Sheffield. So we may be able to challenge the cuts consensus in Herefordshire for the first time.

Socialist Party fighting fund

	£ target	£ received	July to September 2014	Deadline 29 September 2014
North West	1,200	2,697		
Northern	600	1,054		
South West	1,400	1,456		
Eastern	1,200	1,183		
Yorkshire	2,900	2,770		
West Midlands	2,100	1,950		
East Midlands	1,600	1,458		
Wales	2,300	1,896		
London	6,100	4,705		
Southern	1,200	677		
South East	750	227		
England & Wales	3,650	984		
TOTAL	25,000	21,056		

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Front row fury

Ronnie Job
Swansea Socialist Party

On 14 September I was told I had until midnight to donate to Labour - and win a front row seat for Miliband’s speech at Labour Party conference!

I don’t know how I ended up on a Labour mailing list. But there is zero chance of me donating to a party whose leader promises Tory

cuts, and whose councillors make them.

If there was ever any doubt about that (which there wasn’t) then Labour’s willingness to ally itself with the Tories, bankers and bosses to preserve the Union for the ruling class would have put paid to it.

I’ll be donating the money that Labour asks me for to the Socialist Party’s fighting fund. There it will contribute to putting forward a real socialist alternative - and anti-cuts candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Millions on streets for Catalan independence

Rob MacDonald
Socialismo Revolucionario
(CWI Spain)

On 11 September an estimated 1.8 million people took to the streets of Barcelona in the annual demonstration for Catalan independence. The mobilisation, stretching at least 11km, formed a massive 'V' down Barcelona's two main roads, symbolising the right to vote on the question of independence from Spain - 80% want such a vote.

A cross-section of society took part in the sea of red and yellow - the colours of Catalonia. Despite the official leaders of the protest attempting to confine the demonstration to strictly national demands, many people wore anti-cuts t-shirts. Socialismo Revolucionario intervened with 'La Brexta', a Catalan language version of our paper.

Referendum?

The Catalan government has announced a referendum for 9 November. But it is likely that the governing right wing PP party and the Constitutional Court will block it by legal challenges. The Rajoy government have one eye on the referendum in Scotland and will do anything to avoid such a vote taking place in Catalonia.

The CIU, the governing capitalist party in Catalonia, appears split on the question. All seem to agree that the "rule of law" cannot be broken, which is preparing the ground for accepting the Court ruling banning the referendum.

The ERC (Republican Left, a social democratic, pro-independence party which is leading in the polls) are calling for an illegal vote. But while calling abstractly for "civil disobedience", the ERC gives no clear indication of how this would be organised or what it would look like. They have ruled out mobilising the working class in a meaningful way.

Working class

The truth is that while demands from workers for a referendum increase, the ability of the Catalan capitalist parties to deliver is being reduced. It is critical that the leadership of the independence movement is not left in the hands of these people.

Only the mobilisation of the working class and people of Catalonia can force the hand of the Spanish state and allow a genuine referendum to take place. For example, a united call for a general strike in Catalonia in defiance of the ruling of the Constitutional Court would get a tremendous response.

Such a movement also requires



One small section of the demonstration

unity to be forged with the working class in struggle throughout the Spanish state, also suffering the impact of the PP's austerity policies.

Whether or not the referendum takes place, legal or not, the question of what type of Catalonia the people want should be at the top of the agenda.

Whether or not the referendum takes place, legal or not, the question of what type of Catalonia the people want should be at the top of the agenda

A Catalonia led by the CIU/ERC will not be much different from one led by PP or the pro-capitalist social democrats PSOE. The struggle for independence must be linked with the struggle to end austerity, to end capitalism and to radically improve the living conditions of all Catalans

and peoples across Europe.

Across the Spanish state, the working class is drawing radical conclusion as to the nature of the capitalist crises. The growth of IU (United Left), CUP (left nationalists in Catalonia) and Podemos (new party which evolved out of the 2011 Indignados movement) is a sign of this.

In Barcelona, it is likely there will be some sort of united left electoral challenge called "Guanyem" ('we win'), based around Ada Colau, the leader of the anti-evictions movement. This is a positive development.

Socialist programme

We need a programme that argues for non-payment of the public debt to the financiers, the ending of all austerity measures, for investment in public services based on needs, for the right of self-determination, and the nationalisation of the banks and key sectors of the economy, under workers' control and management.

With a programme such as this, working people in a socialist Catalonia can voluntarily link up with

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

workers across the Spanish state in a socialist confederation, and also with workers in countries like Greece and Portugal, fighting for an alternative socialist Europe for the mass of people and not the capitalist elite.

This is the best way to win independence and avoid the division of the workers of Europe and Spain.

Swedish elections: Conservatives collapse, extreme-right gains

Per Olsson
Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna
(CWI Sweden)

The elections in Sweden on 14 September were a catastrophe for the ruling right-wing alliance of four parties that have formed the government since 2006 (Moderates, Christian Democrats, Liberal Party and Centre Party). Never before have these parties had such poor election results - less than 40% combined.

On election night, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt announced his resignation as both prime minister and leader of the Moderates. Other right-wing parties may also see a change of leadership following the election results, and the alliance can now crack open.

This year's election took place against the background of a dramatic change in public opinion - against the government and right-wing politics. For a long time, the opinion polls pointed towards a clear victory for the red-green opposition (the Social Democrats and the Green Party, with the support of the Left Party). But the closer the election loomed, the smaller the red-green lead became.

The official red-green election campaign and media coverage lacked mention of any issues key to the working class: privatisation, welfare, education, the health care crisis, government jobs initiatives, etc. The red-green alliance did not put forward any anti-capitalist poli-



CWI member addresses a post-election anti-racist student rally

cies or any idea of taking some of the billions that the super-rich, large corporations and banks are sitting on.

Swedish Democrats

It was these weaknesses that meant the racist right-wing Swedish Democrats (SD) were able to make gains using a mix of populism and racism and could double their vote from last time. Although the SD voted with the last government on most issues, they tried to present the party as opposed to the government, alongside attacks on an alleged "mass immigration".

Despite its neo-liberal tradition

SD gained support from voters who are strongly opposed to profits in schools, and those disgusted with the Social Democrats declaring they will not reverse privatisation. The SD is perceived as a party that challenges the establishment, even though the party is part of the same establishment.

A weakened Social Democracy will now try to form a government with the Green Party. They can only form a new government and get proposals through with support of several other parties. On election night there were signals from at least the Liberal Party that cooperation is possible. The Left Party leader, Jonas Sjöstedt, also spoke about the possi-

bility of wider cooperation to isolate the SD. But as expected, the Social Democrats said no to the Left Party participating in a new government but want them as a supporting party in Parliament. It is too early to predict what the next government will look like.

Feminist Initiative

Neither 'isolation' nor 'cooperation' can stop the SD or arrest the economic, social and political crisis that creates the dissatisfaction that racist right-wing parties make gains from.

While the SD increased their vote, there is also a widespread desire to

Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna kept its two council seats in Haninge (south Stockholm) and as well as two out of three seats in Luleå (north Sweden). We are awaiting results for our candidate in Gothenburg. During the campaign, we raised what the party has achieved in numerous local campaigns and struggles, as well as a clear internationalist and socialist programme. We organised several protests and demonstrations against local cuts and against racism. In the six week campaign, we sold 4,500 election manifestos. We recruited dozens of new members and have more new members on the way.

stand up against racism, sexism and class inequalities. As well as the defeat of the government alliance, this was reflected in the Feminist Initiative (FI) coming close to getting into parliament. The FI is seen as a new feminist and left-wing challenge. It was elected onto 13 of the 21 councils it stood for.

The election campaigns by Rättvisepartiet Socialisternas (see box), showed that clear socialist policies can gain support. Continued grassroots campaigns are needed more than ever - for non-profit welfare, secure jobs, etc.

We have to fight for a new workers' party, with a socialist programme. This could offer an organised and united struggle and a programme against capitalism, right-wing politics and racist divisions.

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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

End tribunal fees

The TUC says the number of individual employment tribunal claims fell 70% between April and June 2014 as compared to the same period in 2013. This clearly results from charges introduced by the Con-Dem government. Sex discrimination claims fell by 91%, disability claims by 63% and race discrimination by 61% along with falls for all types of claims. Many of these workers will be in non-unionised workplaces with little protection from the bullying and intimidation rife in today's workplace as bosses push workers to breaking point.

91%
fall in sex
discrimination
claims since fees
were introduced

The government introduced fees, deterring many workers from taking cases to a tribunal, and telling the bosses they are free to treat workers how they please with no comeback. One worker left work and was not paid his holiday entitlement of £300. The fee he would have had to pay at a tribunal was £390 so he did not pursue it for obvious reasons.

The right wing trade union leaders' failure to organise a determined fight back has let the government and bosses off the hook.

A concerted campaign to unionise non-unionised workplaces would provide workers with protection against unscrupulous bosses, while coordinated strike action would show workers that the unions are serious about protecting jobs and improving conditions in the workplace.

Charlie Taylor

**Absurd fire cuts**

A huge fire broke out at a building under construction at a Nottingham University campus on 12 September, completely destroying what would have been a GlaxoSmithKline carbon-neutral chemistry facility.

The huge blaze needed over 50 fire-fighters to fight it and stop it from spreading. Fortunately no one was killed, but this is a clear demonstration of why the Labour-controlled fire authority's proposed budget cut of £2.4 million is absurd, even from the viewpoint of capitalist businesses wanting to preserve their property.

With those cuts in place it would have taken considerably longer for a response to reach its full strength and the damage and threat to lives could have been correspondingly worse.

Geraint Thomas

**Labour then and now**

In a Q and A session after the Tony Benn film (see review on right) showing in Liverpool, I congratulated the film's producers. I also introduced a 'tiny criticism' which was the absence of any reference to the struggle of the socialist-led Liverpool City Council in the 1980s. I compared Benn's unequivocal defence of the 47 Labour councillors who led the movement (which carried out huge reforms such as building council housing and opening new nurseries) with Kinnock's craven capitulation to the Murdoch/Maxwell press's demand for action against us.

I asked: what would Tony Benn's view be of a Liverpool Labour council under a Labour Mayor butchering services, and of Hilary Benn's letter telling local authorities that a Labour government would continue the Con-Dem cuts? There was much applause when I said the Labour Party no longer represents working class people and called for the formation of a new mass party.

Tony Mulhearn
Former Liverpool City Councillor

**National government**

Observing the embarrassing antics of Labour MP's suddenly flooding north to Scotland to help the other main parties campaign against Scottish independence made me reflect on history.

In 1931, faced with the fall-out from the Wall Street crash and the imminent collapse of the capitalist system, Ramsay MacDonald led a Labour government into forming a national government dominated by Stanley Baldwin's Conservative Party. The Labour Party took 14 years to recover.

The Great Depression was made harsher by the government's austerity policies and attempts to 'balance' the budget. This brutal approach failed to work but continued until the war coalition of 1940. It was said there was no alternative. Sound familiar?

We currently have a national government in all but name, with all-party consensus about neoliberalism, austerity policies, privatisation, protection for the rich and tax avoiders, anti-union legislation, poor employment protection, etc. Once again we are told, including by Labour, that there is no alternative. The Labour Party has no right to our vote or the money from trade union members.

Ian Hunter
Derby Socialist Party

Reviews

Film

Tony Benn: Will and testament

Matt Kilsby reviews 'Tony Benn: Will and Testament'

This is a personal and, at times, moving portrayal of a major figure on Labour's left. It is a series of interviews in the later period of Tony Benn's life, interspersed with films from his own archive and of contemporary film and TV footage. The story is told in Benn's own words.

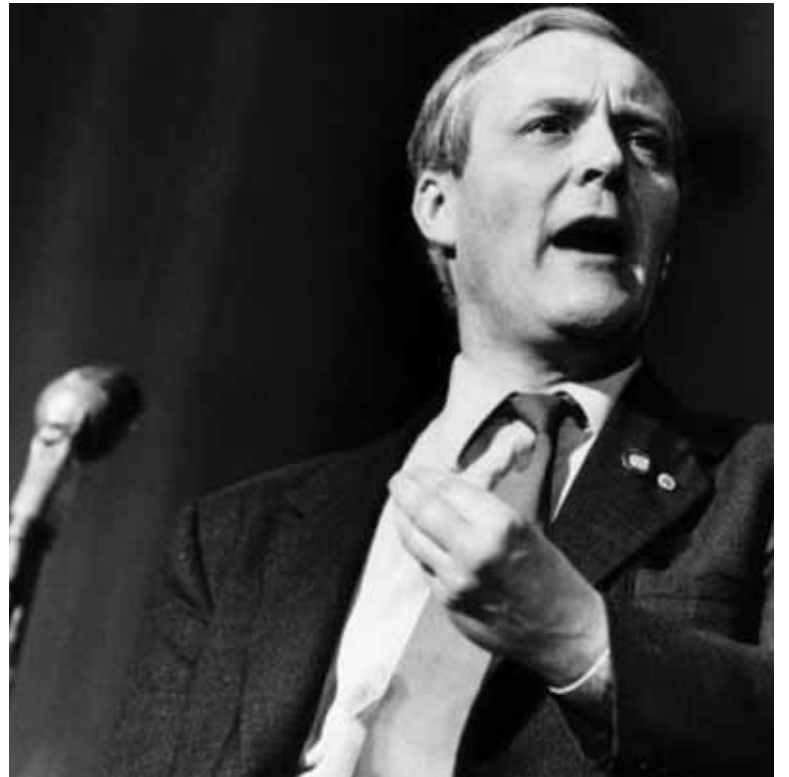
Benn's political career disproved the cynical dictum that the older you get, the more right wing you become. In the 1960s, Benn had to fight for his right to refuse a seat in the Lords – which he inherited on his father's death – to remain as an MP in the House of Commons.

On the centre-right in Harold Wilson's Labour government of 1964-70, Benn shifted to the left under the influence of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation, which is detailed in the film.

Campaigner for democracy

Throughout the 1970s, with Benn as a major influence, the left kept advancing in both the Labour Party and the trades unions. Benn was a campaigner for democracy in the Labour Party, which is why he was a firm critic of former Labour leader Neil Kinnock and the right-wing's later witch-hunting and victimisation of Militant.

Benn approved the film's final cut but unfortunately, except for the miners' strike, it barely mentions the 1980s titanic workers' struggles. We hear little of his fight to become Labour Party leader in 1976 or coming within 1% of winning the deputy



Tony Benn

leader race in 1981. The rise of Militant, with three MPs elected, and the victory of the socialist councillors in Liverpool between 1983 and 1987 is overlooked as if he wanted to draw a veil over these hugely important events.

The film also fails to explain how the right-wing offensive within Labour led to the victory of Thatcher's Tory Party in the 1983 general election.

Benn remained loyal to the Labour Party until he died. In the film

he makes clear that Labour is no longer socialist or representative of working class interests. If only Benn had thrown his weight behind the calls for a mass-workers' party to the left of Labour then Britain's left would be all the stronger today.

As a personal memoir of one of the most influential left wing figures in recent times, Will and Testament is worth watching. However, it is disappointingly lacking in political content and serious analysis.

Film

Obvious Child

Obvious child, described as an "abortion rom-com", is groundbreaking cinema not because of special effects, but because it's a realistic portrayal of a woman deciding on and getting an abortion.

A film discussing a procedure that one in three women will have in their lifetime is too much for many cinemas apparently - only three cinemas across London are showing Obvious Child.

Compare Obvious Child's character deciding to have an abortion to Knocked Up, where the characters refuse to even say the word "abortion" as it's too horrible to contem-

plate or Juno, where there is a pro-life protester outside the dark, cold clinic. Obvious Child's producers asked Planned Parenthood for advice to make the scenes realistic.

In the last century only 300 abortion stories have been seen on film and TV. Of characters who obtain abortions, a huge 9% are killed off in the show.

Obvious Child is a funny movie about a 20-something comedian making her way in the world. But it's unmissable because it depicts a part of life that many women are told they should be ashamed to discuss.

Helen Pattison



The central character is a comedian

Theatre
Skylight

Worthing in Sussex always re-elected Tory MPs in the past and worship of the blessed Margaret Thatcher is widespread. But the town's Con-naught Studio was packed for a re-

cent performance of "Skylight" by David Hare.

The play is part of the National Theatre Live screening programme, where plays are broadcast throughout the country. David Hare made it a condition of putting the play on that it should be broadcast by the NT Live programme.

In it Carey Mulligan plays a teacher. Bill Nighy as her former lover is the epitome of Thatcherism. The play cleverly weaves together a love story, a comedy and a political statement.

David Hare commented in the interval that it was originally staged at the end of the Thatcher era when people working in public services were denigrated and "we have just had four years of the same!"

Carey Mulligan has one final statement. She says teaching is about setting your own objectives, and celebrating them when you achieve them rather than following the daft objectives set by politicians who hate the public services. All teachers will recognise that.

Derek McMillan

The human cost of social care cuts

Over the last few decades Britain's social care system has been bundled up and sold off to the private sector. As cuts and privatisation continue to bite - increasingly affecting the NHS as well as social care - a catastrophe is being created. **Ann Parkes** describes her family's desperate struggle to gain access to decent care for her husband.

"Alf, my husband, was diagnosed 24 years ago with Parkinson's disease. Then later he also began to suffer from dementia. At first it was just little things like seeing things in the cupboard that weren't there but later he tried to attack me with a bread knife and threatened to break my jaw. He got out on one occasion and was wandering on the main road.

For ten years I had no assistance looking after him, I was left with no support. In that time I had one holiday when my kids came and looked after him.

"It reached a point where I could no longer bathe him. He fell on me in the bathroom. My head cracked on the wall, I suffered fractured vertebrae and was hospitalised. Alf was on the floor for twenty minutes until my son could get there to get him up.

Alf then went into respite care in a local care home. I wanted him to come home again but for that I needed a care package put in place because I couldn't cope any more. Then there were arguments between Birmingham and Solihull Social Services about who was going to be responsible.

During that period he deteriorated. The home he was in for respite couldn't keep him any more. So he was sent by social services to a care home called Jubilee Gardens.

It is a private care home; social services moved him there because it was the only bed they could get. He was only there for a couple of weeks but when we took him out my kids had to carry him out to the car, and he looked like death. He'd lost so much weight. My children had repeatedly found him lying in bed

in urine and faeces. His congealed breakfast was still found there after lunchtime and he had grown a beard. He's never had a beard in his life, he is 76 years old, but they hadn't shaved him. It was clear he wasn't being given his medication. I insisted he be taken out of there. We managed to get him a place where he had previously had respite care. That is where he is now.

I complained to the Care Quality Commission about Jubilee Gardens and they referred the complaint back to Solihull council who in turn referred it to the Deputy Manager of the home, one of the people the complaint was against!

I had asked friends and campaigners to email Social Services demanding a proper investigation into Jubilee Gardens. I was contacted by someone from Social Services who said that, if I didn't stop, they would make sure I was arrested. I then had an intimidating visit from two police officers.

Later I went to the police station to demand to speak to a senior officer and was told it was impossible, so I lay across the chairs. They locked me up for ten hours! They denied me a phone call; they did a mug shot and fingerprints. No one knew where I was.

In the cell I fainted and they had to call an ambulance. It was only when I told the paramedics that I was allowed to phone my son.

The police said they couldn't bring a criminal case, but I could pursue a civil suit against the home. I can't do that though because of costs. We have also had problems with the DWP stopping all of Alf's money at source even though he still has ongoing expenses - including loans - coming out of his bank



The government's spending cuts are making the care system "unsustainable"

account. Lloyd's bank has passed the resulting debts onto debt collectors who are now harassing me, which is very stressful.

In the last year I have suffered a perforated ulcer, and nearly died, brought on by the trauma I have suffered.

I always promised Alf I wouldn't put him in a home and it is very difficult to come to terms with. Maybe if support care had been available at home I wouldn't have had to. Social Services have acted with a total lack of morals, going so far as to get the police called on me for whistle blowing. It is time for people to take the power back."

The Socialist Party says:

- Immediately take all health and social care services and buildings back into the public sector, under democratic control, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.
- The government should provide the necessary extra funds to local authorities to run care homes, and to provide adequate home care.
- For qualified, well-paid public sector staff to work in care homes and provide community support.
- Rebuild the NHS! No to cuts - defend jobs and services

Con-Dems destroying our services

The Con-Dems' cuts in public services are destroying social care. Over the last three years a massive £3.5 billion has been axed. As a result, nearly 90% of councils in England have stopped providing care to people whose needs are ranked 'low to moderate', says the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (Adass). The cuts are making the care system "unsustainable", says Adass.

Many elderly people with failing health, who depend upon home visits to help with washing, cleaning and cooking, are no longer being supported. Yet many are completely dependent on council funded care packages, as their disability benefits are used to pay for other essential daily living costs, such as food and heating. Inevitably the health of those requiring care will deteriorate.

And according to a study earlier this year by the Nuffield Trust charity, which researches healthcare,

government austerity has meant that:

- Between 2009-10 and 2012-13 spending on social care for older people fell by 15% in real terms from £10.6 billion to £9.8 billion
- Almost 250,000 fewer older people received publicly funded community services in financial years 2012-13 compared to 2009-10, a 26% drop
- Home and day care spending by councils fell by 23% (or £538 million) over the same period
- The number of older people receiving home delivered meals has more than halved since 2009-10
- Transfers of money from the NHS to adult social care have more than doubled since 2009-10. Without these, service cuts in social care could have been even more drastic

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Kshama will be speaking at the Saturday night rally along with Bakers' union president Ian Hodson, Irish TD Ruth Coppinger, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe

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www.socialism2014.net or 020 8988 8777 for bookings/info

UNITED STRIKE ACTION CAN WIN

Support the October pay walkouts

Join the TUC London demo on 18 October

Jean Thorpe

Nottingham City Unison rep,
personal capacity

The image of a homeless person rummaging through a bin for food is sadly quite common. But now many low paid workers are also being forced into that situation.

I've been told about a low-paid worker at Nottingham city council in that position. His workmates would save out-of-date food from the communal fridge for him.

This kind of extreme in-work poverty is one of the by-products of the local government pay freeze in place since 2010. This is why we're striking on 14 October.

And it's not just the lowest paid workers who are struggling. I have had social workers approach me as a union rep, saying they cannot afford to fill up their car with fuel for work.

Further misery

Nottingham city council is heaping further misery on its staff. An ongoing local pay freeze is in place for many staff and last week the city council announced pay cuts via restructuring for home care staff.

A generalised fightback is essential. A successful outcome to our pay dispute, on the back of a strong strike and campaign, could also send a warning to council bosses - and the government - to back off from attacking jobs and services.

A recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development report stated that by 2018, public services could be at the level they were in 1938! Over 450,000 jobs have already been lost in local government since 2010.

Colleges

UCU members in Further Education colleges will now be striking on 14 October too, with NHS workers striking the day before. The ballot of council workers in Scotland finishes on 29 September and it is hoped their strike can be coordinated with ours as well.

The greater the number of disputes that are coordinated, the greater the confidence of those taking part. Trade union leaders should be talking to each other to maximise coordination, including any disputes in the private sector.

The dispute shouldn't finish on 14 October though. In my branch and no doubt in others, activists are

A successful outcome to our pay dispute could send a warning to council bosses - and the government - to back off from attacking jobs and services

demanding to know what is the union's strategy to try to win this dispute? If activists and members knew what future action is planned, there would be more confidence that we can win.

See page 4 for more on the NHS and college strikes

STOP PRESS: Given the decision by Unison, Unite and GMB unions to split the days of the health workers' action from local government, the PCS national executive has voted to call its members out on 15 October. This will mean three days of consecutive strike action to break the public sector pay freeze.



On the last council workers' strike on 10 July photo Paul Mattsson

What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW MASS 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 mass 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!