



# Pay cuts:

# ANGRY AND READY TO STRIKE!

As we go to press, public sector workers - including in the NHS, local government, colleges and the civil service - are due to take part in rolling strike action on 13-15 October. Two trade union activists say why they are striking.

## Roger Davey

Chair, Swindon & Wiltshire Unison Health branch (personal capacity)

For the first time in over 30 years health workers in England have overwhelmingly voted for national industrial action over pay.

On 13 October, tens of thousands of NHS staff will be on strike over what - even by the standards of this government - is an insulting and arrogant offer.

Incredibly over 60% of NHS workers will receive no pay rise at all, while the rest will get just 1%, and even that is almost worthless since its non-pensionable, and cannot be used to

calculate unsocial hours and other enhanced payments.

It's clear that not only will the pay freeze continue for years, but the government is also preparing to attack weekend rates of pay.

All this on to top of a 10% cut in real pay since 2010!

Is it any wonder then that health workers are angry and ready to strike?

However, it's not just the onslaught on their living standards that health staff face.

The huge financial cuts that have been inflicted on the NHS have put huge pressure on workers. Work-

loads and stress levels are at an all-time high, as often tired and exhausted staff attempt to provide a good standard of service.

Also alongside all these issues is the ever present threat of privatisation, which is accelerating after the reforms of successive governments.

Most health workers know we will not be able to achieve anything unless we are prepared to fight. The vote not only shows that we are prepared to struggle, but it also gives a warning to the Westminster politicians and employers that workers everywhere will no longer accept austerity and the dictatorship of millionaires, and are preparing to move into action. When that happens, nothing can stop us.

Royal College of Midwives members have voted by 82% - in their first ever strike ballot - to join the four hour strike on 14 October

Health workers in Wales are currently being balloted until 20 October in a separate pay dispute

**Unions should reject new local government pay proposals, see page 4**

## 'We don't want treasure hunts, we want decent pay!'

We've had our pay frozen in the civil service for the past four years. Workers everywhere are being degraded and humiliated, despite workload increasing through the roof. I know I have never felt so undervalued.

On top of this, our manager recently announced a month of 'treasure hunts' around Leicester to promote health and wellbeing. Maybe if our staff weren't working every hour god sends in overtime to supplement their inadequate income, they'd have the time and energy to exercise - but of their own choice! My entire office was incensed by this patronising scheme, telling management: 'We don't want treasure hunts, we want decent pay!'

The fact that this government will not even pay their own employees a decent wage in one of the most affluent countries in the world is a damning condemnation of capitalist society.

I will be out on strike on 15 October with my fellow PCS union members in the civil service, fighting for the pay rise we so richly deserve.

**Tessa Warrington**

**Britain  
needs a pay  
rise**

**Join the TUC London  
march on 18 October  
Assembles  
Embankment,  
11am**

# US-led bombings will widen divisions

The brutal bombing onslaught led by US imperialism on 'Islamic State' (IS) held parts of Iraq and Syria is pouring more fuel on the fires of civil war. Abhorrence is felt by people across the globe at reports of Islamic State killings and forced displacement of Shias, Kurds, Sunnis and others; and in the west at the beheading of western hostages. But the air attacks will solve nothing. They will only multiply the atrocities, be seen by ordinary people across much of the globe as another round of imperialist slaughter and aggression, and lead to more recruits for the IS on the ground.

Cameron's government, wary of repeating its shock parliamentary defeat when he sought to bomb the Syrian regime in August 2013, delayed a vote this time to make sure of Labour's backing. Also it confined the vote to air assaults on Iraq only – not Syria – and excluded any ground combat; though Cameron has made it clear that he favours widening the attacks to include Syria. Weighing heavily on the MPs' debate was what lay behind last year's parliamentary defeat: the catastrophic long wars on Iraq and Afghanistan with their massive destruction of life and on-going legacy of bloody sectarian division.

Journalist Patrick Cockburn commented in the Independent that "going by David Cameron's speech to the UN General Assembly, the government has no more idea of what it is getting into in this war than Tony Blair did in 2003". Defence secretary Michael Fallon spoke of another "long, drawn-out campaign".

Yet only 43 MPs opposed it, with a huge 524 in favour. As the US does not need UK military help, "privately, ministers admit the UK's involvement is largely symbolic", said Andrew Grice in the Independent. But Britain's capitalists want to uphold their position and prestige on the world stage, as well as their interests in the Middle East, which together shifted them towards intervention, no matter that it increases the risk of terrorist attacks on British civilians rather than reducing it.

## Changed position

This new offensive is a turnabout in US and British policy in the Middle East, from making withdrawals following the terrible failures of the Iraq, Afghan and Libyan interventions, to embark on new attacks that could escalate in scale and last for years. Obama came under increasing pressure from sections of the US ruling class and from various other capitalist powers globally to act against IS because of its aggressive and accelerating role in the tearing apart of Iraq and Syria and its contempt towards the world powers.

Over 40 countries signed up for the onslaught, including Saudi Arabia and a number of other Sunni Arab regimes. Wealthy



Only 43 MPs opposed the UK's involvement in the bombing of Iraq

donors in the Gulf countries had been helping to boost IS as one of the forces against the Iran-friendly regimes based in Damascus and Baghdad, and no doubt some are still doing so. But overall the repressive Gulf elites now feel threatened by the expansion of Islamic State, which among its proclamations has called for the ousting of the al-Saud monarchy.

Also, Turkey's government, having allowed the movements of IS and other Islamist militias across its border with Syria, is considering giving support to the US strikes, not least because of the instability being caused at its own border by Islamic State's present offensive on Kurds in and around Kobane, Rojava, in Syria and the influx of hundreds of thousands of desperate refugees into Turkey.

Following the development of mass opposition to George W Bush's wars, Obama tried to create an anti-war image for himself and has declared that the US will not "act as an occupying power". But the US ruling class doesn't want to be seen as unable to defend its prestige and interests across the world – especially in this period of tension with Russia in Eastern Europe over Ukraine and with China in the Asia-Pacific region.

The IS threatening the US capitalists' remaining interests in Iraq and those of their

Middle East allies tipped the balance back for them towards renewed military intervention, although they are still struggling to find a strategy for it. They have been able to seize the opportunity provided by a shift in the public mood. Ordinary people's horror at the brutality and rapid spread of IS – and promoting its violence on social media – has led to majority support in the US and UK for the air attacks – though notably not for ground troops.

## Ground combat

Virtually every media commentator points out that air attacks alone can't win a war against Islamic State. But sending ground troops would mean again becoming stuck in an unwinnable war, with huge costs financially and to the lives of the intervening troops. So for now the imperialists' strategy is to send military assistance to the failed Iraqi army – widely regarded as a corrupt, largely Shia sectarian force – and to some of the militias already fighting Islamic State, including the Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq and the Free Syrian Army in Syria.

However, the world and regional powers are not sending that assistance with humanitarian aims, but rather to fight a proxy war in their own interests on the ground and to buy influence over organisations that might hold territory after the war.

Furthermore, the very existence and growth of IS is a direct result of imperialist intervention – the group first started in the early period of the US-UK occupation – and most of the heavy weapons it has seized and is using were previously supplied to the Iraqi army by the US and to the Syrian army by Russia.

## Effects of US-led bombing

The New York Times reported that after the first six weeks of air strikes on IS in Iraq, it still held sway over a quarter of the country. Meanwhile civilians are also at the receiving end of the missiles – it is impossible for the bombers to target IS only. In addition, oil refineries, grain stores and other businesses and institutions are being destroyed, devastation that will impact massively on civilians regardless of who controls their area.

Many insurgents fighting against both IS and Assad's forces in Syria are incredulous and angry that the US strikes have enabled Assad to strengthen his position – he took

advantage of them to retake a swathe of territory near Damascus. Some militias are also furious that the US decided to strike the Khorasan group, an al-Qaeda offshoot that works with the Syrian opposition Islamist Nusra Front.

In Iraq, despite the recent change of ministers to make the government appear less Shia-dominated, the bombing of IS areas has the effect of aiding Shia and Kurdish fighting forces and making the Sunni population feel more vulnerable.

## Sunni opposition

US strategists want to try to encourage a Sunni opposition movement to Islamic State, as they did in 2007 against al-Qaeda, but IS is more developed than al-Qaeda was, and learning from history it is using extreme brutality to keep the Sunni population in check in the areas it controls. At the same time it poses as defenders of Muslims who accept its brand of Salafist/Wahhabi religious fundamentalism. Defence is a key issue for Sunnis in Iraq and Syria – in both countries they have suffered massacres from bombardments either by US-led forces or Assad's military, and in both they have suffered discrimination and sectarian bloodshed.

However, it is the task of the Iraqi and Syrian people – including the Sunni communities – to counter IS and not that of outside powers that will create an even greater nightmare scenario for the masses of the region. Working class people and the poor in Iraq and Syria – across all communities – need to build their own independently organised action from below, starting with democratically organised, non-sectarian defence bodies. They will need to discuss the taking up of socialist ideas, as the only path out of the horrors that capitalism and imperialism have unleashed on the region.

Workers' and socialist organisations internationally need to be at the forefront of spearheading movements against the rounds of imperialist intervention, and demand rights and decent conditions for refugees. We must also be ready to support and assist non-sectarian, independent, working-class based organisations in the Middle East, and uphold the necessity of protection of the rights of minorities and the right to self-determination.

**For the full version of this article, see [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)**



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# More brutal cuts from the imploding Tories

Paula Mitchell

The Tory party conference is a vision of a party in peril, and a leader surviving by the seat of his pants.

David Cameron hoped to steady the ship, reeling after weeks in which he and his party looked potential meltdown in the face. But instead they were rocked by another defection to Ukip and a sex scandal.

There has been no abatement of the cruel anti-working class agenda as Cameron and Osborne nervously look over their shoulder at a restless Tory right and the shadow of Ukip looming over them.

A further brutal £25 billion of cuts are promised by this government of millionaires, whacking 10 million people with benefit cuts.

They try to present this as fair to workers 'who have to pay for the benefits of the undeserving', but 7 million of those to be hit are in work. On top of this the public sector pay freeze will continue into 2017. Under-21s will be hammered with a vicious ban on housing benefit and a 'work for your dole' regime.

They hope the right and Tory voters will be assuaged with tax cuts for better off pensioners and a pledge not to increase taxes, balanced only slightly by threatening to chase tax-dodging corporations.

## Splits

The sexting scandal of Tory MP Brooks Newmark once again gives a glimpse of the seedy, arrogant lifestyle of an out-of-touch elite, but more important is MP Mark Reckless jumping ship.

The defection of Douglas Carswell to Ukip in August was the first concrete indicator of the potential splits that could open up in the Tory party. As we go to press the Tory party leadership is on tenterhooks, as Ukip's Nigel Farage taunts them with the possibility of another defection to coincide with Cameron's speech.

'Stay with us to get the EU referendum you want', Cameron desperately pleads, even holding open the possibility of an exit from the EU:



**Fight the cuts - kick the Tories out!** photo Senan

'Vote Ukip and you'll get Miliband and Balls' borrow and spend, we'll get the economy going and be ruthless with it.'

Cameron is a leader teetering on the brink following the Scottish referendum. With a stunning combination of arrogance and ineptitude, he bungled his way through the campaign from start to finish.

## The crisis in the Tories is just part of a crisis of all big business parties

He narrowly escaped going down in history as the Tory leader who lost the union.

While the Tories have scraped by at this stage, they have been massively damaged. Lord Ashcroft, former Tory donor, warns that they are not gaining enough to win in 2015.

The anger of working class people against austerity and all the main parties, which found a voice on 18 September, is not going away. The Tory crisis may now take longer to play out, but crisis there undoubtedly is.

Their only hope of getting away with it is that the Labour opposition is so poor. But the rage that found an outlet in Scotland will build and transform as working class people find a voice and get organised.

The crisis in the Tories is just part of a crisis of all big business parties. How else can Ukip's threat to Labour in the Heywood byelection, a Labour seat since it was formed in 1983, be explained?

As the Socialist said last week, "This is a new era of four, or in fact five, six and more-party politics, in which 'stability' will be elusive."



**Cameron - dead man walking?**



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## Focus E15 single mothers

"These people need homes - these homes need people"

Bob Severn

East London Socialist Party

Twenty nine unemployed single mothers face eviction for a second time by Newham Labour council. This time from the abandoned council block the mums have occupied. The council's first eviction attempt was booted out by the court on 26 September.

Newham council in east London, run by budget-slashing Blairite mayor Sir Robin Wales, withdrew funding for the mothers' accommodation at the Focus hostel

in E15 a year ago.

The flats are part of Stratford's Carpenters Estate. Focus E15 mums are teaming up with residents who want to save their homes. Newham's 100% Labour council wants to demolish the estate as refurbishment is 'too expensive'.

But the occupied flats have already been partially refurbished. Residents at a meeting in the estate's pub agreed to finish the refurbishment so the flats can again become homes.

The council's real game is social cleansing - push out council tenants and build expensive housing, part of

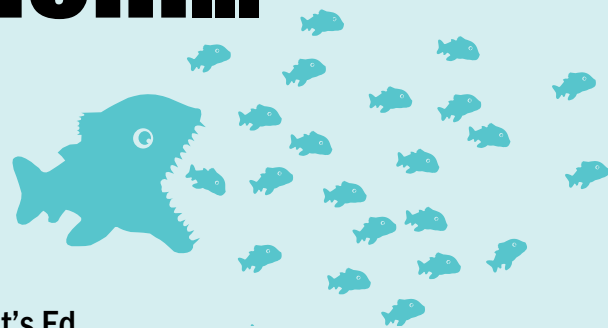
the 'Olympic regeneration'.

The occupation has received national media coverage, and teamed up with other housing campaigns including the New Era estate in neighbouring Hackney (see last week's Socialist). This hasn't stopped the vindictive council's second attempt at eviction proceedings.

As the banners outside the block say: "These people need homes - these homes need people."

The Focus E15 mums have been invited to speak at the housing discussion at Socialism 2014 (see page 8).

## Them...



### Priority, it's Ed

'Move aside - the Labour leader is coming through!'

Party conference organisers, who wanted photogenic shots of Ed Miliband exiting the platform after his speech and glad-handing "bright young things", apparently removed disabled delegates from reserved seats at the front of the hall. One disabled delegate, Bernadette Horton, who fell over after being told to move, said: "I am flabbergasted that the Labour Party is treating its delegates as second class citizens." "Disabled and carers were not mentioned in the speech at all", she added.

able average of £467,000. According the Land Registry, London house prices have risen by 21.6% in the last year and have increased by an astronomical 500% since 1995. The capital's house prices are so high that that global accountancy firm KPMG is linking up with Clydesdale and Yorkshire banks to give its well-paid professionals a leg up onto the property ladder. KPMG's chairman Simon Collins said: "Owning a home is fast becoming a fairy tale for all but society's wealthiest." You said it!

### Mind the gap

Austerity, Chancellor George Osborne's cure all for our economic woes, is - surprise, surprise - not working!

The hapless Tory has been forced to increase government borrowing as the deficit has increased by £700 million over the last year. Instead of borrowing 12% less this year he has been obliged to borrow 6% more. Cutting the taxes of high earners and corporations, along with the weakest wage growth in the UK on record, has meant that an anticipated 6.5% increase in tax and national insurance contributions has actually been a fall of 0.8%.

### Fairy tale of London

The housing price bubble in London continues to inflate, with the average property now costing an unafford-

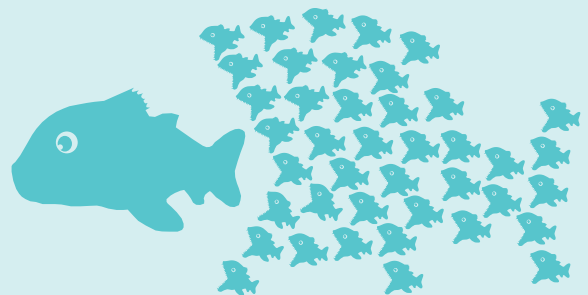
### Predictable failure

Management at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire, the first privately run NHS hospital, has been slammed in a leaked letter by CQC inspectors for appalling standards of patient care.

In November 2011 a ten-year £1 billion contract to run the hospital was awarded to private vulture company Circle Health after Hinchingsbrooke had been labelled a 'failed' hospital with £40 million of debt. Half of this debt had been created in error by the previous Labour-run Department of Health failing to pay agreed tariffs for patient services. The remainder was due to a costly Private Finance Initiative scheme to rebuild the hospital front.

Back then the company had admitted its business strategy was under strain, saying this "could affect its ability to provide a consistent level of service to its patients".

## ...& Us



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

What we saw

Balls to low pay



photo SK Bateman



# Hove Park victory: academies can be stopped

**Phil Clarke**

NUT executive member for Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Kent and Medway, personal capacity

Hove Park will not become Gove Park after a tremendous campaign to prevent it from becoming an academy.

Despite years of planning, months of producing glossy booklets, holding consultation evenings which only explained the 'benefits' of academy status and the full backing of the Department for Education, the head at the last minute realised he was going to lose as governors voted not to convert on 22 September.

This is an amazing turnaround from a few months ago when the 'Hands off Hove Park' campaign was formed. Parents, teachers, students and local residents knew that not only was conversion the privatisation of Hove Park, but that it would open the flood gates to other schools in Brighton and Hove to do the same.

## Governors' u-turn

What was it that swung the governors, who for so long were expected to vote the conversion through?

The packed campaign public meetings? The protest marches? The campaign song (search YouTube for 'Hands off Hove Park'),



the solid NUT union strike, the council ballot showing 71% against conversion or even the election of three anti-academy governors in a contest forced by the campaign? Of course it was all of these and more.

All of the cards are played by the government in the hands of those who favour the privatisation of our schools. Conversions can happen in a matter of weeks but the Hove Park campaign is a model of how to bring people together and use every avenue available to pile on the pressure. Already the campaign is receiving invitations to meetings around the country.

It has certainly been noticed by heads and governors around

The Hove Park campaign is a model of using every avenue available to pile on the pressure

Brighton, who will be thinking twice about pushing on with a conversion.

Socialists know that the majority of people oppose school privatisation, but that too many think nothing can be done about it. Hove Park helps show that if you fight, you can win!

# Doncaster Care UK workers start record breaking strike

**Alistair Tice**

Reported telephone conversation - Unison rep for Doncaster Care UK strikers: 'We're planning for Christmas.' Care UK senior manager: 'Oh yes, I know that.'

Even the Don't Care UK bosses know they cannot break the resolve of the Doncaster Care UK strikers. On Monday 29 September a further three weeks strike action started, on top of the 69 days of action taken since February.

The dispute began to fight a 35% pay cut imposed following privatisation of Doncaster's Supported Living Service for Adults with Learning Difficulties and now is for a decent pay rise. But the dispute has always been about defending the NHS.

This inspiring group of workers, still numbering around 60 on strike, were joined on the picket line by one worker re-joining the strike and another striking for the first time.

The strikers plan another coach to London to protest at Bridgepoint, the private equity company that owns Care UK, and an open top bus around the capital. Solidarity tours are planned in Barnsley, Hull and Nottingham as well as supporting the public sector strikes on 13-15 October. Strikers will also hit the Tory conference.

But the most significant day will be Friday 19 October, when on the



photo Paul Mattsson

81st day of action, this dispute will become the longest ever involving health and care workers. The strike committee is appealing to Unison and all its other supporters in the trade union and socialist movement nationally to organise protests on that day at Care UK offices and Bridgepoint companies, such as

Pret A Manger and Fat Face.

The continuing strike action combined with the leverage campaign is increasing the pressure on Bridgepoint and Care UK. They know the strikers are not going away. They won't cope with a strike at Christmas. They will be forced to negotiate and make a serious pay offer.

## Reject new council pay proposals

Local government employers have made a set of new proposals in the pay dispute to the Unison, Unite and GMB unions.

It should be noted that any new proposition is a result of the threatened strike on 14 October, part of three days of action also involving NHS, college and civil service workers.

However, the proposals are nowhere near enough to settle this dispute.

Council workers who have suffered four years of pay freezes, would receive a pay rise only marginally above the original 1% limit imposed by this Tory-led government.

## Build the action

Socialist Party members in public sector unions believe that these proposals should be rejected by all the unions. Even more effort should be made in building for massive strikes on 13, 14 and 15 October as well as

the TUC 'Britain Needs a Pay Rise' demo on 18 October.

We welcome that, when meeting with local government employers, a majority of union representatives voted to reject the proposals. However, as we go to press, the proposals might be made into an official offer. Union members would then be consulted over the offer.

## Shaken

The incredible movement built around the Scottish referendum shook the government and the establishment to the core and revealed their lack of confidence.

With Unison members in academies also voting for strike action, there is a clear momentum building towards 14 October.

The proposals should be rejected but it shows that the government and employers have blinked first. It should give council workers and all those in the public sector confidence that far more can be won.



## 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](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk)

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# Continuing Bob Crow's legacy after RMT general secretary election

Mick Cash has been elected as the new general secretary of the RMT. The election was called after the tragic early death of Bob Crow earlier in the year.

Bob spearheaded the RMT's transformation into one of the most militant unions with a proud record of defending its members' jobs, pay and terms and conditions.

Under Bob's stewardship, the RMT recognised the need to strengthen the rank and file within the labour movement by initiating the National Shop Stewards Network.

But it also saw the need to fight for a workers' political alternative to the mainstream parties by playing a key role in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, confirmed by conference motions at three con-

secutive annual meetings.

However, the result of the election, in which five candidates stood, did show that there is a need to build a strong left rank and file organisation within the RMT.

## Assistant position

This could have ensured that those activists who are determined to fight for Bob Crow's political and industrial legacy within the union united around a single candidate. This need is still posed as Mick Cash's victory now leaves a vacancy in one of the assistant general secretary positions.

Undoubtedly the pro-big business Labour Party, and behind them the bosses generally, would welcome any opportunity that may arise to

reverse the union's bold stance on independent working class political representation.

As Mick Cash is a longstanding Labour Party member, increasingly rare among RMT activists, some union members will fear that his election could make it harder to resist this pressure in the future.

Mick's comment that his election will mean that "there will be no deviation from RMT's industrial, political and organising strategy mapped out [by] Bob's leadership" will be welcomed.

The Socialist Party looks forward to continue working with the RMT, now under his leadership.

**Election result: Mick Cash 8,938; Alan Pottage 4,006; Steve Hedley 1,885; John Leach 1,428; Alex Gordon 1,176**

## CWU needs a political fund but also political representation

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) is this month balloting all members on whether to retain its political fund.

All trade unions with such a fund legally have to hold a full postal ballot every ten years. Recent CWU campaigns, including opposing Royal Mail privatisation, the remote sourcing of BT call centres and post office closures, have relied heavily on the political fund.

The union leadership, recognising the anger towards the Labour Party from rank and file members, has stated that: "Political fund review ballots are not about affiliation to the Labour Party."

Labour allowed the Con-Dem government to privatise the Royal

Mail without so much as a whimper. The Labour leadership went further by overturning the decision of its conference to renationalise the service if it wins the 2015 general election!

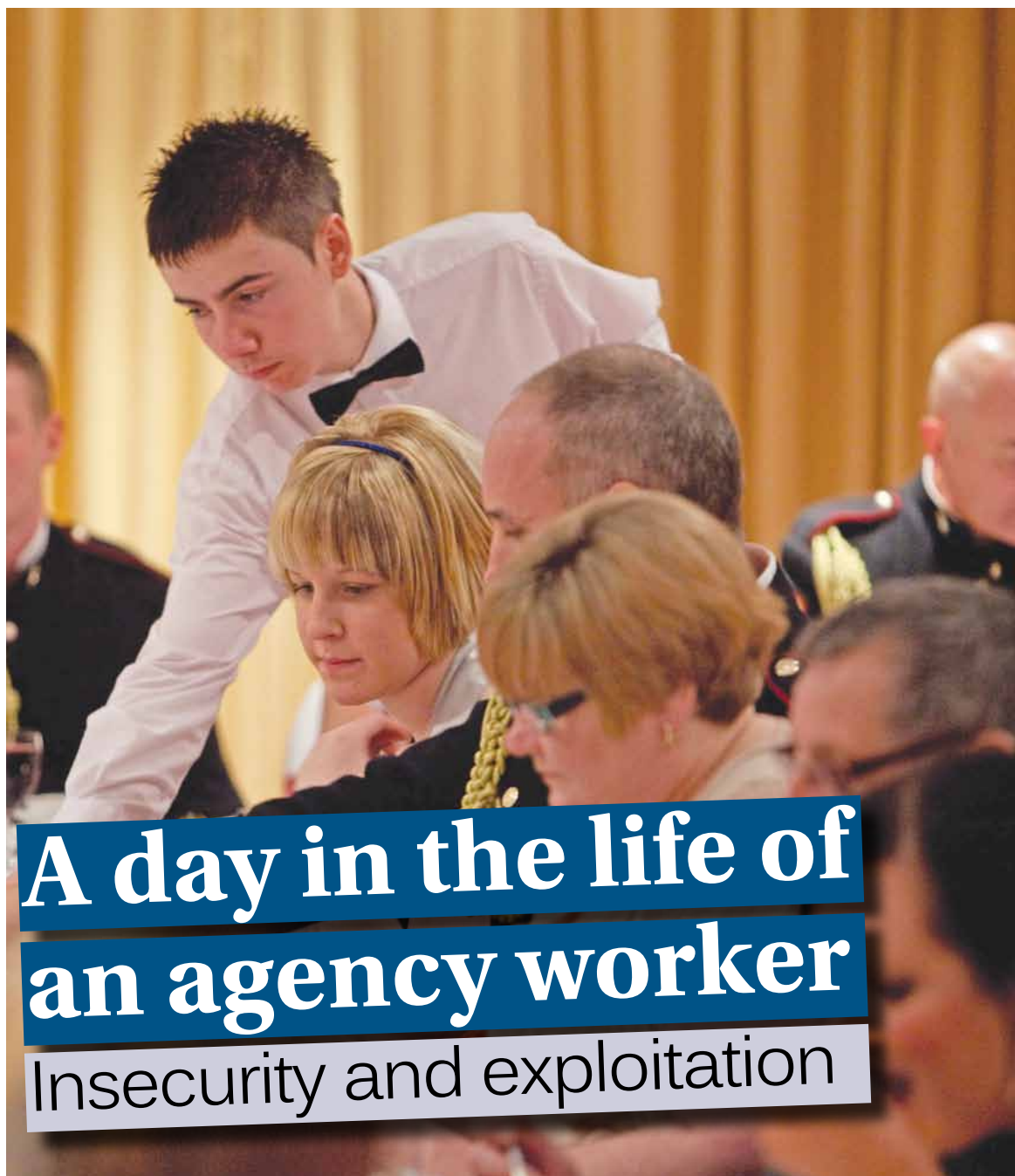
The CWU should run a separate poll over its affiliation to the Labour Party.

It is important that trade union members have a political voice. For that reason the Socialist Party supports the retention of the political fund.

But this support is alongside campaigning for disaffiliation from the pro-austerity Labour Party and laying the foundations for a new mass workers' party.

**Carl Harper, Peterborough Royal Mail worker**





## A day in the life of an agency worker

### Insecurity and exploitation

#### An agency worker

I wake up at 5.30am, throw on the uniform I spent my last pay cheque buying, leave at 6am to arrive at the pick up at 6.30am. If I'm late I risk losing not just one shift, but all future ones.

When I get there I'm informed that I won't be getting the three hours travel pay I was promised for the six hours travelling. Staff hang around, sharing stories of missing pay and 19 hour shifts. We wait for the coach - fortunately only 20 minutes - far less than the hour and

a half last time. We finally leave at 7.10am for the three hour journey.

We arrive and it's work on a bar, not the waiting shift I was told about. Still, I learn quickly and keep up till a 20 minute break after seven hours where we are treated to a hot meal. I lose the first five minutes finishing up and rush to the dinner queue. By the time I sit down I have five minutes to eat the food as fast as possible and get back to my workstation. Still, only a few hours left.

At 6.25pm I'm signed off as 6.15pm. I grab my stuff and go to the coach where we wait for all the staff

to finish their shifts. Now I have access to my phone I spend the time applying for as many shifts as I can for tomorrow.

Finally at 8pm we set off for the three hour journey back.

#### Youth Fight for Jobs demands:

- Pay us enough to live on
- Give us proper contracts
- Decent tea and lunch breaks
- Stop the bosses' fire-at-will attitude
- Build democratic campaigning trade unions

See [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)

## Round up: Socialist Students at the freshers fairs



#### Leeds

Once again, Socialist Students has met hundreds of students wanting to join us across the three universities in Leeds. At Leeds Uni, 187 students signed up to our mailing list with a number of them paying up to join the society too. This was followed up with a well-attended first meeting on 'What is Socialism?' introduced by Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser. At Leeds Beckett and Leeds Trinity we found a good number of people interested in joining Socialist Students, as well as support for our campaigns to kick sexism off campus, for a student union letting agency and for a £10 an hour minimum wage. The latter also had a lot of interest from many of the young workers doing promotional work for various companies at the freshers fairs.

Alongside this, we've also been campaigning at Notre Dame Sixth Form against changes to A-level exams which means students can no longer choose to sit exams or do resits in January. Instead students have to sit their whole year again, at a time when funding has also been cut.

An excellent first meeting of Notre Dame students attracted six people. Our ring round for our next meeting, a skype link up with socialists in Israel/Palestine has us worried the room we've booked will be too small!

#### Leeds Socialist Students

#### Aberystwyth

42 signed up to join Aberystwyth Socialist Students. Aberystwyth University is now the worst in Wales according to the latest world university rankings. This is undoubtedly down to the wave of cuts and attacks on staff, which have led to an angry student population and militant workforce. This culminated in a four day strike as term started.

Our first meeting bore witness to an

eagerness to fightback on issues such as education cuts, tuition fees and improving the town's poor student accommodation.

#### Scott Jones

#### Huddersfield

70 Huddersfield students gave names and contact details to find out more about Socialist Students. We sold 19 copies of Megaphone, the Socialist Students magazine.

Our first meeting on 'what is socialism?' attracted seven new people - all are keen to get active in the society.

#### Jack McLean

#### Kingston

150 signed up to find out more about Socialist Students. We sold out of Megaphone magazines - 20 in total - plus 16 copies of the Socialist. We also sold a copy of It Doesn't Have To Be Like This, the Socialist Party's book on the joint struggles for women's liberation and socialism.

#### James Ivens

#### UEL

In the first day at the University of East London fresher's fair we sold five copies of Megaphone and a copy of the Socialist. 40 people signed up to join the society. We are planning on holding a meeting to discuss the recent attacks on Palestine, which was a hot topic at all the London freshers fairs.

#### Helen Pattison

#### Southbank

In one day at Southbank 50 people signed our petition and we sold four copies of Megaphone. Two people were also interested in joining the Socialist Party and bought copies of the Socialist.

#### Southbank Socialist Students

## What party should students vote for?

#### Mary Finch

Leeds Socialist Students

The general election may be eight months away, but the three main parties have already embarked on a mission to remake their images and shore up support. Labour has pledged an £8 an hour minimum wage by 2020. The Liberal Democrats have turned their backs on plans to privatise the Student Loans Company. The Tories are vowing to continue attacks on immigrants, benefit claimants, disabled people



There aren't many attractive options facing students at the ballot box

and young people.

Whichever of these parties we vote for, it's clear that young people and students will still be paying sky-high rents for substandard accommodation. We'll still be paying at least £9,000 tuition fees every year.

We'll still be ending up on zero-hour contracts, working for below the living wage.

None of the three main parties have taken any stand on these issues, and that's because they don't represent ordinary people - they

stand for the super-rich and big business. These people make their profits on poverty pay, and on the mass privatisation of public services. None of these parties will defend the interests of ordinary students and young people. So when

we're in the ballot box next year, which box will we tick?

We could vote Labour, to kick out the Tories, but we'll only see more of the same. We could vote Green. They've pledged a £10 an hour minimum wage, but, just like with Labour's insufficient promises, we'll have to wait until 2020 to get it. And when it comes to the crunch, the Green-led council in Brighton has passed cuts, just like all the other pro-austerity parties.

#### TUSC

We need a party that stands up unequivocally for workers and for students, against all the cuts, for the scrapping of tuition fees and student debt, for decent and affordable housing, for an end to zero-hour contract jobs, for £10 now and not in six years time.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood for all these things in the council elections in May and will be doing so again in the general and local elections 2015. See more about TUSC on page 6 and 7

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# LABOUR: NO REAL ALTERNATIVE

Steve Score

Millions of people are furious with this government. Their living standards have been crushed and their services eroded. This year's pre-election Labour Party conference was an opportunity to enthuse those people to vote Labour. They failed to do so because they provide no real alternative.

Miliband in his speech raised a number of 'goals', including halving the number of people on low pay, "restoring the dream of home ownership" by doubling the number of first time buyers, increasing the number of apprenticeships and creating a million high tech jobs including in 'green' industries. In particular he focussed on the NHS, which he knows has massive support and is currently being dismantled.

But even these insufficient promises are not going to be met unless, as with any capitalist government, they are forced to by a mass movement. They have repeatedly pledged to stick to the Tories' overall spending plans. So any undertakings are just window dressing for a government that will continue with austerity.

Much of the press coverage was about Miliband's mistake of forgetting to mention the government spending deficit and what he would do about it. The Tories and Lib Dems made a lot of this to prove Labour would 'spend too much'. But the text, released to the press in advance, shows he clearly would make cuts and plans to "balance the books", hoping to eliminate the current £75 billion deficit.

## Tough decisions?

Ed Balls in his shadow chancellor's speech also talked about not 'flinching' from tough decisions and "not making promises we cannot afford". He did promise to raise the top rate of income tax by a meagre 5%, but at the same time said he would cut corporation tax. On top of this he announced that child benefit, already cut in value over a number of years, will be held down for a year longer than even the Tories had planned, hitting working class families.

Even Miliband's assurance on the NHS, which sounds good at first, with promises of more staff to give them "time to care", is a meagre £2.5 billion more. This is just over 2% of the annual budget for the NHS, and given the increasing needs of the health system is totally inadequate. In the first four months of this year the NHS was already half a billion in deficit on its current budget, including 86 out of 147 foundation trusts in the red.

Funding for this is meant to come from a "mansion tax" on houses valued at over £2 million, a small amount from tobacco companies and £1.1 billion from reducing certain types of tax avoidance. This is paltry compared to the £160 billion a year the PCS union points out it is either 'evaded' or 'avoided' by big business and the rich.

Another headline pledge was an £8 an hour minimum wage, but delayed until 2020. Taking into account inflation it doesn't amount to much. If the current minimum wage increases at the rate of 2.5% per year, roughly what it has on average for the last few years, it would be £7.54 anyway. It is far short of the immediate £10 an hour cam-



TUSC stands against all cuts and privatisation photo Alistair Tice

paign for by the Socialist Party, bakers union and others and now adopted, at least on paper, by the TUC.

Trying to catch the mood of anger against the super-rich, Miliband and other leading Labour figures use phrases attacking them from time to time: "People before profit" is one that crops up again and again. But there isn't an atom of real socialism in their programme. In the railways, in the NHS and elsewhere their attack on Tory privatisation does not amount to a promise that it wouldn't continue under Labour.

They will not renationalise the railways, they will just allow the public sector to compete for contracts with private firms. They do not plan to massively expand council housing. They will not reverse the cuts that the Tories have made in public services. The list goes on. They are rooted in capitalism, and cannot provide the socialist solutions that are necessary for working class people.

## NHS

Appealing to voters by saying 'only they will defend the NHS and stop privatisation' for example is rich considering the record of the last Labour government. The process of dismantling the NHS was accelerated under the Blair and Brown governments. The 'internal market', Private Finance Initiative (PFI), Foundation Trusts, private companies moving into take over parts of the NHS, all of these were part of it. Labour health minister, Patricia Hewitt, farmed out NHS work to BUPA and other companies on the grounds that it would reduce waiting times. She later became a director of the private equity company that owned BUPA!

The same process happened elsewhere in the public sector: PFI under different names, Academy schools etc. They introduced university tuition fees at the initial "nominal" level of £1,000 a year, later increasing them to £3,000 and opening the way to £9,000 under the Tories now. It is no accident that Miliband didn't mention tuition fees in his speech, as Labour has refused to reverse this policy.

All of this leaves aside issues such as

taking us into wars like Afghanistan and Iraq. There is no evidence that a future Labour government would act in any way differently. The only difference being that it would face a far greater capitalist economic crisis than the last one.

Miliband, in his conference speech, referred to the disillusionment that millions have with the main political parties: "People in England who think all politics is rubbish. People in Scotland who wanted to leave our country because they felt they had nothing to lose."

The same anger exists everywhere, but not expressed in the same way. In England, some of the anger of working class people, because of the lack of a mass alternative, has even flowed to the right wing pro-big business Ukip. What is desperately needed is a party that fights for the interests of working class people, one that puts a real alternative to capitalist austerity. As a step towards building this new mass workers' party, the Socialist Party takes part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which challenges in elections.

Given how much this government is hated, Labour ought to easily win the next election. But that is far from guaranteed, because for many their record and their policies are not seen as significantly different.

They may still win, not because of, but despite their policies. Many will vote for them as the 'lesser evil'. This is understandable, but unless we create a new mass working class force then it will be 'business as usual' after the next election. We are confident that on the basis of experience of the next government more and more people we draw the conclusion that a new party is needed.

Appealing to voters by saying 'only they will defend the NHS and stop privatisation' for example is rich considering the record of the last Labour government



The two Eds: Miliband and Balls

## TUSC: a voice for working class people

This letter from Dave Nellist, chair of TUSC, was published in The Guardian.

Ian Martin (I can't remember a more spineless opposition, 24 September) sums up the feeling of millions of working-class people. Millions are desperate to get rid of the current government, yet at the same time depressed because they don't believe a Labour government would mark a real change. As Ian says: "Labour's message to the electorate is clear - austerity is the new reality." To get rid of the Tories many, like Ian is clearly considering doing, will vote Labour in the general election next year. Others will abstain from the elections in disgust, or even vote for the right wing stockbrokers of Ukip to express their anger. But trade unionists and socialists cannot continue to accept a choice between

parties whose policies are so similar you can barely get a fag-paper between them. That only leaves the road open to Ukip and its ilk. That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - to which Ian refers) was co-founded by the late Bob Crow to begin to build an electoral voice for working-class people. In May 2014, TUSC fielded 560 local election candidates in nearly 90 towns and cities, in the widest socialist challenge to Labour for 60 years. In May 2015 - for both the general and the local elections - we are going to up our game, aiming to stand even more widely, to ensure austerity is not unchallenged at the ballot box.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, as well as the Socialist Party and other left and anti-cuts groups and individuals.

[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)



Given how much this government is hated, Labour ought to easily win the next election. But that is far from guaranteed



TUSC fights for rent control and social housing photo Paul Mattsson

## Labour's housing failure

Paul Kershaw

A commitment to build new housing was trumpeted by Miliband at the Labour Party conference. As a document, agreed at Labour's recent National Policy Forum, states: "Britain is in the midst of the biggest housing crisis in a generation."

The enthusiasm unleashed in the recent referendum campaign in Scotland shows what is possible when people begin to believe in an alternative to 'Westminster politics'. A mass party articulating radical policies on housing could generate comparable enthusiasm across the UK. However, the policies set out by Labour can only lead to despair.

## Not enough

Labour's target is to build 200,000 homes by year by 2020. But accepted estimates of the rate of household formation suggest that between 200,000 and 250,000 would be needed simply to prevent the crisis becoming more acute. So even if Labour were to achieve the target in its last year, the housing shortage would still be getting worse.

The Lib Dems' Danny Alexander has stated that Britain actually needs 300,000 new homes a year. So Labour's house building targets are lower than the Lib Dems!

Is it realistic to believe that Labour would achieve this inadequate house building target? We are assured that the Lyons Housing Review - set up by Labour - will explain. But leaks already suggest that they are finding that the target does not look realistic because of the commitment to stick to Con-Dem spending plans.

Housing has been hit hardest in local government cuts: a 34% cut between 2010 and 2015. Labour's local government spokesman Hilary Benn has repeatedly stated that there will be no more money for local government from a future Labour government.

Labour has little to crow about over housing. Between 1998 and 2010, when in government, Labour built only 6,330 council homes. Even the Tory Thatcher government managed to build 17,710 council homes in 1990

There is no mention of restoring social housing grant cuts. Labour councillors had called for further borrowing powers but that has not been accepted. The belief that Labour will 'pull a rabbit out of a hat' and find the necessary money for a serious affordable house building programme is fantasy. Trade union members will question why their leaders voted for this pro-austerity position at the National Policy Forum when union policy opposes cuts.

Miliband promises more first time buyers. While suggesting adjustments, the document reaffirms Labour support for the 'Help to Buy' scheme that supports purchasing homes worth up to £600,000 -

the government taking on risk that would otherwise have been the banks' responsibility (welfare for banks!).

When introduced by the Con-Dems, the policy was almost universally condemned by capitalist commentators. Albert Edwards of Société Générale described it as "One of the most stupid economic ideas of the last 30 years," warning that by artificially inflating house prices it would drive young people into "indentured servitude".

Younger house buyers are desperately overstretched; a rise in unemployment or in interest rates would push many over the edge. Yet even in this policy area Labour cannot find the courage to oppose the most discredited of neoliberal policies.

## Nightmare

Expanding home ownership through easy money and building council housing with grant funding seemed to offer the prospect of improved conditions in the post-war capitalist boom. In the post-crash world of austerity Labour does not promise grant funding for housing and the dream of home ownership is turning into a nightmare.

In these changed conditions only a radical break from failed capitalist policies can offer a way out. Instead of being run as massively subsidised dysfunctional casinos, the banks must be fully nationalised (already the official policy of unions such as Unite).

Instead of gambling with our money a publicly owned banking system could mobilise finance for a massive programme of house building and refurbishment as part of a democratically determined plan.



[illegible]



# Hong Kong protests: “umbrella revolution” changes everything

**Vincent Kolo**  
Socialist Action (CWI Hong Kong)

The weekend of 27 September changed everything in Hong Kong. Mass popular resistance took to the streets, by night and day, with mass gatherings of up to 180,000, spearheaded by young people. This, combined with a week-long student strike, has forced the unelected Hong Kong government and thousands of heavily armed riot police to retreat.

As we go to press the mass protests are continuing to grow and people feel enormous self-confidence since defeating the massive police attack of 28 September. The movement represents a major pushback against the Beijing regime's anti-democratic agenda in Hong Kong and in China.

This is the most serious political crisis in Hong Kong since its reversion to Chinese rule in 1997. There are some features of a pre-revolutionary situation, with a government in deep crisis having suffered a loss of control and authority. The state institutions – especially the police – are now widely distrusted and despised. The territory's tenuous ‘autonomy’ as a special region of China is now distrusted or rejected as a fake by a majority of Hong Kong people.

Yet this movement is almost entirely without organisations, programme or leadership, replicating a pattern we have seen in similar mass protest movements around the world. There is a powerful anti-party mood within the demonstrations.

While this ‘spontaneous’ model has proven itself more than equal to the task of kick-starting the movement on the streets, more will be needed – steps to organise, build democratic strike and occupation committees, and work out a clear programme of demands to take the struggle forward.

## China

A crucial issue is the need to spread the movement across the border, by issuing appeals to workers and youth in mainland China to join the struggle against China's one-party dictatorship. Clearly, as long as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules there will be no possibility of democratic elections in Hong Kong (which is the main focus of this movement).

This task requires greater forces than the masses of Hong Kong alone can muster. Rather than appealing to the US administration or ex-colonial masters Britain for support, as some are doing, the protest movement must seek allies among grassroots workers and youth in China and worldwide.

University students, increasingly joined by school students who have faced huge pressure and threats from school authorities, have extended their strike action. The main focus of the demonstrations is now to demand the resignation of Chief Executive (political leader) CY Leung, an already hated figure whose role as mastermind of the police crackdown only adds to his list of crimes.

The current protests and occupations evolved out of the week-long school strike, in which around 13,000 university students

participated. These were joined by around 1,500 secondary school students, some as young as 12, on 26 September. That evening, a group of student protesters managed to break the cordon around the ‘Civic Square’ and began an occupation there. This is a nominally public protest zone at the government headquarters that has been fenced off by police since July, in anticipation of Occupy protests.

Around 80 demonstrators were arrested. The 17 year old convenor of student group Scholarism, Joshua Wong, was arrested and held for 40 hours, then released without charge. The arrests of student activists, and excessive police violence, provided the spark for the weekend's mass mobilisations.

**The struggle for democracy cannot be won within the confines of capitalism, which everywhere means the control of politics by unelected billionaires and big corporations**

The movement has widely been dubbed the “umbrella revolution” on social media, due to the inverted umbrellas used by protesters as protection against tear gas and pepper spray.

On 28 September, the police launched wave after wave of tear gas attacks – 87 times according to their own statement – in an attempt to clear the protests around the government headquarters in Admiralty.

Not surprisingly, China has tightened internet controls, blocking online searches for words such as “tear gas” and banning Instagram.

As rumours of bullets and armoured vehicles circulated, official leaders of the movement called on protesters to retreat. While most protesters did evacuate the main protest site in Admiralty, new occupations sprang up in two other parts of the city.

## Strike

Some sporadic barricades have been thrown across major roads, and a ‘general strike’ call was issued by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU). While the latter is an extremely significant development (it is unprecedented in Hong Kong for a political strike to be announced) the participation of workers in the strike is at this stage quite limited.

So, the police attacks did not succeed as planned in dispersing and quelling the ‘Occupy’ movement. Instead the protests have spread into multiple occupations, which present a far bigger challenge for the police.

Significantly, one of the main slogans chanted towards the police by protesters since the attacks has been “Police, strike!” This undoubtedly poses new problems for

police commanders as morale is dented and they are forced to completely rethink their strategies.

Underlining the depth of the current crisis, this is the second time in a month that powerful illusions, built up by the ruling elite over decades, under British and then Chinese rule, have been smashed. The first occasion was the 31 August decision of China's undemocratic fake ‘parliament’ (NPC) that killed off popular hopes of free elections for the next Chief Executive.

## Explosions

The destruction of decades-old illusions in the impartiality of the state, and Hong Kong's sacred ‘rule of law’, is a result of the CCP's increasingly hardline, repressive and rigid position, which is in turn a reflection of the deepening crisis within the dictatorship.

The political perspectives for China are increasingly towards a social explosion or series of explosions – towards revolutionary upheavals in other words, a foretaste of which we are now witnessing in Hong Kong.

Despite massive propaganda against the occupation it's evident which side has won the battle for public support through the events of this weekend. The South China Morning Post reported that office workers on their way to work cheered the occupiers in Causeway Bay.

The newspaper quoted an accountant who said the government had “underestimated the power of the people.” There are many reports of passers by bringing water and food and showing support.

## Working class

The first stirrings of the working class, which has up to now not made an entrance as a distinct, organised and independent force within the democracy movement, is for socialists the most significant of all developments.

While the response to the strike call has been mixed, reflecting the numerical weakness of the unions in Hong Kong, still some important groups stopped work in anger at the police crackdown. These included around 200 workers at the Coca Cola factory in Sha Tin, water workers, bus drivers, some bank employees and schoolteachers.

Although the situation is extremely fast-moving, with sharp variations and changes possible, it seems now that the regime will hold back from unleashing a new repressive wave. It will probably offer concessions, perhaps sacrifice an unpopular official (as it has done on occasion before) in order to buy time and allow the crisis to pass.

## Socialist Action

Socialist Action has been active throughout this movement and is playing an important role in organising strikes among secondary school students through the City-wide School Strike Campaign.

We explain that genuine democracy can only be achieved by linking mass protests in Hong Kong with the coming revolutionary upheavals in China, where the gigantic working class is the most important force to change society



and defeat the dictatorship.

The struggle for real democracy cannot be won within the confines of capitalism, which everywhere means the control of politics by unelected billionaires and big corporations.

Capitalism means dictatorship, either by authoritarian regimes or by financial markets. Our alternative is a socialist society and democratically-run and planned economy that can eliminate rising poverty levels, housing misery, unemployment and low-paid contract labour.

**Read a full version of this article at [www.chinaworker.info](http://www.chinaworker.info)**

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

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



## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

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**Blair's unhealthy legacy**

The Socialist (issue 823) highlighted NHS Chief Executive Simon Stevens' previous job with United Health (UH) – the USA's largest health insurance company. Stevens was Vice-President



of this company in 2013 when its income was \$122 billion and its profits \$5.6 billion.

In the previous four years its shareholders were paid \$14.7 billion. That's money that could have been spent on providing health care to those too poor to pay for private health insurance in the US.

He's the man now in charge of the NHS. But before Stevens joined UH in 2004 he was policy adviser on the NHS – to Prime Minister Tony Blair! We can believe nothing Labour says now about protecting the NHS unless they disown the last Labour government's record. That government started the invasion of the likes of United Health into our NHS.

**Jon Dale**

**Labour off the rails**

I went to a Labour conference fringe meeting in Manchester on 'Can Labour renationalise the railways?' Labour's shadow transport minister Mary Creagh refused to commit to renationalising any part of the railway – even the successfully renationalised East Coast



mainline which had failed under the private franchise train operating company but made millions under nationalisation.

The people dominating the Labour Party are terrified of the organised working class in industries like the railways. They also see that large sections of the public are sympathetic to our aims and bitterly oppose privatisation in public transport.

I said at the meeting that if Labour won the 2015 election and failed to deliver on nationalisation, our unions (RMT, Aslef and TSSA) would and could "do the job" against Labour. The call for socialism will attract many workers as the crisis deepens in Britain.

**Steve Metcalfe, branch secretary, RMT Lancaster/DIS**

**Scotland: Labour's failure**

When Tories claim 'we love Scotland – don't leave us' – what do they really love? The workers, disabled, unem-

ployed? Hardly, for amidst "one of the richest countries in the world" (quote from Cameron) – Scotland suffers poverty amongst one in four children, food banks feeding one in five, evictions from the Bedroom Tax and much more. What the Tories really love is their ownership of grouse moors, factories, banks and the exploitation through low wages and zero hour contracts for their profits! Labour's leadership has climbed into bed with the capitalist Tories and Lib Dems – another nail in their coffin to any claim to represent workers in Britain. Labour has no answer to how to address the national question. The Yes campaign is a defining moment in our struggle against capitalism and emphasises the urgent need for new mass workers' parties.

**Sean Brogan, Exeter**

**Lord Stooke**

The Tories could not have organised the "no" campaign without stooges and lickspittles north of the border. Step forward the Darling/Brown double act. Without them the Tories could not have carried the day. Darling must deserve



a knighthood from the Tories; Brown, a peerage at least.

I understand how people may vote Labour to get the Tories out. But we could do a lot better if the unions refused to fund candidates who support privatisation or cuts. That would rule out most of the Labour Party. The NSSN has forced the TUC to get off its knees before. It can do it again. Cameron and his Labour allies won this battle. They must not win the war.

**Derek McMillan**

**Branson's pickle**

Virgin boss Richard Branson's latest wheeze is to let his inner coterie of workers take as many holidays as they like as long as it doesn't "impact upon the productivity of the company". What a good idea! My suggestion for a slight improvement is that everybody



at Virgin took a holiday together at the same time, in other words an "all out strike!" They could stay out until they get proper terms and conditions, especially in the call centres, including trade union rights and negotiated holiday time.

**Bill Mullins**

# Film review

## Still the enemy within

**Rob Williams**

The popular "Pride" film based around the 1984-85 miners' strike is not the only film on this epoch-making dispute getting its premiere this autumn. "Still the Enemy Within", directed by Owen Gower, should make every viewer want to find out more about the strike and join the struggle against austerity.

It starts with a Yorkshire miner revisiting Frickley Colliery. 2,000 men used to work there, but it's now a landscaped monument. Soon we are plunged into a vibrant past with footage of post-war Britain's most vicious, polarised industrial struggle. The film tells the strike's story from the miners' side, with interviews with ex-miners and their wives from Yorkshire, Scotland, the north-east and Wales.

It shows how miners and their union, the NUM, fought Heath's Tory government through the 1972 and 1974 strikes, a period of intense industrial militancy. The second strike forced Heath to call a snap general election asking: 'Who rules – Heath or the miners?' As one miner remembered: "It wasn't \*\*\*\*ing him!"

That defeat for Britain's ruling class prompted thirst for revenge. They hoped to beat the miners, leading to a counter-revolution against the trade unions and working-class in general. The 'Ridley Plan', devised by Tory MP Nicholas Ridley, set out exactly the strategy Thatcher's government used in the strike – building up coal stocks, strengthening the police and training them in almost paramilitary methods, attacking the NUM's finances etc.

But despite this preparation, the strike could have been won. After years of provocation by the nationalised National Coal Board (NCB), the gloves were finally off. There were early successes for the miners, who were also confident about winning over the major coalfield that stayed in work, Nottinghamshire.

**Orgreave**

However the film shows the police intimidating and harassing NUM pickets by, totally unlawfully, preventing them entering Nottinghamshire. So the NUM turned its attention to British Steel's coking plant at Orgreave, South Yorkshire. If the miners could stop that, steel and car plants would be left standing idle. But instead of a mass picket, what followed was a mass ambush by the state.

Ex-miners outline how the same police that stopped them daily on main roads now welcomed them into fields and car parks around the plant. Then thousands of police, on foot, on horseback and with dogs, systematically meted out massive violence to workers defending their jobs and communities.

The images are sickening. But campaigning by miners, the NUM and groups like the Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign, raised pressure for an inquiry into a scandal that came from the very top in Thatcher's government.

Orgreave made it clear – mass solidarity action by the whole trade union movement was essential. Watch for placards of the Socialist's predecessor Militant and also the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC), which we supported, on footage of the miners' lobby of the



**Ian MacGregor was appointed by Thatcher as head of the coal board**  
photo Dave Sinclair

1984 TUC conference.

Ordinary trade unionists and working-class people raised millions for the strike fund, but there was little appetite for action amongst the TUC and other union leaders who could have made the difference. The Labour leadership under Neil Kinnock also failed to support the miners. One miner talks of the Tories deliberately buying off potential disputes to avoid coordinated action.

**Liverpool**

He also mentions the struggle of the Militant-led Liverpool city council in this by agreeing to "a deal that gave them a little extra". But in reality, the council won a massive victory against Thatcher through mass action and inspired many miners in what was possible. £60 million was won, which would mean something like £130 million today.

The film shows how the Tories nearly snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in the dispute with pit deputy union Nacods. But after a massive vote for strike action that would have shut down all pits, including Nottingham, Nacods' leaders caved in after a meeting of its executive at the TUC!

You'd need a heart of stone not to be moved as the strike enters its final stages in 1985. The Tories, assisted by the media, built the 'return to work' drive by starving out the miners, then bribing them back.

This film isn't demoralising. It shows how ordinary workers and their families took on a vicious government

But this film isn't demoralising. It shows how ordinary workers and their families took on a vicious government, with all the resources of the state, and nearly won. It shows how women of the coalfields got organised and were often the spine of this incredible struggle.

In 1992 when the Major Tory administration finally closed most remaining pits, even those miners who worked during the strike in Nottingham finally saw why it was right to fight in 1984.

The final shots show recent strikes and protests against the Con-Dem austerity offensive. Ex-miners march alongside striking teachers and other public sector workers. The miners' defeat led to three decades of neo-liberalism but we must absorb lessons of their heroic struggle to ensure that workers can resist and defeat Thatcher's descendants now.

**See the-enemy-within.org.uk/events for details of local showings**



# Housing - a history of class struggle

Housing is one of the most pressing social issues in Britain. Millions are struggling to pay their rents or mortgages. Government policies have resulted in rents and house prices reaching crazy heights - allowing a profits bonanza for private developers and landlords.

Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of tenants are being penalised by the hated 'bedroom tax' and by draconian cuts in council tax benefit. The need for a trade union and communities based housing campaign is urgent.

**Dave Walsh** gives some examples from the history of workers' and tenants' struggles for decent housing.

At the start of the 20th century 90% of Britain's population had a private landlord. At the outbreak of war in 1914 these landlords began ramping up rents for servicemen's families.

Women across Britain organised tenants' groups to resist the rises. In Glasgow in 1915 they secured the support of the Independent Labour Party and industrial support from the factories and shipyards where emergency committees threatened a wave of sympathy strikes.

These actions forced the government to introduce rent controls and security of tenure which made it harder for landlords to evict tenants.

There is a long tradition of rent strikes in Britain. More recently, in 1972, rent strikes broke out across Britain against the Tory Heath government's Housing Finance Act which aimed to raise council tenants' rents to comparable private sector rates. Hundreds of thousands took part in marches, pickets and meetings and the Labour Party conference resolved not to implement the act.

In Dudley in the West Midlands, the largest tenants association organised 15,000 people to withhold rent. In Kirkby, Merseyside, 3,000 refused to pay the new rent. Their campaign lasted 14 months, drawing support from Liverpool dockers and 9,000 struck in a day of action.

When workers were sacked at the local BirdsEye factory for taking solidarity action, tenants joined the picket line and the men won their jobs back. This industrial support was a key factor in the strength of the tenants' campaigns.

Many Labour councils came to power after campaigns against the act. But when prison was threatened, most councillors voted through the higher rents to avoid breaking the law. Councillors who stayed defiant found themselves

facing their own party leadership. Labour MP Anthony Crosland warned councillors they faced losing their homes, savings, seats and jobs with no support from their party if they broke the law.

Eventually only Clay Cross council in Derbyshire stood firm and refused to implement the rent rises. The eleven councillors spoke at workplace meetings, organised street committees to resist the government commissioner and led a march of over 5,000 people through the town.

They were ultimately prepared to risk prison if necessary. Their campaign showed what could have been achieved had other Labour councils led a fightback, and stood by the defiant 1921 Poplar councillors' mantra: 'Better to break the law than break the poor'.

Clay Cross was the only council which refused to implement the rent rises until the Heath government was toppled in 1974 and Harold Wilson's Labour government abolished the act.

## Liverpool socialists

In Liverpool in the early 1980s a Liberal-run council, egged on by the Tory Thatcher government, increased council rents by 34% and slashed millions of pounds from the council budget.

Militant (forerunner of the Socialist) activists campaigned against these attacks which in 1983 led to the election of the famed 47 Labour councillors.

This socialist-led council, in the teeth of opposition from the state and the Labour Party leadership, fought the Tory attacks on public services, embarking on a massive house-building programme - double the number of council houses built in total in the rest of the country.

After World War One, Britain's first



Liverpool's 1980s socialist council built 5,000 new homes and froze council rents photo Dave Sinclair

Labour government responded to tenants' campaigns by introducing the 1924 Housing Act which encouraged councils to clear slums and build council houses. Between the wars two million council houses were built and with rent controls and security of tenure still in place, the landlords' stranglehold was broken.

After World War Two, the Labour Party responded to the workers' movement's demands by supporting policies that resulted in 4.3 million council houses and 3.9 million private houses being built by 1975. Private landlords owned less than 15% of housing stock by the mid-1970s.

Clay Cross and Liverpool also show that campaigns must have political representation to achieve their goals. Successive governments since 1979, driven by their desire to restore landlords' privileged position under capitalism, failed to build social housing in adequate numbers.

In the 1980s the Thatcher government sold many council houses to tenants with huge discounts under the Right to Buy scheme, while restricting councils' ability to build replacement stock. This policy continued under the Blair and Brown Labour governments.

Today, Labour councillors show by their actions that they offer no al-

## 'Rent caps, not benefit caps'

Socialists call for a return to rent control, whereas Labour has proposed an extremely limited form of it. It timidly proposes to restrict rent rises to once a year based on 'market values', capped at an unspecified "upper ceiling".

Rents continue to shoot up. The Tory government abolished rent control and secure tenancies for private tenants in the 1980s and the following Labour governments did nothing to restore it. The Tories acknowledged that rents would rise but when challenged that this would create hardship they said that increased housing benefit payments would "take the strain".

Private landlords now take huge sums in rent and benefit from rising property prices and the Tories have the cheek to punish tenants with benefit caps. Benefits paid for rising rents don't make the tenants rich - they do make the landlords rich.

The legislation for rent control with secure tenancies and rent tribunals to agree 'fair rents' is still on the statute book. For old tenancies rent tribunals still operate. So it would be simple to bring back rent control as an emergency measure.

**Paul Kershaw**

ternative to the capitalist crisis and are willing to implement savage cuts and austerity. A few brave Labour councillors have resisted but they have been marginalised or expelled while the Labour Party bulldozes forward with its neoliberal agenda.

We need a national campaign, spearheaded by tenants' groups but involving the trade unions with industrial support, alongside a political campaign that gives a voice to tenants' demands.

These demands include a rent

cap at affordable levels (see box), a crash programme of mass council house building, renovating empty ones and setting a living wage with no lower youth rates.

The Labour Party today utterly opposes these solutions (see page 7). Many union members see that their unions are wasting their time and money trying to reclaim a party which has no intention of being reclaimed. And they are concluding that a new mass workers' party is the answer.

# York University - Student housing letting agency victory



Campaigning for a not-for-profit letting agency photo York Socialist Students

**Megan Ollerhead**  
University of York Socialist Society

It's an old adage that student accommodation is always bad. Apparently, living with walls covered in damp and families of slugs just goes with the territory, like pre-drinks and bar crawls, 'all part of the university experience'.

In practice, this really means that students nationwide are paying well over the odds for what can be incredibly dangerous houses.

Rents on York's campus have gone up by between £15 and £20 a week since I started, and no accommodation there is now less than £100 a week. This figure includes the accommodation blocks that were closed one summer to get rid of the large quantities of asbestos in the walls.

The off-campus outlook is also bleak. An investigation of York's

recommended off-campus accommodation register last year revealed that 85% of properties listed had serious problems. Of these, one quarter were "category one" risks, including potentially fatal electrical hazards and no fire alarms.

Letting agencies in the city are known for their cabal-like behaviour, engineering price hikes that leave students with no real choice of price range.

Although this is a problem everywhere, it can be combated. After more than a year of hard, effective campaigning by our Socialist Society, York University Student Union will open its own not-for-profit letting agency in autumn 2015.

It will be transparent in its transactions, with no agency fees, and totally accountable to the student body. Each property on its books will also be accredited according to the city council's highest quality standards.

Winning the letting agency was hard work, but worth it.

We set up campaign stalls on campus, creating information leaflets, petitions and even a magazine. We attended debates, held open meetings and spoke to student papers.

Eventually the student union called a referendum on the issue, which was successful.

Now, I sit on the letting agency planning committee to make sure it stays true to its original aims.

Not only will this letting agency improve the housing market for York students, but its existence is proof that students are prepared to struggle against the illegal and dangerous activities of landlords and the letting agents.

This struggle should be taken up by campus activists everywhere to give young people the living conditions they deserve at prices they can afford.



# NO TO IMPERIALIST WAR

## Bombing will not stop sectarian violence

Tom Baldwin

Once again the government is banging the drums of war. Parliament has now agreed airstrikes on Islamic State (IS) which will see the return of British military intervention in Iraq. This comes just five years after the end of the last conflict which we were told had brought 'security and stability'.

Because of the barbaric and extremely reactionary nature of IS there is a feeling that 'something must be done'. But the self-serving intervention of Western imperialism, backed by a number of regional powers, cannot solve this problem.

The UK establishment parties, including Labour, which overwhelmingly backed this, have learnt nothing from the recent past military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.

### Disaster

Prime Minister Cameron says they will not put boots on the ground but a creep in the scope and nature of the intervention is an inevitable risk. He may hope it will distract from the Tories' problems at home but in the long run it could be another disaster - both for people of Britain and the Middle East.

The crimes of IS are abhorrent. But why do the capitalists express disgust when IS behead someone for supposedly religious crimes but turn a blind eye when it is done by the Saudi regime, an ally in this conflict?

Why do they say it is evil to murder someone with a sword but acceptable to blow people up from the safety of an airbase thousands of miles away, killing innocent civilians in the process?

The actions of the imperialists



Air strikes may halt Islamic State expansion but at the expense of creating other Frankenstein monsters

are steeped in hypocrisy. They cannot even decide who their enemies and who their allies are. This is not a moral mission to rid the world of IS but an attempt to use military might to pursue their own interests.

Just like the last Iraq war this will not succeed in bringing peace or stopping murderous fanatics, just the opposite.

More death and destruction imposed from hated imperialist countries and regional powers with their own interests to push;

the propping up of a corrupt and sectarian government with no authority in large parts of the country - these are fuelling the growth of reactionary forces.

They may be able to strike blows against IS in the short term but at the expense of creating other Frankenstein monsters - as in Libya, which is being torn apart by rival militias after Nato airstrikes helped remove Gaddafi.

IS or similar jihadists won't be defeated by foreign intervention.

Only the working class and poor can overcome sectarian forces, by building a movement that can organise a united struggle to improve their lives. The potential for this is shown by the cross-communal demonstrations against the occupation of Iraq or the uprisings that marked the start of the 'Arab spring'.

We oppose this latest war as we opposed the last. Otherwise we'll be faced with a perpetual cycle of war, each time fighting the horrors that the previous conflict has unleashed.

See editorial page 2

### Stop the Bombing of Iraq/Syria

Demonstrate  
Saturday 4 October:  
Assemble 1pm

Temple Place, London  
WC2R 3BD

called by Stop the War Coalition

### What we stand for

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

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

**The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in 45 countries.**

#### Our demands include:

##### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

##### WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

##### ENVIRONMENT

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

##### RIGHTS

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

##### NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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