



## Pay victories celebrated at Socialism 2014



# WE CAN WIN £10/HR



**Rob Williams**  
National Shop Stewards Network chair

**S**ocialist Seattle city councillor Kshama Sawant brought the house down at Socialism 2014 in London on 8 November. She spoke about her election victory and the successful campaign she led to win a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle.

Now a new report highlights the low pay trap that is keeping millions of workers in poverty pay. The Resolution Foundation estimates that only one in four workers who were low paid in 2001 have moved on to jobs with higher pay. But as Kshama and the BFAWU bakers' union President Ian Hodson said from the Socialism platform, there is an escape from low pay - if we fight for it!

In Seattle, Kshama's incredible victory gave a political voice to the struggle of fast

food workers and opened the door to a pay rise of almost 40% for the poorest! This has lifted the sights of workers throughout the US as other states and cities are forced into concessions.

Why should it be any different here? Just over the last few weeks, we've seen workers in St Mungo's Broadway homelessness charity and Greenwich libraries, with Socialist Party members playing important roles alongside others, win real victories.

If unions give a determined lead, their members can have the confidence to fight to break the scourges of low pay and zero-hour contracts.

We can take inspiration from these victories, here and in the US. Let's commit ourselves to the industrial and political struggles needed to smash the pay freeze and win a £10 an hour minimum wage now!

**See pages 6 and 7 for reports from Socialism 2014**



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# Afghanistan war: A legacy of death and destruction

Niall Mulholland

British combat troops were finally pulled out of Camp Bastion on 27 October, 13 years after the start of the US-led disastrous invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.

The October 2001 western powers' invasion took place weeks after the attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon. The subsequent US-led assault on Afghanistan was justified on the pretext of destroying al-Qa'ida's support base, despite the fact that most of the 9/11 attackers came from Saudi Arabia, a close US ally.

The Socialist opposed the invasion and warned it would bring massive loss of life and devastation to Afghanistan and would spawn more terrorism, including in the west. This was borne out by events.

From 2001 to 2013 the invasion and occupation cost between 18-20,000 civilian Afghan lives. Over 400 British soldiers were killed. Combat trauma amongst 150,000 British personnel who served in Afghanistan saw more commit suicide than die on the battle field in 2012. Since 2001, active al-Qa'ida type groups have spread from Central Asia to Pakistan, the Middle East and parts of Africa.

Despite the overwhelmingly pro-war media coverage, a poll in Britain taken in October found 68% think the war was "not worthwhile" and 42% felt Britain was "less safe" as a result.

While £19 billion was wasted on

the Afghan war, the Con-Dem government carried out massive austerity cuts at home. And despite the US pouring in \$104 billion over the last decade with promises of aid and development, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

Half of the country's children are acutely malnourished. The few faltering steps towards improving women's rights, including schooling for females, are under attack and being rolled back. In 2011, development agencies declared Afghanistan the most dangerous country in the world for women.

The only real 'success' story is the opium poppy crop, which last year reached a record high, worth \$3 billion!

## Imperialist aims

The truth is that the lives of Afghans and soldiers are just so much 'collateral damage' to the western powers. The main motivations behind imperialism's bloody actions in Afghanistan were securing a military foothold and influence in the strategic and energy-rich region.

With overwhelming firepower, the US-led 'coalition' quickly removed the reactionary Taliban regime in 2001 (whose origins were to be found in the west's arming and financing of the mujahedeen fighters against Soviet Union occupation in the 1980s). But they failed to suppress general Afghan opposition to foreign occupation or the Taliban's subsequent armed revolt.

The Hamid Karzi regime - reviled



The invasion and occupation has cost an estimated 18-20,000 civilian Afghan lives

by the majority of Afghans as corrupt, brutal and nothing more than a western puppet - was isolated in heavily militarised Kabul.

Realising that it was impossible to subdue the population and that Taliban armed attacks would only escalate as long as occupation continued, the western powers announced troop withdrawals and engineered new elections.

But the heavily rigged elections threatened a bloody conflict along ethnic lines after Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzi, a former World Bank economist, and Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister in Karzai's discredited regime, both claimed victory.

US Secretary of State John Kerry

recently forced the two candidates to accept a 'national unity' government or face the cutting off of aid.

Like British imperialism's three previous wars in Afghanistan in the 19th and early 20th century, this latest war also ended in disaster and ignominy for the US and Britain, exposing the limits of their power. But the fighting is not over.

Helmand and Nimroz provinces, which British forces had special responsibility for, are amongst the most violent parts of the country, with over 200 Afghan soldiers and 500 policemen killed this year alone.

Kerry insisted President Ghani sign a pact to allow 12,000 Nato troops, including British 'special forces', to stay in the country to

train the Afghan army. Air strikes, drone attacks and special forces operations to 'defend' the pro-western regime will continue.

The formal end of this catastrophic war underscores the fact that only the Afghan masses themselves, with the active solidarity of working people everywhere, can transform their appalling conditions and realise genuine peace, democracy and prosperity.

The formation of strong independent organisations, with pro-worker and poor polices, can contest corrupt warlords and the reactionary Taliban. But they can also expel imperialism, creating a socialist society, as part of a socialist federation of the region.

# Mid-term elections do not mean a shift to the right in US

From the website of Socialist Alternative, co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the USA

The significant gains made by Republicans in the mid-term elections, in particular taking control of the US Senate, have caused alarm for working class and progressive people across the country. The Republicans also solidified their control of the House of Representatives.

But Republican gains cannot obscure the fact that the whole political establishment is discredited. This election showed frustration and disappointment with the Democrats - not support for Republicans.

Before the election, one poll showed 70% supporting the idea of throwing out all incumbents. The gap between the frustration of working class people and what's on offer from reactionary Republicans and pro-corporate Democrats will inevitably force working people to find other ways to express their needs. We can expect struggles on a range of fronts.



Jess on the campaign trail

## Jess Spear campaign

Socialist Alternative candidate Jess Spear's campaign against Frank Chopp - the most powerful legislator in Washington State - was strong enough to force Chopp to perform a bizarre masquerade. The 20-year Democratic incumbent and Speaker of the House for the past 16 years portrayed himself as a "progressive activist".

Under the pressure of the Spear

campaign, Chopp hypocritically claimed to be for rent control; an early advocate in the fight for \$15 and a champion of school funding.

Jess Spear soundly defeated Chopp in all the debates. The campaign mounted a strong grassroots effort mobilizing volunteers, distributing over 50,000 leaflets, putting up thousands of posters and yard signs, and raising a phenomenal \$76,000 in donations from over 650 people without taking a dime in corporate cash.

Unfortunately, despite these ef-

forts, we were only able to expose Frank Chopp's "progressive" charade to a minority of the district's voters.

A large share of the responsibility for Chopp's success in hiding his corporate politics lies with the leaders of labour and progressive organisations. They publicly endorsed Chopp and covered up his abysmal record of corporate handouts, budget cuts, regressive taxes, and underfunding education.

However, the 16% vote Spear received on election night does not accurately reflect the support we found in a majority of conversations at doorsteps throughout the district.

The reality is that this election only indicated the views of the minority who actually voted, which is heavily skewed toward older, more conservative sections of the electorate who make up Chopp's base.

The election result was also part of a larger national picture. The low voter turnout in Seattle was matched by an incredibly low turnout across the country. An older, whiter, more conservative electorate decided the election.

However, ballot initiatives to raise the minimum wage passed with decisive margins in all four states where the issue was up for a vote, all

of which are considered conservative states - Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota.

San Francisco became the second major city after Seattle to implement a \$15 an hour minimum wage, which passed with 77% of the vote!

Also in Seattle, a number of ballot initiatives that show support for a left-wing, working class agenda were passed.

The essential task is to build a mass party to give working class people a vehicle for fighting for their own interests against arch-conservative Republicans and pro-corporate Democrats. This will require a determined, sustained struggle - but it is absolutely necessary.

While the electoral result is lower than what the campaign had hoped for, it is a basis for building further resistance against the corporate politics of the Democratic Party establishment. The Spear campaign is part of a larger process of beginning to break the corporate stranglehold over the political system and building an independent political voice for working people, oppressed groups, and environmentalists. The campaign helped to advance this project.

Full versions can be read on [www.socialistalternative.org](http://www.socialistalternative.org)



# 'A magical fairyland' of corporate tax avoiders

Alison Hill

More shocking revelations about tax avoidance by giant corporations have just been revealed by a team of journalists and published in the Guardian.

A set of leaked documents refer to arrangements made with the Luxembourg government. Broadly this involves the Grand Duchy rubber stamping labyrinthine 'loan' deals which effectively allow big companies to write off tax liabilities against interest they are paying to themselves. An arrangement not open to us on PAYE.

One tax expert, when giving evidence to a US Senate investigation in 2013, described Luxembourg as "a magical fairyland" - with entrance tickets restricted to big business of course.

## Hypocrisy

Tory Prime Minister Cameron and Chancellor Osborne have made various pledges about 'getting tough' over tax avoidance. But in reality Osborne is actually involved in a race to the bottom to attract more tax avoiding companies.

In 2012 he changed the regulations, cutting taxes for finance companies established in Luxembourg. Welcome to 'UK Tax Haven Inc.'

Over 1,000 companies have been involved in these arrangements, including household goods manufacturer Dyson, who the Guardian describes as saving millions through being taxed by 1% in Luxembourg.

Companies which may once have been involved in actual engineering have turned to tax engineering, to benefit a small elite.

To quote one example, pharmaceutical company Shire has operations in Basingstoke and the



Osborne cut taxes for finance companies established in Luxembourg

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) represents 50,000 workers in HMRC, responsible for collecting taxes in the UK. PCS estimates the UK tax gap to be £120 billion a year. This is £25 billion in tax avoidance, £70 billion in tax evasion and £25 billion in outstanding taxes. Yet the government is cutting tax staff and closing tax offices. Staff have been cut by half since 2005 and another 10,000 are scheduled to go over the next three years.

US. Most of its market is in the US, producing drugs to treat ADHD, Crohn's disease, etc.

Its head office is in Ireland and it is registered in Jersey. Shire's CEO is Michael Spencer, Tory party treasurer 2006-2010. He has made around £5 million in donations to the party.

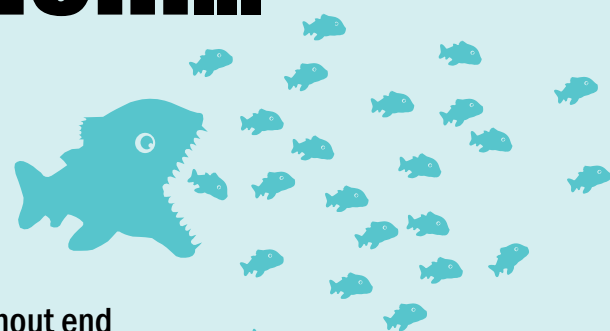
Shire used the wheeze of making loans to itself in Luxembourg. This was so successful that the documents leaked to the Guardian show that \$1.87 billion in profits from one

part of Shire was taxed at less than 1% over the last five years.

Under capitalism, no amount of legislative change is likely to stamp out this obscenity. In fact these revelations have just exposed the competition between countries to be the most attractive tax haven. Luxembourg is just one of the worst examples.

What more argument do we need to nationalise these companies and run them under democratic workers' control and management?

## Them...



### Cuts without end

Millionaire Chancellor George Osborne boasted to a baying audience at Tory party conference in October that he was slashing an extra £25 billion from public spending and a further £12 billion from welfare payments.

As devastating as this is for millions of low income people, the FT reports that £25 billion is actually an underestimate, that Osborne will demand an extra £48 billion of spending cuts due to paltry economic growth and falling tax revenues.

### Who's in charge?

Dominique Strauss-Kahn's investment company, Leyne, Strauss-Kahn and Partners (LSK), has declared itself insolvent. The former head of the International Monetary Fund (who resigned from the IMF in 2011 over allegations of sexual assault and now faces a trial in 2015 for "aggravated pimping") left LSK last month after he became aware of "excessive borrowing" by the group. And this guy used to be in charge of the world economy!

Clive Walder

### BBC watch...

Far be it said that the BBC displays a right-wing bias. However, its website article on 5 November, which reported an academic study showing that EU migrants have made a £20 billion net contribution to the UK Treasury over the last decade, only quoted 88 words from Professor Christian Dustmann, co-author of

the study; whereas the same article provided 121 words from reactionary Migration Watch chairman Sir Andrew Green rubbishing the study. No doubt this was done to 'ensure balance'!

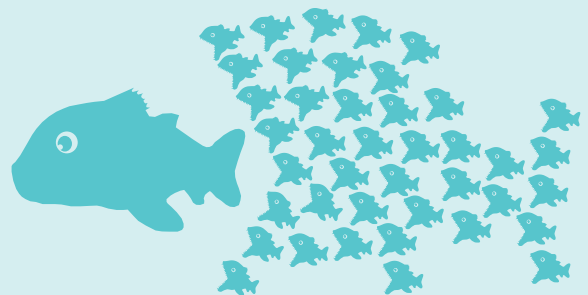
### ...Kick them out!

Meanwhile, the arch-Tory Daily Telegraph misused the study to run a headline which screamed: "£120 billion cost of Labour's policy on immigration". However, eight paragraphs later the Torygraph reports: "The native population made a negative contribution in 12 years during the period, a total of £591 billion, as the economy ran a deficit." Perhaps the "native population" should move to other EU countries to ease the burden on the UK economy?

### Repatriate robots?

Despite regular announcements of massive job cuts by private sector employers, local authorities and the government, establishment parties, including Ukip, falsely blame migrant workers for 'taking British jobs'. Now it seems a third of all UK jobs (mainly those earning £30,000 or less a year) will be replaced by robotic and automated systems over the next 20 years as capitalism seeks to maximise its profits. Can we expect to see TV images of Nigel Farage pouring a pint of beer over a computer?

## ...& Us



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



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## What recovery? Thousands more jobs axed

The Con-Dems much vaunted economic recovery is a mirage judged by the recently announced large scale job cuts affecting manufacturing and the service sector. Socialist Party members in Wales and Derby report on these draconian cuts. It's vital the trade unions organise a fightback to prevent this economic devastation.

### Rolls Royce

Rolls Royce (RR) has announced job cuts with the biggest impact in Derby at the civil aerospace factories in Sinfon, which employ 12,000 workers. Up to 1,800 jobs will be axed over the next 18 months.

The local paper explains: "With shareholders to satisfy, Rolls-Royce is on a constant drive to deliver profitability. And if cutting costs, namely jobs, is a means to achieving them, then so be it. It is economics at its most brutal."

Yet RR has an order book worth £71 billion and £60 billion has been secured by its aerospace division, the very part of the business where the axe will fall.

In the past few years, RR has delivered profits in spades to its investors, breaking records along the way.

I can remember being at school when RR in Derby went bust in 1971. Then, workers took to the streets with demonstrations. Such was the anger that the then Tory Heath government was forced to nationalise it in 24 hours.

The unions should be demanding the opening up of the company accounts to inspection by the workforce, no job losses whatsoever, and renationalisation under democratic workers' control and management.

Derby has already suffered from job cuts at Bombardier. If the unions don't fight then RR will keep coming back again and again announcing job cuts in the future and this would turn Derby into a ghost town.

Chris Fernandez

### Milford Haven

Residents of Milford Haven now have another reason to remember 5 November, when it was announced that the Murco oil refinery, one of the biggest employers in the town, was to close. This will lead to the loss of 400 jobs directly, plus an estimated 1,500 jobs from contractors on the site, and taking a massive £30 million out of the local economy.

The loss of this refinery is the latest in a line of closures and layoffs to hit the town situated in one of the poorest regions of northern Europe.

Unemployment in the town is skyrocketing thanks to Con-Dem cuts passed on through a Labour Assembly to a county council that is set to slash its budget by 25% in the coming financial year.

Socialists demand renationalisation of the energy sector as part of a democratically planned economy to ensure full employment.

Gareth Bromhall

More reports online at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

The Socialist Party's magazine

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# St Mungo's strikers celebrate victory

Workers at homelessness charity St Mungo's Broadway have won a fantastic victory against draconian attacks on their pay, conditions and union rights. The Socialist spoke to the Unite union convenor, **Adam Lambert**, about the dispute.

## What ignited the dispute?

Due to the union density within St Mungo's we've always had quite decent terms and conditions. Recently we merged with Broadway, a smaller charity in which terms and conditions of staff were much worse, a much lower quality provider which was making a deficit for at least four years.

Despite all that, their leadership headed the new merged organisation. Clearly they had a plan to bust

the union and reduce terms and conditions.

In July they told Unite that from the next day they were making changes, including 19% pay cuts, and ignoring the union's recognition agreement. They said there would be a retrospective consultation! We moved immediately into a mass campaign of industrial action.

## So how was the strike organised?

We got a 68% turnout and a 96% yes vote. We called a mass meeting and hundreds attended. We proposed a five day strike that management wouldn't just ride out. Some people started saying 'what about seven days?' At the end of the meeting we unanimously voted for seven.

It was a great seven days because we didn't just picket, we protested everywhere and we really tried to build up political pressure. Some councils threatened to end their contracts with the company.

During the strike 70 people joined Unite. We've now got over 700 members. Our membership has grown massively, to include large numbers of Broadway staff. I think overall it's increased by 50% since July.

At the end of the seven days, management hadn't yet moved. So we immediately called another action. Another mass meeting, of about 130, voted for ten days.

The day before the strike, management finally agreed to go to ACAS. By the evening it was quite



St Mungo's Broadway workers in Hackney, east London photo Paul Mattsson

clear that they were backing down on pretty much everything.

## Can you say a little about the Unite housing workers' branch?

It's great to be part of a branch where so many workplaces have taken action - One Housing, Homes and Communities Agency, Equinox. Look Ahead were about to strike but won before they actually struck.

It's clear there is a real appetite for resisting the atrocious cuts within our sector. They don't just impact us as workers but impact the services we can provide.

So in the last year we've been developing sector standards within the branch, which we want employers to sign up to.

In Scotland they have an agreement in place already, the tendering

is about quality, not just competing over the amount you can slash wages.

I think employers should be worried because we will not sign up to these attacks. If they continue in that spirit, there will be more unrest and more strikes.

See [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) for a longer version of this interview



Adam Lambert speaking at Socialism 2014 photo Senan

## Greenwich libraries: read all about it!



Greenwich library workers, as reported in last week's Socialist, have won a fantastic victory to fill vacant posts with permanent staff, reduce casual, zero-hour contracts and for the employer to abide by national collective bargaining. More details on this victory can now be read on [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) in a report by one of the library workers.

## Care UK workers to ballot on 2% pay deal

### Alistair Tice

Doncaster Care UK workers are set to ballot on a pay offer. 90 days of strike action taken over ten months has forced this wage-cutting employer to concede a three year deal of a 2% a year or Consumer Price Index pay rise, whichever is the highest. This would be paid to all Doncaster Care UK staff with a £500 bonus for the Tupe transferred staff this Christmas.

The Doncaster Supported Living Service for Adults with Learning Difficulties was privatised last year. Within three months of takeover, 'Don't Care UK' announced that former NHS staff's pay would be slashed an average of 35%.

Workers refused to accept this and began what has become the longest running strike ever in the

social care sector.

The magnificent struggle by the strikers has exposed Care UK and their private equity owners Bridgepoint, and inspired others such as Your Choice Barnet care workers and the St Mungo's Broadway housing workers to take bold strike action against cuts.

### Long struggle

The Guardian has reported that the more than 60 strikers would be "celebrating" a pay deal set to "pave the way" to the end of industrial action.

However, chair of the strike committee Roger Hutt told the Socialist: "If anybody thinks that we're happy to take a 35% pay cut and then get 2% back, they are sadly mistaken. But after such a long hard struggle, the shop stewards felt obligated to put the offer to the members.

"If you look at the bigger picture, I'm proud of the effect our campaign has had trying to stop the private sector milking the NHS as a cash cow and abusing service users as commodities. We have travelled the country with our message, even reaching the Observer and House of Commons."

The feelings of many strikers are summed up by Theresa Rollinson: "Having lost so much due to changes to terms and conditions it is not acceptable to me.

"It would give me less than £8 per week, less than £400 per annum. I have lost the latter of those figures every month! It certainly won't go far to paying the bills. I know what my vote will say."

Socialist Party salutes the inspiring struggle of the Care UK strikers and will continue to support them 100% if the pay deal is rejected.

## Sheffield recycling: 'We're out until the boss is out'

"We're going to stay on strike until we see Martine [Laffan-Butler, head of The Green Company] walking out of those gates." So say the Sheffield recycling workers on indefinite strike since 1 November.

Thirty GMB union members are striking for premium pay rates, welfare facilities, against management bullying and the way the privatised and sub-contracted council service is being run. They want Laffan-Butler out because of serious concerns about the misuse of public money and the sacking or forced resignation of the former senior management team who questioned this.



The strikers lobbied the city council meeting last week to pressure Labour to pull the contract from Green Company. In the town hall chamber they questioned Jack Scott, Labour's environmental services cabinet

member. His reply was just flannel, which brought the retort from the public gallery of: "What a load of bollocks!"

Two of the five recycling sites are closed by the strike. The strikers picket the other three tips to disrupt commercial waste operations while gathering signatures of support from the public.

As we go to press, GMB officials are having a meeting with the council leader and chief executive. The strikers hope for a breakthrough but insist they will not go back until Laffan-Butler goes.

Alistair Tice

## London RMT: Vote John Reid

Socialist Party member John Reid is standing for the London Transport seat of the RMT union national executive after receiving eight nominations from RMT branches representing 70% of the region's members. John is a former London region secretary, the current regional president and chair of Camden 3 branch. John's track record includes supporting members in Taxi branch, Docklands Light Railway (which is now balloting for strike action), cleaning and catering grades. In London Underground (LU), John has organised members' meetings

to discuss tactics before executive decisions are taken.

John says: "RMT has done well to defend salaries and limit displacements on LU. But we must also seek alliances with other unions across the transport sector and TUC for a coordinated and serious fight back against government cuts. "RMT should continue to support the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition that Bob Crow was a founder member of. Trade unions need a political and industrial voice." The election opens on 24 November.





photo Rob Williams

### HTC cranes strike

Hundreds of crane drivers from the UCATT construction union picketed building sites in London and around the country on 7 November in a dispute over pay with HTC Plant Limited.

Workers had voted 94% in favour of strike action. The turnout was over 80%.

Concrete mixer drivers refused to cross the mass picket outside the Nova Square site in Victoria, London.

Drivers are furious that after years of pay freezes and even wage cuts, they have only been offered a 3% pay increase. One worker said: "We haven't had a rise for years. We'll keep taking action until we get one".

UCATT plans further strikes on 14 and 21 November.

**Rob Williams**

### Fight JCB's 150 job cuts

Construction machinery firm JCB is carrying out a consultation with office workers after announcing 150 job cuts through voluntary redundancy and early retirement. The company has not ruled out further redundancies in all areas of the business.

According to JCB CEO Graeme MacDonald, the global construction equipment market has taken a sudden and surprising nose dive in the last few weeks.

Eleven months ago JCB announced a huge £150 million expansion that would create new factories and 2,500 jobs. Now it is reviewing and delaying these investments.

The company says it has to cut some of its 6,500 UK workers to have a 'viable business' in the long term.

JCB has made a profit every year since its launch in 1945 – even during the 2008 economic crash. Recent years have seen record profits.

JCB is owned by multimillionaire Lord Bamford, who donates large sums to the Tories on a regular basis, including £1 million before the 2010 general election. JCB is also constructing a £40 million golf course at its headquarters in Rocester, Staffordshire.

After the crash thousands of skilled JCB workers were made redundant and thrown on the scrapheap. Now we face this prospect again.

JCB should be nationalised so all profits can be reinvested for public benefit, rather than fund lords and Tories.

**A JCB worker**

# Under capitalism, the only way is down

## Fight for our future!



A study by Oxford University academics has shown that if you were born in the 1980s, you're far more likely to have worse living standards than your parents.

The report showed that if you were born in the 1940s or 1950s, you were more likely to experience upward social mobility, ie have a better job and life quality than your parents. But since the 1940s, downward social mobility has risen from 21% of people to 36%. Upward mobility had crashed from 48% for men and 44% for women born in 1946, to 37% and 36% respectively for those born during 1980-84.

This will be no surprise to the millions now working in insecure, zero-hour, workfare or 'self-employed' low paid jobs. But it doesn't have to be like this. We don't just want relative social mobility for the minority, we want a better society for all.

Join Youth Fight for Jobs to fight for our future!

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

## Nottingham students fight sexism

**Becci Heagney**

Sexist behaviour by male students in Nottingham has recently led to some high profile cases.

One Nottingham Trent University student has been sentenced to nine months for sexual assault. At the University of Nottingham, students - including students' union representatives - have been fined £150 for sexist chanting on a night out.

Socialist Students and the Rape Is No Joke campaign hosted a meeting as part of the Nottingham Women's Conference Fringe Festival. The month of events around the second annual conference brought together different groups that campaign for women's rights.

Our meeting was titled "Lad Culture: just a bit of 'harmless fun'?" We looked at how rape and sexual assault are trivialised in popular culture, and particularly on university campuses. Over 30 people, mainly young women and students, attended.

The discussion focused on how 'lad culture' - described by the National Union of Students as a "pack mentality" of "arrogant male chauvinism" - adds to a growing rape culture. Violence against women is joked about and normalised.

However, more women are taking action and are beginning to challenge these ideas. We also discussed uniting with men in opposing sexism, and developing comedy and popular culture that represents ordinary people's lives.

## Bradford academy's dress sense nonsense

**Iain Dalton**  
Yorkshire Socialist Students  
organiser

On Tuesday 4 November, Hanson Academy in Bradford sent over 150 pupils home for failing to wear school uniform matching its newly enforced standards. These include minutiae about the colour of the socks children wear, type of trousers and colour of shoe laces!

Angry parents took to the school's Facebook page to complain, one who had accidentally put her daughter's tie in the wash, sent her to school with money for a replacement but she was sent home anyway! But many parents simply can-

not afford to replace school uniform that was perfectly fine until this week.

The principal, Elizabeth Churlton, defended the policy on the school website: "Our uniform and dress codes set the tone for our community and provide the scaffolding for high standards in every aspect of school life." Surely the scaffolding for high standards should be good quality teaching?

However, Churlton is financially worlds apart from the situation faced by most parents of her pupils. The advertised rate for Churlton's job was around £125,000 a year. The median wage in Bradford East constituency (where the school is located) is less than £18,000 a year.

## York: Students and workers unite for a £10 minimum wage



Campaigners outside one of the outlets visited photo UoY Socialists

**Jamie Chatfield**  
Secretary, University of York  
Socialist Society

A successful Fast Food Rights campaign Day of Action, jointly organised by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) and University of York (UoY) Socialist Society, took place on 5 November, calling for an end to all zero-hour contracts and a £10 an hour minimum wage.

20 people joined the protest, including students from the University of York and St John University, Socialist Party members and representatives from York trades council.

Lead by Sam Vickers, BFAWU organising regional secretary, protesters marched through York city centre leafleting the public and

actively engaging with fast food workers in outlets across the city about trade union membership and fighting zero-hour contracts.

Many agreed with our call for a £10 minimum wage, particularly under-18s, who can receive as little as £3.79.

Plans have been made to hold another protest later in the academic year.

Good wages are necessary to eliminate poverty pay and the increasing reliance on in-work state benefits (such as working tax credit and housing benefit), with 70% of new benefit claimants now in employment.

**Join the Fast Food Rights lobby of Parliament at Old Palace Yard, Westminster on Friday 21 November, 12 noon when MPs are due to discuss zero-hour contracts**



# SOCIALISM2014 CONTAGIOUS CONFIDENCE - WE CAN WIN

'I feel at home here'. Those were the words so many of the people attending Socialism 2014 used. They were workers, trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners, young people, students and other members of the 99% hit by austerity and wanting to fight back. Well over 1,000 people spent 48 hours being inspired and inspiring others with their commitment and determination to fight back. The entire event was infused with a contagious confidence that the working class can fight and can win.

Every workshop, forum and rally was packed out with people wanting to discuss and debate, listen and learn. The financial appeal raised £22,000 to fund the work of the Socialist Party and the socialist international to which it's affiliated, the Committee for a Workers' International. Socialist Books took over £2,000, reflecting the determination to understand socialist ideas among those in attendance. There isn't space here to list all the outstanding speakers,

contributions and organisational work that helped to make the weekend such an enormous success. This event gave a taste of the Socialist Party – confident in the working class to struggle to change the world, organised, determined, bringing together experience and youth, growing, and proud to be socialist. If you think you could be at home in a party like that, join us!

**Sarah Sachs Eldridge, Socialism 2014 organiser**

## Inspirational Rally for Socialism

**Steve Score**

Editor of the Socialist

The Saturday rally of Socialism 2014 was inspirational. The Camden Centre was full to bursting with an enthusiastic audience. Chairing the rally, Socialist Party national organiser Sarah Sachs-Eldridge pointed to the record of the speakers, not only in fighting the attacks on the 99% by the super-rich 1%, but also in putting forward an alternative to capitalist crisis.

Ian Hodson, president of the bakers' union BFAWU, whose members at the Hovis bakery in Wigan defeated zero-hour contracts through taking action, in a barnstorming opening speech said: "We showed the power of our class. Yes, you can beat zero-hour contracts." He explained his union's role in the Fast Food Rights campaign (see page 5), and in the campaign for a £10 an hour minimum wage. He went on to say: "Ritz (cinema) workers in London won a 26% pay rise. Yet they say striking doesn't win!"

### Scotland

Brian Smith, secretary of Glasgow city council Union (speaking in a personal capacity) and member of Socialist Party Scotland (SPS), explained the mood of workers and young people in the recent independence referendum in Scotland.

The 1.6 million-strong Yes vote reflected a "huge radicalisation". It included a big majority of the 16 and 17 year olds who were able to vote for the first time and was motivated by a desire for "a different way of running society".

SPS's slogan of 'yes to independence, but fight for socialism' highlighted that an SNP-led Scotland would not "remove poverty or provide working class people with a future. We call for an independent socialist Scotland, linked to a socialist England, Wales and Ireland."

Although the No vote won, based on a huge campaign of fear waged by the parties of big business, in fact the "losers won and the winners lost". The collapse in Labour Party support shows the need for a new mass workers' party, and SPS is committed to building the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (see page 8).

The next speaker was Mark Serwotka, recently re-elected as general secretary of the PCS civil service union. His union has been at the sharp end of the resistance to government attacks on public services - 87,000 civil service jobs have gone in the last four years.

He warned: "The next government, whoever it is, will be one of austerity, privatisation and spending cuts. The unions need to step up to the plate. The PCS has supported all the coordinated strike action that has happened so far. I call on the leaders of all the unions - let's strike together as a matter of urgency." He also pointed to the need "to build an alternative political force that has the credibility to stand in elections."



The platform joins the standing ovation for Kshama photo Paul Mattsson

Ruth Coppinger, one of the three Socialist Party (Ireland) members elected to the Irish parliament, spoke with passion. A sister party of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, it is playing a leading role in the massive movement taking place against water charges. Ruth reported: "A week ago, 200,000 people attended 100 local protests across Ireland. Four weeks ago 100,000 attended a demonstration in Dublin. This has been a mass uprising from below."

The Socialist Party is spearheading a mass campaign of non-payment to defeat the water tax. Ironically, the "boasts of the established parties" that there is a 'recovery' have played a role in changing the mood. "People are saying - if it's a recovery why are we having another austerity measure? Where's our recovery?"

The Socialist Party took part in setting up the Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA), which won 14 council seats in the local elections in May. Paul Murphy, a Socialist Party member was elected to parliament for the AAA last month. A political alternative to austerity is being built.

### Militant

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, drew the rally's attention to the role of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist, which was founded 50 years ago. Militant beat Thatcher "through the mighty movement of Poll Tax non-payers". We also took her on in the massive 1980s' battle of the Liverpool councillors.

Some accuse the Socialist Party of 'reformism' because of the Liverpool struggle, and today our co-thinkers in the US, Socialist Alternative, because of the \$15 Now campaign in Seattle. Peter answered this by saying: "Yes we are guilty of winning reforms for the working class! The \$15 Now campaign is a model throughout the US and the world."

In certain periods of history it is possible to win reforms. But in a period of capitalist crisis it is not possible to maintain those unless we are prepared to change the system.

Peter explained: "If wages had increased at the same rate as bosses' pay, the minimum wage would now be £19 an hour. What a condemnation of right wing trade union leaders!"

Inequality is built into the fabric of capitalist society."

The working class has no mass party through which to fight back. Peter described the crisis in the Labour Party due to its austerity policies. Leader of the Unite union Len McCluskey has warned that if Labour continues along the same lines, after the next election it might be time to build an alternative. "But we say to him - that's too late! Workers are looking for an alternative now. Look at Spain: Podemos, founded only a few months ago, is now the largest party in the polls."

Peter concluded: "Capitalism has had its day. No longer can it develop the means of production." It is our job to fight to get rid of it.

### Kshama Sawant

The climax of the evening was a speech from Kshama Sawant, who was elected onto Seattle city council with nearly 100,000 votes as a Socialist Alternative (SA) candidate. She played a key role in achieving a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle, which will lift 100,000 workers out of poverty and transfer \$3 billion from the bosses to the low paid. She was given standing ovations both before and after her speech.

SA has shown what a difference a socialist representative makes. The council pays \$117,000 a year to each of its councillors. Kshama is taking home only the \$40,000 average workers' wage and donates the rest to a solidarity fund that supports workers' struggles.

Consciousness in the US is changing because of the bankruptcy of capitalist policies. "The US working class is not weighed down by the betrayals of social democracy like Labour in Britain." This is partly why there is so much potential for socialist ideas now.

"We are now taking the first steps towards a new mass workers' party in the US. Capitalism is undermining itself. All its institutions are seen as rotten by big sections of the population. The US congress is less popular than head lice and cockroaches according to a recent poll!"

Kshama finished with the rallying call: "Let's build the powerful force that we know is necessary - because we have a world to win!"



A section of the audience at the Saturday night rally photo Senan



**Nancy Taaffe**  
Waltham Forest

**Peter Taaffe** photo Paul Mattsson



**Mark Serwotka**  
photo Senan



**Ruth Coppinger**  
photo Senan

## Closing rally: just getting started

**Nancy Taaffe**  
Waltham Forest

The closing rally of Socialism 2014 marked the end of two tumultuous days of debate and discussion. Even though it officially closed the event, the speakers reflected a very definite mood that we were all just getting started.

Chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Dave Nellist, explained that we won't be waiting for Labour to betray workers in government (if they manage to stutter over the line and win the general election). There will be no sitting back and allowing Ukip to gain traction in our communities.

### TUSC

Dave emphasised the need for socialists to step forward and stand for TUSC in May 2015. He outlined the drive to stand 1,000 candidates in the local council elections and 100 in the general election - giving us the possibility of an election broadcast to help us reach a wider audience than ever before.

Unite convenor at St Mungo's Broadway, Adam Lambert, put to shame many national union executives. He described the recent victorious strike of homelessness workers at St Mungo's, where stewards knew that it would take more to win than an hour's strike here and another hour there. Workers voted for seven days of action.

This dispute highlights that where workers' leaders are honest, committed and determined, they are repaid with a resolute and determined struggle. And of course, victory!

If the theme of a new beginning ap-

plied to any speaker it was Isai Priya of Waltham Forest Socialist Party and Tamil Solidarity. She spoke of her rage against low pay, poor working conditions, difficulties in paying the rent, racism and discrimination. She described the inspiration she took from the struggle in Seattle and the possibilities to replicate and build this fight in Britain.

### Ireland

Recently elected Irish TD Paul Murphy painted a picture of what Ireland was like before the water charge struggle.

The mood he described could be applied to Britain today. He described the endless austerity, the trade union leaders' sell-outs, the Labour Party implementing the Troika's (EU, European Central Bank and IMF) demands and the working class (on the surface) seemingly willing to take it.

However, he described the rupture in this mood as represented by the non-payment campaign of water charges. Just like in Seattle he described how others on the left and the establishment thought his election impossible, and yet, win he did.

Hannah Sell, assistant general secretary of the Socialist Party, described the dire situation facing working class people but in keeping with the mood of the closing rally and of the whole weekend, spoke of all the possibilities for humanity if society was organised along socialist lines.

She appealed to those who were not yet members of the Socialist Party to join with us in replacing this system. The rally closed with a rousing rendition of the Internationale and a determination to take socialist ideas out far and wide.



**Isai Priya** photo Senan



**Hannah Sell** photo Senan



**Paul Murphy**  
photo Senan

## What you thought

I thought Socialism 2014 was the best yet. The sessions were packed and well-delivered and even the most complex of topics felt accessible and applicable to our everyday experiences. I left feeling empowered and like I was part of something very exciting.

It was a particular privilege to hear Kshama Sawant talk about the work of the CWI in Seattle. To learn about the incredible gains that have been made right in 'the belly of the beast' was truly inspiring.

On another note, the crèche was excellent!

**Lianne Francis**  
Cardiff

photo Senan



After 11 years in the Socialist Party this has to be one of the most inspirational, exciting and impressive political events I've been to. It showcased the reach of the Socialist Party in many spheres of life - from the excellent session on disability rights, where campaigners, service users and workers discussed the way forward in building the fight against cuts and austerity, to the session on political theatre and the arts. Socialism 2014 was the shot in the arm needed in preparing us for the struggles to come.

**James Kerr**  
Lewisham

This was my first Socialism and proved to be an uplifting experience. It was great to meet so many comrades from across Britain and the world!

**Jenny Stewart**  
Leicester

Kshama is the epitome of a modern socialist leader, showing no compromise in the fight against low pay, taking home only the average wage, using remaining wages to support local struggles, making the time to talk to workers, understanding their issues - all while organising and building the socialist movement in Seattle. Pure inspiration.

**Lisa Bainbridge**  
Lambeth

Still buzzing, and not from the beer! Two excellent rallies promoting our public

representatives - two Irish MPs, a US city councillor, a leading trade unionist in Scotland. Where else would you get; thirty people intensely debating political theatre; a hundred people discussing how to fight Islamic State; and two hundred exploring Trotskyism in the 21st century? Book me in for 2015. Unmissable.

**Paul Gerrard**  
Salford

When we arrived and saw the huge numbers outside, queuing all the way through to the front door, we knew something had changed. The commissions were excellent, the seats were packed. The rallies fizzed with excitement. We came home tired but massively enthused.

This Socialism event will stand out in all our memories as marking a turning point in the building of our party.

**Mariam Kamish**  
Caerphilly

I thought the event was tremendous in the enthusiasm and contributions from platforms and the audiences in the sessions and what the younger attendees were able to teach an older dog like me informally as well.

Kshama Sawant's speech in the Saturday night rally even excelled all we had expected. The packed closing rally was a fitting tribute to the whole event and epitomised it in its mood, content and efficiency.

**Keith Dickinson**  
Socialist Books



photo Suzanne Beishon

An inspirational weekend of incredible discussions and speakers showing the vital role the Socialist Party and its sister sections are playing around the world. I was filled with confidence in our socialist ideas and desperate to get out and convince other workers of our ability to win a better future!

**Tessa Warrington**  
Leicester

Very informative weekend, obtaining information from other workplaces, cultures, industrial and community actions. A broad range of like-minded people learning from experience - past and present. Enjoyed every single minute of it.

**Ian Plumbley**  
St. Helens

Great to see so many young people cheering for socialist ideas at the rallies. Listening to speakers and debates, I really got a feeling that the working class is stirring.

**Heather Rawling**  
Leicester

Kshama is an inspiration and takes no personal credit for her incredible victories. What can I say but onward and upward, forward to socialism.

**Mary Jackson**  
Doncaster

My favourite session was 'Is revolution possible in Britain?' The leadoff exposed the revolutionary character of the British working class in history. Loved meeting and having a chat with Kshama before the rally on Sunday too!

**Richard Shattock**  
Hatfield

photo Suzanne Beishon



Charged our batteries with the explosive rallies and excellent discussions from working class activists! The discussion about 'caste, race and class' introduced by Senan and Meena Kandasamy dealt comprehensively not with the brutalities of casteism and racism but also about the necessity of a class-based approach with a socialist programme to deal with those inhuman atrocities.

**Sajith Atteppuram**  
Hatfield

I went to the political theatre session with James Ivens leading a well-informed discussion on the future of political theatre. I learnt a lot of new stuff and saw that this kind of discussion is an integral part of our political life. James, you play a mean ukulele - Hendrix would have been proud.

**John Marston**  
Liverpool

The highlight of my weekend was the 'women on the frontline of austerity' session. It was inspiring to hear Ruth Coppinger speak on the campaigning work of ROSA in Ireland, taking up the issues of sexism, violence against women and abortion on an anti-capitalist basis.

**Caroline Vincent**  
Leicester

I enjoyed the final rally. The speakers represented workers in struggle and their speeches were short, snappy and brimming with optimism.

**Jean Thorpe**  
Nottingham

Glad to hear the championing of community issues and see the breadth of work comrades are getting involved in up and down the country

**Mark Gawthorpe**  
Leicester

Kshama Sawant photo Paul Mattsson



# Leading Scottish trade unionists back TUSC

**Philip Stott**  
Socialist Party Scotland

Some of the leaders of Scotland's most combative unions were gathered at a significant Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) conference on 1 November.

Gordon Martin, Scotland organiser of TUSC supporting transport union RMT, spoke from the platform. "All the politicians in Scotland - whether Labour, SNP or Tories - have failed us. That's why standing our own candidates is so important."

John McNally, vice president of civil service union PCS, explained that austerity was the only choice on offer from the capitalist parties - including the discredited Labour Party. "Labour is in long term crisis in Scotland, as we see by the resignation of Johann Lamont. If Blairite Jim Murphy is the ans-

wer to this crisis, we're asking the wrong question."

Cheryl Gedling, a member of the PCS national executive committee, chaired the meeting - which was also attended by leading members of the union's Scottish Committee. The leadership of left wing branches of public service union Unison, including Glasgow and Dundee, attended as well.

Also taking part were community activists, including successful anti-bedroom tax campaigners from Castlemilk and Easterhouse. In all, more than 70 trade unionists, socialists and anti-cuts activists discussed the way forward following the independence referendum.

## Yes

Despite the huge working class Yes vote in the referendum - a revolt against austerity and the establishment - the cuts juggernaut

has continued.

The SNP bears much of this responsibility. A number of left organisations and individuals in Scotland have called for an SNP - or so-called "Yes Alliance" - vote next year.

All the organisations that take part in TUSC, including the RMT, called for a Yes vote in the referendum. But we cannot support candidates who are not prepared to refuse to implement cuts.

## Betrayal

Jim McFarlane, secretary of Dundee City Unison, reminded the conference that Dundee delivered the biggest Yes majority in Scotland. Yet within a week the SNP led council announced a further £8 million in cuts.

"This week has seen that figure become the tip of the iceberg. Now cuts of four times that - a full £30

million plus - are being prepared between now and 2017. They will decimate public services in Scotland's Yes city. This cannot go unchallenged."

Instead the conference unanimously passed a resolution committing TUSC to standing candidates in the 2015 elections. We pledge to set no cuts, needs based budgets - and fight for socialist policies like public ownership, an end to anti-union laws and a living wage.

Scottish TUSC will hold another conference in late February to finalise its manifesto and list of candidates. In the meantime, the expanded steering committee will be writing to trade union organisations, socialist groups and others. We invite all such groups and individuals to take part in building a principled electoral challenge to austerity in May 2015.

**TUSC  
AGAINST  
CUTS**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves transport workers' union RMT; leading members of other unions including the PCS, NUT and POA; the Socialist Party, and other anti-cuts and socialist groups and individuals.  
[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)



## Leicester party building school

**Caroline Vincent**  
Leicester Socialist Party

Our party is not funded in the same way as the mainstream parties - we don't get corporate handouts. We rely on the money we raise through campaigning.

On 11 October, Leicester branch posed the question "why do we do stalls?" We were holding a day school on building a revolutionary party. We assembled at a cafe in Leicester town centre, ordered coffee and bacon sandwiches, and kicked off the discussion.

## Fundraising

Members made many suggestions, such as raising the profile of the party, promoting upcoming events and testing out our ideas. Our key reasons for doing stalls were meeting potential members, selling the Socialist newspaper and collecting donations for our fighting fund.

The economic situation means the majority we meet are earning minimum wage or little more, are in precarious employment, or are affected by government cutbacks in some way. For this reason we can sometimes be shy when asking for cash. But since donations from the working class are vital to our work, we agreed to be both sensitive and bold.

We also went through logistical and organisational points, including dressing appropriately for the weather and bringing pens that

actually work! Then we turned theory into action, and took our ideas to the street with a two hour town centre stall.

Using petitions for a £10 an hour minimum wage, we asked for donations by giving concrete examples of how money would be spent, such as printing material. We enthusiastically sold the Socialist, pointing out the front page article on striking to end poverty pay. Even the rain couldn't dampen our spirits - fortunately some of us had brought umbrellas, displaying how well prepared we are!

Three people had expressed an interest in joining, ten papers were sold, and an impressive £32 fighting fund had been raised. Clearly our bold approach had been a success!

## Recruiting

After ordering more coffee (with cake this time) we discussed recruitment. We gave examples of things to say when we phone potential members, and how best to arrange a meeting for discussion. Contact details were assigned, with a plan to phone them all within 48 hours.

We ended the day with a social event where homemade curry raised a further £20 for the fighting fund.

The day left us full of renewed confidence and fresh ideas - and a good start towards hitting our branch's fighting fund and paper sales targets for this quarter.



photo Laurence Maples

Residents of Cressingham Gardens in south London march to save their homes. Lambeth council is threatening the estate with 'redevelopment'



photo Paul Mattsson

Russell Brand joins residents of the New Era estate in north London. Demonstrators posted an eviction notice on their millionaire Tory MP landlord's office in protest at rent hikes. Visit [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) for the full story



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Renewed confidence and fresh ideas



# Low wage Britain

## Little charity from high paid care bosses

### A care worker

**F**ive million workers in Britain are on low pay. I'm one of them.

In 2005 I was transferred from the NHS to one of a group of companies owned by a not-for-profit charity. It was also 'not-for-union recognition', although those transferred did stay in Unison.

In 2013 I was on £8.50 an hour for supporting people with learning difficulties and challenging behaviours. If I did overtime, night work,

I was on £8.50 an hour for supporting people with learning difficulties and challenging behaviours. But then a restructure 'harmonised' all of us to be paid £7.59

unsocial hours and bank holidays I got an enhanced rate. I got six weeks holiday too.

But then a restructure 'harmonised' our contracts with the non-transferred workers. Our hourly rate was to be cut to £7.59 for all shifts with no enhanced rates. Holidays were cut to four weeks. Some of us went on strike.

The companies made a total surplus of over £2 million in 2012-13, which they gave in gift aid to the parent company with no tax paid. Four executive directors were on over £100,000 a year!

### Determined strike

Many people had never been on strike before but were determined to fight. Some already on £7.59 also struck, but sadly we did not win over enough of them, as management used divide and rule tactics. But I still think that had the strike gone on, more would have come out on strike.

However we lost, not through lack of determination, but the union regional officials let us down and called it off. At one point we had the bosses on the run, they had to bring in management from other areas.

A couple of months later the company gave us a pay rise, from £7.59



Care workers on strike photo The Socialist

### The Socialist Party says:

- Stop the care cuts
- Take council and NHS care back in-house
- £10 minimum wage now – no exemptions
- Scrap zero-hour contracts

to £7.66 an hour. It was not much, but better than nothing. The company had said we would not get a rise till 2016!

We also won extended pay protection from 12 to 18 months, but that protection comes to an end at the end of November. So I will be taking a lot less home in December.

I am trying to campaign for union recognition as we recruited a lot during the strike, but it is difficult to recruit more now as a result of the union officials' action. There is still a lot of demoralisation.

Now rumour has it that the company are cutting again. Many of the people we support need two-to-one support. However, social services now want one-to-one support.

This will affect's clients' activities and quality of life. But it also puts staff at risk as many clients have very challenging behaviour. Staff could also lose their jobs.

They also want to change waking nights to sleep-ins, expecting staff to sleep in corridors on a flat bed. Why pay an hourly rate for a waking night when you can just pay £22 for a sleep in?

Labour have promised an £8 minimum wage, but not until 2020! We need £10 now!

## Life of a zero-hour care worker

**A** day in the life of many care workers working for charities on zero-hour contracts can involve:

- Sitting at home watching crap TV while waiting for a call that doesn't come
  - Taking a ticket at the council offices and waiting half a day to sort out your housing benefit even though you lose a day's pay in the process
  - Trawling the internet for a care job with a proper contract
  - Being shunted from place to place and pretending to be happy, lest a grumpy face loses you shifts
  - Or being at work and seeing that the very people you work with and for are also being done over
- I know, I've been there and dread going back. Like so many, the Con-Dems' recession led me from a half-decent job to zero hours via the soul destroying Job-centre Plus.

Many are doing two jobs because the charity claims it cannot pay a living wage. I ended up get-

ting an hourly rate that I wouldn't have got out of bed for in 1999.

But charity chief executives regularly get £100,000 plus expenses with their entourage not far behind. No wonder that a recent poll showed 35% of people have little trust in charities.

### Benefit cuts

Vulnerable clients are also getting whacked with their benefits being cut. New Personal Independent Payments actually mean personally restricting their lives: more stress and isolation for them with less respite for their carers.

Zero hours means you're permanently skint. Most staff couldn't afford to attend last year's Christmas do at £25 a head – that's over half a day's pay.

The only saving grace in three years of zero-hours working was my fellow workers and the vulnerable people I worked for. Socialism cannot come quick enough for them.

**A London Socialist Party member**

## Flawed maths of the bedroom tax

**I** have been hit twice with the bedroom tax. The first time was last year when I was in a three bedroom place, as I was having my younger kids stay weekends, along with my older son living with me full time.

Not being able to afford the top-up, I decided to move to a two bedroom flat along with my son.

Then he left and a few months ago I was back to square one, having to pay the top up once again. I could not afford this and gave the place up.

When I was in a three bedroom home the rent was about £82 a week. But when I moved to a two bedroom flat the rent was £125 a week.

Why did I have to downsize for the council to pay an extra £40?

It would have been cheaper for them to keep me in the three bedroom and still have my kids stopping.

Scrap the bedroom tax!  
**Ian Radford, Grimsby Socialist Party**



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## Exhibition review

# Disobedient Objects

**Amalia Loizidou** reviews the Disobedient Objects exhibition at London's V&A museum

This exhibition takes people on a journey through protests around the world and across time through objects, protest art and design. A Unite union banner saying: "Still the enemy within" greets visitors; this refers to how Thatcher talked of striking miners in the 1980s. The exhibition is full of DIY protest objects – some of which normally have a completely different use.

There is the lid of a cooking pot, used in Argentina around 2001 in protests against the bank accounts of millions being frozen. These protests led to the fall of four different presidents in three weeks. Next to it was a teacup and saucepan from the Women's Social and Political Union, the suffragettes' movement in Britain.

Other objects included a self-made gas mask used by protesters in Turkey in the Gezi park movement and the red square cut-out used as a solidarity symbol for the 2012 Quebec student protests.

A moving feature was the Arpilleras, appliquéd textiles made by women in South America. One of

them celebrated the fall of dictator Pinochet in Chile; others were calls of hope and to remember the children who disappeared.

This exhibition also shows the guerrilla girls' gorilla masks, a feminist group of artists who were protesting the lack of female artists' representation in New York's Metropolitan Museum. You can learn about the history of the "bust cards"

"Still the enemy within" greets visitors; this refers to how Thatcher talked of striking miners in the 1980s

made in case of the arrest of protesters, explaining to them their rights and legal procedures.

There were placards from the 2011 student demos in Britain against increasing university tuition fees and abolishing the EMA. Wherever you stand in the exhibition a huge banner watches over you, saying "Capitalism Is Crisis". It's a pleasant surprise in a museum – Victoria and Albert (V&A) – named after royalty!

We went to the exhibition the day after the TUC "Britain needs a pay



photo V&A

rise" demo in London. So it was good to see stickers from the V&A staff and the PCS union, with slogans about the living wage on the description panels.

Another good feature was a wall covered with current campaigns' material such as leaflets (including Socialism 2014 flyers) and also knickers with slogans about the

abortion rights movement in Ireland.

This exhibition can teach you about movements in different places of the world and different moments in time that you might not know about. It even has items that you might have been using yourself while demonstrating for your rights. It will make you smile at objects pro-

duced for the different movements. It can also make you cry.

It will certainly leave you inspired about all the struggles across the world and across time. It shows how the baton is now in your hands to fight for your own rights and your own future. The exhibition, on until 1 February 2015 is definitely recommended! And it's free!

## Labour - the singer or the song?

The Con-Dems are the most unpopular government in living memory. They crush the poor and force-feed the rich. Suicides of people unable to cope with miserly benefits are increasing. Yet Labour's lead limps between 1% and 4%. Why?

The would-be political assassins of Ed Miliband are condemned by Labour worthies like Hain and Blunkett, who say Ed should get on the doorstep to project Labour's policies.

If he did it would go like this: 'Vote for me and I'll maintain the Con-Dem spending cap; vote for me and I'll maintain the public sector wage freeze; the privatised utilities will remain in private hands; the Health Care Act will be repealed but there's little I can do about the privatisation of the NHS. Vote for me and I'll be tougher with the unemployed than the Con-Dems; and I'll maintain the most vicious anti-trade union laws in Western Europe.'

Ed's problem is not that he looks silly eating a sandwich, but that Labour offers a continuation of austerity not fundamentally



Miliband - no alternative

different to the Con-Dems.

Those socialists who remain with Labour should now put their energies into building a new mass party of the working class, spearheaded by TUSC, so offering a clear socialist alternative to the electorate.

**Tony Mulhearn**

## Theatre review

### United We Stand

Reviewed by **Kate Jones**, Socialist Party Wales

It is the summer of 1972, two years into a Tory government, and building workers take strike action against the 'Lump' – the use of cash-in-hand non-union labour in the building industry.

Flying pickets travel from site to site, and succeed in persuading workers to join the union, and the strike. The bosses retaliate. The big building companies, and their Tory allies, decide to teach the trade unions a lesson.

Des Warren and Eric 'Ricky' Tomlinson are two workers who pay a heavy price, when 24 pickets are charged with a variety of offences, including 'conspiracy to intimidate and affray'. Conspiracy laws, not



used since the days of Queen Victoria, are a stick to punish the workers.

United We Stand, currently touring, is a political – and highly entertaining – two-man show, which uses humour, music and puppets to tell the story of the strike and its aftermath. The audience become the workers at the strike meeting and the public at the trial. News and other footage from the time are projected on to a sheet draped over the scaffolding that makes up a simple set.

Over 40 years later, the campaign to overturn the verdicts continues. On tour with the play is an exhibition from the official Shrewsbury 24 Campaign. As Des Warren told his

trial: "The only conspiracy was between the government, the employers and the police".

Ricky Tomlinson, today supporting the play, comments: "They wanted the prison sentences to act as a deterrent to prevent workers from taking strike action. Every worker should know what happened to us to ensure it does not happen again." United We Stand is a play which every trade unionist and activist should see.

**United We Stand by Neil Gore Townsend Productions in association with the official Shrewsbury 24 Campaign [www.townsendproductions.org.uk](http://www.townsendproductions.org.uk)**

## Obituary: Heulwen Davies 1960–2014

Heulwen Davies passed away suddenly on 30 October after suffering a stroke and then a heart attack while out walking, one of her favourite pastimes. Heulwen joined Militant in Swansea in the early 1980s and became one of the hardest working, most respected comrades in the area particularly in Morriston where she became secretary of the local branch.

For many years, she was active in the PCS and its predecessor union the CPSA at the big Driver and

Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) office. She was the most conscientious of union reps, and some of her members would insist on presenting her with a gift each year. She always refused such gifts, but would accept donations to the Militant and later the Socialist Party.

For much of her time at DVLA, the union branch was controlled by right wingers but she persistently fought for her trade union and socialist principles. She took the time and effort to talk to the members she rep-

resented and took up their concerns both with management and union branch officers.

She was less active politically and in the union in recent years, but she remained the most loyal of comrades and friends. Heulwen cared about her friends and took their concerns seriously, sometimes to the detriment of her own needs. I cannot believe that she is gone. Rest in peace, Heulwen, our comrade and friend.

**Carol Warren**

### 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](mailto: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.



# 25 years after the Berlin Wall fell Was capitalist restoration inevitable?

**Robert Bechert**

Berlin resident in 1989

While, for millions, the 1989 opening of the Berlin Wall is celebrated as a great victory for democratic rights, the official celebrations to mark its 25th anniversary have been dominated by anti-socialist propaganda.

This has sought to hide the fact that, initially, the revolutionary movement that opened the Wall was pro-socialist and that it was only afterwards that hopes and illusions in capitalism came to dominate the movement in East Germany.

But the official propaganda buries the initial revolutionary and pro-socialist character of the movement in autumn 1989 and make it seem that, from the outset, its aim was to bring back the capitalist market via uniting with west Germany.

Internationally the 9 November anniversary of the Wall's opening was exploited by many governments to allow them to appear that they always were on the side of 'democracy' and free travel. This is complete hypocrisy.

As far as free travel is concerned, in many ways it is increasingly restricted to those with money. Internationally, visa restrictions are being continually tightened while the Berlin Wall has been replaced by new barriers east and south as the European Union has worked to construct a 'Fortress Europe'.

But the monstrous border, with its killing zones, that the East German regime (GDR - the German Democratic Republic) maintained, alienated millions and allowed the western powers to paint a horrible picture of a 'socialist' country which used force to keep its population inside.

Initially, immediately after the World War Two, there was some enthusiasm for the creation of the GDR. Partly this reflected the then widespread support for socialist ideas throughout Germany. The GDR was at first seen by a section as more 'anti-fascist' and 'progressive' than West Germany which was clearly capitalist and had a large number of ex-Nazis in key positions in the economy and state.

## Bureaucracy

But the GDR, while not having a capitalist economy, was not a socialist democracy. Its regime was modelled on that of Stalin's USSR and run by an elite group of bureaucrats, something seen in the brutal crushing of the 1953 workers' uprising and the continuing suppression of any serious criticism or dissent.

This led to increasing numbers moving to the west and, in 1961, the regime building the Berlin Wall to complete sealing off the inner-German border.

For some decades the GDR developed but then, like in other Stalinist states, top-down bureaucratic methods began to strangle the economy. Internationally this led to the crisis gripping many Stalinist states in the 1980s, particularly in the then Soviet Union, where Gorbachev's attempts at reforms helped stimulate movements from below.

This development had a big impact in the GDR and other countries especially the greater toleration of open debate, something which the GDR leadership tried to resist.

One of the sparks of the 1989 pro-

test movement was the rigging of the local elections held in May that year. Also, there were suddenly opportunities to leave the country as first Hungary, and later the then Czechoslovakia, opened their western borders.

For those living in the GDR a crucial difference with other Stalinist states was that West Germany would immediately grant citizenship and full welfare benefits to any East German citizens who moved there.

As increasing numbers left the GDR many started to discuss whether they should try to leave the country or whether they should try to change it. The majority decided to stay.

## Protests

This was the background to the regular protests that first began in Leipzig on 4 September and rapidly gained strength particularly after clashes around the celebration of the GDR's 40th anniversary at the beginning of October.

Soon a tremendous momentum developed. Despite attempts at repression the protests kept expanding. The authorities began to back down from using force which gave the protesters growing confidence.

In 15 days the numbers participating in the 'Monday demos' in Leipzig jumped from 70,000 on 9 October to 250,000 on 23 October.

The largest single protest was the demonstration of up to a million people (out of a 16.1 million population) in East Berlin on 4 November. However this protest is downplayed in the official story, even though it

Recently Die Zeit published the results of an opinion poll showing that well over 70% of east Germans believe "socialism is a good idea, but was badly implemented"

played a key role in the events that led, five days later, to the opening of the Wall.

The fundamental reason for downplaying it is simple. Its demands were not just for free elections, free media, freedom to travel, but also for "democratic socialism". Opinion polls at that time showed majority support in the GDR for socialism in some form.

Unfortunately, there was no force that was proposing concrete steps that were needed to build "democratic socialism". The opening of the border made many East Germans see the strength of West Germany and they questioned what future the GDR would have on its own.

West Germany's attraction was that then it was the world's third strongest capitalist power. In addition, joining West Germany was increasingly seen in the GDR as the quickest way to get rid of the old GDR elite.

At that same time, West German leaders saw both a threat and an opportunity.

In mid-October 1989 Schäuble, then interior and now German finance minister, told the Financial Times of the danger of "uncontrolled events" in East Berlin and a threat of the "destabilisation" of the GDR.



The wall comes down

But also the German capitalists saw the chance to reunite the country under their control as well as strengthening their international position.

On 8 November the first calls of "Germany, Fatherland" were heard on a 400,000 strong Leipzig demo. Soon this call was getting more and more support and the West German leaders decided to seize the opportunity to campaign for unification. This won massive support in the March 1990 GDR election that paved the way for unification the following October.

In many ways this was, in effect, a takeover. The idea in West Germany's Basic Law that, should Germany be united, there must be a discussion on a new constitution was dropped. The German capitalists feared that there would be demands for a new constitution to guarantee social rights, like jobs, housing, etc.

## Restoration

Instead unification meant a German version of 'shock therapy', the rapid and brutal reintroduction of capitalism, seen in many other former Stalinist states.

As the planned economy was dismantled the former GDR's industrial production dropped by two-thirds between 1989 and 1991. Industrial employment dropped from 3.2 million to under 1 million by mid-1992.

But the big difference between the experience in East Germany and the other former Stalinist states was that the German ruling class pumped huge amounts of money into the area to buy social peace.

Between 1991 and 2013 the German government spent two trillion euros (£1.6 trillion) in the former GDR. Yet still today eastern Germany's GDP (total output) per head is below the west's level.

The experience of the last 25 years has not fundamentally weakened the general idea in East Germany that socialism is preferable to capitalism.

Recently the German weekly Die Zeit published the results of an opinion poll showing that today well over 70% of east Germans believe "socialism is a good idea, but was badly implemented", an opinion currently shared by 45% of west Germans.

This illustrates the potential that

a socialist movement to change society has in Germany. It is one of the reasons why Die Linke (the Left Party) is strongest in today's eastern Germany, although for this party socialism is just a vague long-term goal and its leaders have made clear that they want to operate within capitalism.

However it does not mean that the aspirations for a genuine so-

cialist democracy are buried. The continuing turmoil in the capitalist economy will result in a questioning that will provide fertile soil for the ideas of socialism to grow and become the basis of a movement for change.

**The full version of this article can be read on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**  
**See also: 1989: Germany - Power was lying on the street**

## Berlin Wall timeline

**1945.** After the defeat of the Nazis, occupied Germany is divided between Western Imperialism and the Stalinist USSR. Start of the Cold War.

**1948-49.** Antagonism between the two blocs leads to Stalin imposing a blockade of West Berlin. The West drop air supplies to the enclave.

**1949.** In May the USSR lifts its blockade. Also in May the western capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) is declared followed by the establishment of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in October - a mirror image of the Soviet Union.

**1953 June.** Building workers in East Berlin strike against draconian working conditions and low pay. It quickly develops into a widespread revolt across East Germany against Stalinist rule. Soviet tanks crush the rebellion. Hundreds are killed and the workers' leaders executed.

**1950s-1961.** 3.5 million East Germans defect from the GDR undermining the economy and the SED 'communist' party.

**1961 August.** East German troops are ordered to seal off the border crossings between East and West Berlin. Construction of the concrete wall begins. In response the US moves 1,500 troops through East Germany to West Berlin.

**1963 June.** US President John F Kennedy delivers his 'Ich bin ein Berliner' speech in West Berlin as a policy statement to the USSR declaring US defence of West Germany and West Berlin.

**1980s.** Decades of bureaucratic rule drive the nationalised economies of the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries into an impasse. In response, 'Perestroika' - political and economic reform - is introduced by Soviet leader Gorbachev.

**1989.** An easing of travel restrictions and renewed political protests in East Germany.

**October.** East German leader Erich Honecker resigns and is replaced by Egon Krenz.

**4 November.** One million people attend a pro-democratic socialism demo.

**9 November.** The Wall is breached when the East German government announces that all GDR citizens can visit West Germany and West Berlin. In the absence of a democratic workers' alternative, East Germany effectively collapses.

**1990 3 October.** East and West Germany are formally unified as a capitalist state.



## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine  
**November 2009 special issue on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall**

### ●1989 The fall of the wall Stalinism and after

When the Berlin wall was dismantled in 1989 and Stalinist regimes came crashing down, capitalism declared itself victorious.

In this special anniversary edition of Socialism Today, Peter Taaffe looks back at the incredible events of 1989 and their consequences.

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## Students march on 19 November...

# BUILD THE EDUCATION FIGHTBACK!

**Claire Laker-Mansfield**  
Socialist Students  
national organiser

Four years ago, on 10 November 2010, London's streets thronged with over 50,000 young people.

The mood was angry, but it was also electric. This was the start of a movement which gave thousands their first taste of struggle.

Two weeks later, up to 100,000 students walked out of schools and colleges. Austerity's bitter medicine, in this case the tripling of tuition fees and snatching of education maintenance allowance, was angrily rejected.

Students marching on 19 November 2014 will rightly be asking what the next steps are for our movement today. How can we rebuild an effective movement to challenge the government and end austerity in education?

The immediate task will be solidarity with university staff participating in a marking boycott and potential strike action over pay and conditions. Their fight is ours too.

But there is also the question of our leadership.

### Traitors

Outrageously, in the run up to the march, the right wing leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) attempted to pull the plug. In an online statement, NUS president Toni Pearce announced she and other full time officers were overturning a decision by the union's national executive council to support the protest. "Safety concerns" were the given reason.

This is a disgraceful dereliction of duty. In the run up to a general election, with further attacks on education threatened, failing to organise or even support a national demonstration is criminal.

Should the NUS have genuine concerns about safety, its attitude

should be to provide resources and expertise to assist organisers in resolving them. Better still, if official student leaders had organised the demonstration in the first place, they could easily have prevented any such difficulties.

We must not be prepared to wait for 'permission' from right wingers like Toni Pearce to organise the desperately needed fightback.

Looking back, the magnificent 2010 student movement can seem distant. It too was betrayed by the leadership of the NUS, who abandoned the fight after the first demonstration.

Combined with this, the working class - with its huge economic power - had yet to enter the arena of struggle. Despite boiling anger and a strong sense of solidarity with students, workers were being held back by a 'block at the top' of the trade unions.

These factors meant round one in the battle against sky high fees and cuts ended in defeat.

### Fightback

But no defeats are final. Following on from the march, we need to return to our campuses and continue to organise against cuts. This means strikes, protests and occupations to keep the pressure up on university management and students' union leaders to resist attacks.

It also means fighting for a political alternative. None of the main parties can be trusted with our education. Sitting tight and hoping for a Labour government - the party who introduced fees in the first place - is not a viable strategy.

The energy and vitality of the student movement, when linked with the muscle of organised workers - the trade union movement - makes a formidable force. The scenes of resistance in 2010 were just the beginning.

**Students and workers unite!**



Read more at  
[socialiststudents.org.uk](http://socialiststudents.org.uk)

### 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 £10 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage. 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 unrecycled 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.
- 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!