



Workers unite to DEFEND THE NHS



photo Bob Severn

Steve Bell
Buckinghamshire Unison
(personal capacity)

NHS workers in England will once again be striking for four hours on Monday 24 November from 7am. This time the action has been stepped up as more health unions - eleven in total - will be taking part in the coordinated action over pay.

Unions estimate NHS workers' real pay has fallen by over 12% in the last four years. But this strike, although formally over a government imposed pay rise of just 1%,

is also in opposition to reorganisations, underfunding, staff shortages, privatisation and cuts. The crisis at Colchester hospital is the latest to be in the news as a result of these 'reforms'.

Three years ago I confronted Prime Minister David Cameron in Aylesbury. He confidently told me that the health service budget was not being cut and there would be no NHS cuts in Buckinghamshire.

Since then we have seen wards close, staffing below safe levels, and bed shortages. Staff have seen pay reduced through cuts in local allowances or 'downbandings', plus increases in pension payments and car parking charges.

Health economists predict a funding gap of up to £30 billion by 2020. NHS employers envisage a £7 billion gap in funding to meet the needs of the ageing community. More and more hospital trusts are declaring financial difficulties.

Privatisation

All the capitalist political parties claim they will spend 'more on the NHS', but all agree with making 'efficiency savings'.

In Buckinghamshire NHS we have heard it all before. We have been fighting cuts, privatisation and marketisation not only under this government but also the last

Labour government.

Health workers recognise that coordinated action by health unions makes us stronger. But we also need a renewal of coordinated action across the whole public sector. This could start with health workers coming out at the same time as firefighters.

To go alongside the strike action we also need to call a national demonstration in defence of the NHS in the new year, before the general election. We also need a new workers' party that defends the NHS, one that calls for:

- Cancelling Private Finance Initiative (PFI) debt. Return the money to local health services and staff

pay, rather than generate massive profits for multinationals

- Stopping privatisation and marketisation of the NHS. End private companies profiting from ill health. End expensive tendering for services every three years
- Nationalising big pharma and returning the profits to the NHS

The finance is there to fund the health service. What we need is a political party that represents not only the staff but also those using the services. One that is not in the pockets of big business.

That is why I, and many of my union branch members, back the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

the **Socialist**

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what we think

Solidarity vital to defend trade union rights

Thirty years after the Miners' Strike, the government has launched the biggest single attack on a trade union since Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher set her sights on the NUM. That is what the leaked HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) document about 'lessening the influence' of the PCS union amounts to.

Talk of scab unions and measures like stopping check-off subscription collection, which is an attempt to bankrupt the union, are very reminiscent of the Tories' effort to smash the miners' union.

The reasons are the same. Like the NUM then, the PCS is seen as the most militant public sector union. Despite being less than a quarter of the size of Unison, PCS has played a leading role in fighting austerity – from the giant N30 2011 pensions strike to this year's pay dispute.

PCS has consciously acted as a lever on bigger unions by popularising the idea of mass coordinated strike action to resist austerity. With the government announcing another £35 billion-plus worth of cuts, it is no coincidence that this attack is being lined up now.

Of course, PCS is not the only union that has seen its rights targeted. Many shop stewards and reps have seen their facility time reduced or even scrapped altogether. Scandalously, this has been in Labour councils as well as Tory and Lib Dem (see page 4).

Unite convenors, some of them Socialist Party members, have been on the receiving end of this in Labour councils from Liverpool to Greenwich despite the millions given by the union to Labour.

Union funding

Yet there has been not one threat from Unite to Labour leader Ed Miliband that this funding could be under threat if his cutting councillors don't back off. No wonder Prime Minister Cameron, Chancellor Osborne and Cabinet Office minister Maude feel emboldened to move further.

On cue are the front pages of the red-baiting Tory press. The Telegraph fulminated as NUT members went on strike in Haringey to defend their rep Julie Davies, who was victimised after the removal of her facility time. All this in a Labour borough!

The danger, however, is that these attacks are seen as 'normal' and don't get the necessary response from the trade union movement. Union facility time, for reps to represent their members, is a democratic right won by workers from employers. This isn't about cost cutting, but a further attack on unions and their ability to defend members and, in a wider sense, resist austerity.

A 2007 study by the then Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR, now BIS) found that union reps saved employers up to £621 million in reducing the number of employment tribunals, days lost to workplace injuries and work-related injuries. In addition, it is estimated that reps already carry out over 100,000 hours of unpaid union work every week.

Not just PCS

The lessons must be learned from the Miners' Strike, when Labour and right-wing trade union leaders left the NUM isolated.

PCS is correct to call out to the wider movement and connect the attack with the continuing austerity offensive. If HMRC manage-

ment doesn't repudiate the leaked document or retreat from its implications, the whole trade union movement must rally to any call PCS makes for solidarity.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady should make an immediate complaint to the government. But the ground should also be prepared for solidarity meetings, rallies and protests. Demands must be put on Labour that all Con-Dem attacks on the unions – facility-time, check-off, scab unions etc – be revoked and reversed should Labour take office.

The Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) stands alongside the PCS in fighting these attacks.

In January 2012, the NSSN put its full resources behind the conference organised by PCS Left Unity to unite left trade unionists to try to retrieve the public sector pensions struggle after the post-N30 'deal' by right-wing trade union leaders. It led directly to the 10 May strike that year when 400,000 workers took action.

Solidarity is now vital across the trade union and anti-cuts movement to defend union rights.

Leaked document reveals union busting plan

PCS vice-president **John McNally** spoke to the Socialist about the government's attacks on the civil servants' union.

"The PCS has seen a leaked document from the HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) which sets out, in some detail, a plan to smash the union.

It's redolent of union blacklisting. Clearly they want to target activists and are already taking facility time from key HMRC reps. It is linked to the attempt to set up a scab union, a 'staff association'.

The national dispute committee – the senior officers of the union – are taking the leaked document very seriously. It's an assault on the whole union that fits in with other attacks. The message from the government is 'get PCS'.

PCS members in HMRC took in-

dustrial action in the summer as part of their campaign against office closures and understaffing. Following the strike we entered talks.

The HMRC PCS magazine, Oracle, reported a factual account of how more jobs had been secured at Dundee HMRC office through a strike campaign. Bizarrely, management used the report as an excuse to leave talks.

Facility time

After management's withdrawal from talks, many senior HMRC reps received letters telling them they'd get no more facility time until April 2015.

In an attempt to stop the union operating, the Cabinet Office has taken away the facilities of senior national elected lay officers, despite PCS offering to pay their wages, a common practice. This is a politically motivated attack to target the union's leadership and to deny PCS the right to national bargaining.

This is a hugely important battle, not just for PCS members, but for the whole of the trade union movement. The right wing fanatics in this government will never be satisfied.

They want to break strong unions like RMT and PCS, but that doesn't mean they're going to leave other unions alone. They don't want to see any effective trade unions in this country.

We have released this leaked document and made it clear we'll continue to fight in HMRC. We're holding members' meetings to explain the issues. We believe there will be outrage among members and workers generally.

We also will engage in talks with HMRC, but not with a gun being held to our head. We also want them



HMRC workers on strike in Leicester photo Steve Score

to address the legitimate demands of the PCS HMRC jobs and staffing campaign – how can rich tax evaders be dealt with when HMRC are cutting staff?

Con-Dem hypocrisy

The PCS has consistently exposed the Con-Dems' behaviour around tax evasion and avoidance. Why have Tory Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude and the HMRC management got time to sit down and

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plan union busting, but don't have time to sit down and discuss how they're going to close the tax gap?

We'll fight them legally, politically and if necessary take industrial action to win settlements that defend jobs, conditions and services.

We appeal to the whole movement to support PCS in this struggle. It's a struggle for the defence of union rights against a union busting government. If they're allowed to do this to PCS, others will be next in line."

Financial attack

"There is now an ongoing campaign, directed by Francis Maude, to stop check-off union subscription collection in civil service departments. Maude and the government aim to destroy PCS as a functioning union. They won't succeed in that. PCS has put in place measures to combat the government's attempts to undermine us. We are implementing plans to maintain the union's financial stability. We're campaigning on all fronts, including politically by lobbying MP's and shadow ministers. We have introduced a widespread campaign to get members signed-up to direct debit payments. We are explaining to members that this attack is intended to stop them having trade union representation and an effective organisation to defend jobs, conditions and services."

Toxic mix in Rochester and Strood byelection

Chas Berry

Socialist Party North Kent

As we go to press, Ukip is widely expected to win the Rochester and Strood parliamentary byelection, overturning a Tory majority of nearly 10,000 polled by Tory MP defector Mark Reckless.

The result will serve to deepen splits among Tory MPs over the party leadership's perceived 'softness' on a referendum to leave the European Union and on further restricting migrant workers.

The absence of a genuine alternative to the policies of austerity put forward by the big business parties has seen the most reactionary forces trying to out-do each other on the right during the election campaign.

Tory candidate Kelly Tolhurst promised to stop access to social housing for migrants for five years while saying nothing about the local Tory council's failure to build any houses for local people in all the time she has been a councillor.

At the same time the residents

of Strood, one of the poorer areas of the constituency, had to endure the insults of visiting Tory MPs who described the area as the 'benefits street of the South East'.

Labour

Labour's campaign was lacklustre and did nothing to address the issues of poverty pay and cuts in local services that are blighting the lives of thousands in the constituency. Instead, Labour kept a low profile and was incapable of turning the widespread anger at attacks on local facilities such as Strood Library into a positive force for change.

Even worse it pandered to stoked up fears about immigration, promising tougher border controls, restrictions on benefits for migrants and forcing new arrivals to learn English.

Shamefully, Labour's candidate Naushaba Khan, whose leaflet stated: "I will never duck the real issues that matter in Rochester and Strood", did just the opposite. She ignored requests to meet with lo-



Ukip's Reckless

cal trade unionists to discuss her stance on trade union rights, the living wage, cuts in public services and privatisation.

Into this mix stepped the far-right group Britain First. Their Facebook page showed a video of their candidate Jayda Fransen haranguing elderly worshipers at a local mosque and she was pictured in the local press posing alongside Ukip activists. Fortunately, local residents mobilised twice in large numbers to prevent planned BF demonstrations along Rochester High Street.

Ukip, the Tories and Labour must share responsibility for allowing this toxic atmosphere to take hold. It has been left to Socialist Party activists and supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to put forward a convincing anti-austerity strategy.

Our banner has been prominent on the High Street and our message of 'help us build an election alternative' places us in a stronger position to fight the real elections in May 2015.



TUSC supporters in Rochester photo SP North Kent



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!
socialistparty.org.uk/join **020 8988 8777**

text 0776 1818 206

@Socialist_party

/CWSocialistParty

Rotten to the Greencore

Manny Thain

Pay workers a living wage! That is the urgent demand in the fight against the relentless driving down of living standards in Britain's low-wage economy.

A case in point is Greencore, whose workers make 430 million sandwiches a year and three million Christmas cakes for the likes of Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco and Asda - in factories in Northampton and Hull.

The company sold £1.2 billion-worth last year, an operating profit of £76.5 million. The boss, Patrick Coveney, was paid £1.3 million. Many of his workers subsist on the £6.50 an hour minimum wage.

Reports in the Mirror and Guardian describe how agency staff arrive 20 minutes before the 6am

start time to enter the daily hiring lottery. Those who lose must leave. The winners are too scared to refuse overtime in case they are not picked again.

Workers can be moved in the same shift from a near-freezing 5°C to the sweltering baking area operating huge ovens. Supervisors stalk the lines, shouting at workers to speed up.

Greencore hit the news last week when a Daily Mail headline shrieked: 'Is there no one left in Britain who can make a sandwich?' The Mail moaned that the company recruited some workers from Hungary.

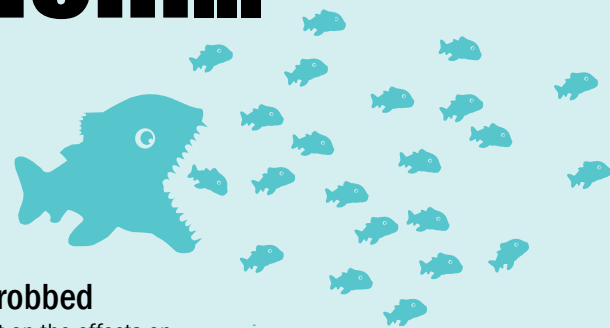
Unsurprisingly, Ukip cynically jumped on the bandwagon. Rose Gibbins, its candidate for Northampton South, said that Greencore is "upsetting people here. It is an insult and a fallacy that people

don't want to work." Tory candidate, David Mackintosh, hypocritically warned of increased pressure on public services if more people come from Hungary (Guardian, 14 November).

Of course, none of them called on Greencore to pay a living wage to the workers who make the sandwiches and profits. These parties and their media backers aggressively promote the 'right' of British bosses to exploit all workers in Britain, and the 'right' to cut to the bone all public services.

It's about time these vicious representatives of big business were shown the door. A determined trade union-led campaign for a £10 minimum wage, and for an end to government and council cut-backs, could mobilise a massive movement to end sweatshop labour - and this divisive 'race to the bottom'.

Them...



Poorest robbed

A new report on the effects on households of Con-Dem austerity cuts and income tax reductions found, unsurprisingly, that wealth has shifted further from the poorest to the richest.

According to the Institute for Social and Economic Research and professor John Hills from the LSE, the groups hit hardest by benefit cuts have been single parent families, large families, children and middle-aged parents, whereas the richest 1% of income earners have increased their wealth.

G20 richest

According to the charity Oxfam, between 2013 and 2014, the total wealth of the G20 countries increased by \$17 trillion with 36% of this total (\$6.2 trillion) going to the richest 1% of the population.

Big oil subsidy

£56 billion

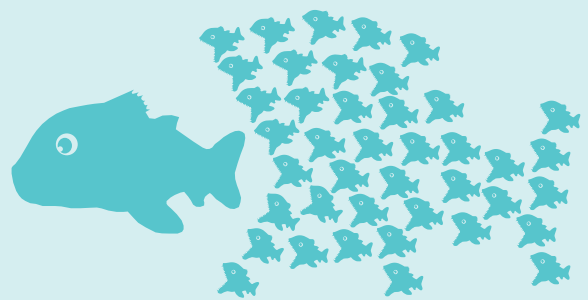
- spent by G20 governments each year in subsidising the oil and gas industry to find and exploit fossil fuels - despite a 2009 pledge from these countries to phase out these subsidies to stop damaging climate change. Globally, more than four times as much is spent on subsidising fossil fuels than renewables.

Nuclear bill

£110 billion

- the forecast cost of cleaning up Sellafield and other UK nuclear sites over the next 120 years.

...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

What we saw

Paul Murphy, recently elected Anti Austerity Alliance TD (MP) for Dublin South West, was stripped half naked by Gardai (police) at a peaceful anti-water charge protest in Jobstown Tallaght, South Dublin, on 15 November

www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8GinTeLFq4&sns=fb

The Irish Socialist Party member was repeatedly subjected to manhandling by Gardai who tore off his jumper in their attempt to remove him from a road sit-down blockade.

The protest was organised by residents in protest at water charges and coincided with the visit to the town by Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Joan Burton of the Labour Party.



Murphy, Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins retorted: "It is another demonstration of ordinary people finding their voices and declaring they will take no more of this government's bullying."

"Joan Burton better start listening and begin by abolishing the water charges which will simply not be accepted."

The water charge is an unaffordable austerity tax being implemented by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government under the bailout conditions demanded by the 'Troika' (EU, European Central Bank, IMF). It has provoked mass demonstrations and protests across the Irish republic.

In response to government ministers' attempts to portray the Jobstown Tallaght protest as an orchestrated ambush by Paul

Labour councils attack trade union rights

Hull
A year after determined Hull council trade unions stopped the worst attacks of a Labour-led council on its workforce, the council leadership is now preparing the way for a fresh onslaught.
Five months after the 10 July local government strike, Adrian Kennett, secretary of Hull Unison and secretary of the council's joint trade union committee, is threatened with grievances over two alleged incidents around the strike.
At the same time, human resources announced a review of union facility time.
All council unions see these related actions as attacks on the trade unions as a whole.
The two "grievances" are farcical. One of them concerned an attempt to stop scabs breaking the strike by entering a building via a fire door. The scabs were behaving illegally

against all health and safety regulations. The other is that Adrian later referred to a strike breaker as a scab!
Collectively, union reps have withdrawn from certain corporate negotiating bodies until further notice. As far as we are concerned, how trade unions organise and behave is not a matter for management - it is a matter for our members.
Strong unions are vital in fighting the cuts still to come. The city treasurer has said up to £100 million could be cut over the next six years. This would mean the city's funding

Strong unions are vital in fighting the cuts still to come

being halved since 2010.
Steve Brady, the council leader, has reported on a recent meeting between northern Labour councils and party leaders Ed Miliband, Ed Balls and Lord Adonis. The meeting confirmed that an incoming Labour government would continue to implement cuts for at least a further two years.
Council workers have shown in the past that they are prepared to fight for jobs, pay terms, conditions and council services. Increasingly, a trade union fightback is seen as being linked to the need for a political alternative to Labour.
Hull Red Labour - the expelled Labour councillors who voted against the cuts - and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will look to build that alternative in Hull.
Mike Whale
Hull NUT secretary

Haringey
Teachers at two secondary schools in Haringey, north London, have so far taken three days of strike action in defence of victimised NUT branch secretary Julie Davies.
In June the headteachers of Highgate Wood and Fortismere schools declared they would not fund union facility time while Julie was in post. They claimed that she was too 'confrontational' and one head compared her to the late Bob Crow.
In truth, Julie simply has a record of successfully defending teachers. The heads have tried to veto who represents teachers to restrict effective trade unionism.
The Labour-controlled council has colluded in this by suspending Julie Davies. It claims Julie breached the council officers' code of conduct by sending an email

about her rubbish bins and tweeting a story about a corrupt former councillor!
For weeks, both the heads and the council ignored requests for talks. Consequently, teachers at the two schools have taken strike action demanding facility time funding and Julie's reinstatement.
In both schools there is overwhelming support for the strikes. Other secondary schools are now balloting to continue rolling strike action across the borough.
Despite vicious personal attacks on Julie in the Daily Mail, there has been strong support from parents. Heads finally agreed to talks on 17 November.
The council will be lobbied on Monday 24 November.
A striking Haringey teacher
• Please send support messages to admin@haringeyteachers.org.uk

RMT: Opposing 'Rail North' cuts and profiteering

Hugh Caffrey
North West Socialist Party
Members of the RMT transport union and others are fighting to stop massive rail cuts, including plans to take guards off many trains in the north. Everything bad about privatisation is about to get even worse.
The public faces fare rises and an inferior service. Station staff and train guards face job losses; ticket offices and some stations could be closed. Part of this agenda is to weaken rail unions, the RMT especially.
Labour started this, commissioning the McNulty report, and the Con-Dem government adopted it wholesale. Pushing this behind the scenes is the shadowy 'Rail North' coalition of 30 local transport authorities, mostly Labour-run, working with the Tory-Liberal government.
This looming disaster is worsened by the intention to push 'driver-only

operation' (DOO) on routes currently served by Northern Rail and Trans-Pennine Express.
Train guards ensure public safety, help passengers including the disabled and those with prams or heavy luggage, and are 'safety-critical' trained to deal with incidents, accidents and emergencies, including if the driver is incapacitated.
Bidding
Bidding will open soon for the Northern Rail and Trans-Pennine Express (TPE) franchises. The government proposes that having no guards should be compulsory on Northern Rail and optional on TPE. The RMT demands that DOO and other cuts are removed from the proposals.
A powerful campaign of opposition is taking effect. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets and postcards have been distributed to passengers. First Liverpool and now Shef-

field councils have come out against DOO.
A lobby of parliament has already taken place. A lobby of the rail minister is planned for 19 November in York as we go to press.
Privatisation has been a disaster for everyone except the profiteers. Around £1 billion a year could be saved by taking the railways back into public ownership. The savings could be used to upgrade the rail network, cut ticket prices and improve staff pay and conditions.
A democratic socialist plan would link up a renationalised rail system with the rest of the transport infrastructure, to deliver safe, swift, affordable transit for people and freight.
Socialist Party member John Reid is standing for election to the London seat of the RMT executive. The election starts on 24 November.



photo RMT

Power station builders walkout over blacklisting

A Greater Manchester construction worker
Construction workers protesting against the "blacklist" - used to punish workers in the industry for raising trade union or health and safety issues - shut the power station site at Carrington, Greater Manchester, on 17 November.
Daz Muir and Neil Banks are being blacklisted and refused employment on this site.
Daz is a rigger who was unfairly dismissed from the Runcorn thermal power station project for voicing his opinion at a mass meeting during a health and safety dispute on the site.
Neil is an electrician who was working at Carrington, but shortly after being transferred to another

job he was sacked because of complaining about a health and safety issue. Neil has tried to get back on to Carrington but is being totally blocked.
Protesting workers blocked the gate to the Carrington site and stopped the first coach. Some workers got off and joined the picket; others assembled at the gate before the first coach arrived.
One coach returned to the car park, all the other coaches were cancelled and workers were held at the car park. The union conveners were stuck in traffic and so it was agreed the workers would disperse for the day.
There is a strong suspicion that some union officials are still complicit in blacklisting union members. The attitude of some seems to be: keep your mouth shut and toe

The Ucat and Unite unions are holding a lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 26 November from 12.45pm over the use of 'umbrella' companies by construction firms which exploit workers by ignoring national employment agreements. The lobby will be held at committee room 14, Parliament, Westminster SW1A 0AA.
the line or you will not work again. If they do not have the stomach for the fight then the Rank and File [a network of fighting construction activists] must do it ourselves.
Further protests will take place if Daz and Neil are not swiftly employed. The fight starts here!

Council unions accept shabby pay deal

A Socialist Party member in Unison
Council worker unions Unison, Unite and GMB have announced their members' acceptance of local government pay proposal.
The proposal from the employers in no way can be seen as an improvement for the living standards of the vast majority of local government workers.
The excellent response of union members to the strike of 10 July was a real opportunity to build a successful struggle. The hard work and sacrifice of members has been squandered.
The majority of the Unison leadership acted in a cowardly fashion in making no recommendation on a pitiful proposal, simply saying it was the "best that can be achieved by negotiation". It is not surprising, with such uninspiring leadership, that branches that simply relied on official material delivered up the sell-out.

But some branches and the north west region openly called for rejection and produced their own material, in the main delivering a 'reject' vote. This clearly demonstrated that, where a confident lead was given, members were willing to fight.
Some branches and the north west region openly called for rejection
It is also being reported that, for only the second time in the union's history, branches representing over 200,000 members have voted to call a special conference to debate this pay campaign.
And over the next few weeks members, in regional and national executive elections, can kick out some of the leaders who refused to lead.
It's time to reclaim our union.

Unison Wales FE strike ballot

Unison members in Welsh FE colleges have delivered a mandate to our union to ballot for strike action over pay. Colegau Cymru, representing the employers, has offered no cost-of-living rise this year. Unison

estimates the value of our pay has fallen on average by 18% since the start of the economic crisis. We will ballot for action in the new year alongside other campus unions.
A Welsh FE worker

Raging tenants evict rich landlord



photo Paul Mattsson

Brian Debus
Hackney Socialist Party

When a 200 strong march of London's New Era estate and their supporters posted a massive eviction notice on management's door, no one believed it would happen five days later.

Tory MP Richard Benyon and family, part owners of the estate, are the butt of much anger for hiking rents by 18% to over £600 a month.

Their company, the Benyon Estate, sold up after the demo - citing tenants' protests. Lindsey Garrett, chair of New Era tenants' association, greeted this as a victory for activism against the richest MP in the country.

that rents would not rise massively before 2016. Westbrook wants to kick out all tenants, do up the flats, and let them at market rents as high as £2,400 a month. Residents fear eviction by Christmas.

Westbrook is a company with the table manners of a skunk. It was labelled a "predatory landlord" by tenants of its New York properties. Residents there have contrasted Westbrook's hundreds of millions of dollars' wealth with constant leaks, no hot water, no mailboxes and over 2,700 building code violations.

A massive campaign by the American tenants has won rent rebates of \$600 each and a maintenance increase.

Speaking to the Socialist, Lindsey commented "they are trying to intimidate and evict 93 families on the estate. We will now take the fight to Westbrook, even if it means going to New York.

"They are trying to take us back to Victorian times. It is the people with money, not asylum seekers and benefit claimants, causing the housing crisis."

In Hackney, private rents are among the highest in London, averaging over £2,100 a month. One signatory to the Socialist Party's petition spoke about her neighbour. She has been divorced for four years and has three kids. She has had to continue living with her ex-husband in a two bedroom house as it is the only way of paying the rent of over £1,500 a month.

clear it would refuse planning permission for preparations for 'market level' rents

■ Starts the process of compulsory purchase of the estate

■ Imposes borough-wide rent controls

■ As well as protecting existing social housing, initiates a mass programme of building new, publicly owned housing



photo Paul Mattsson

Predatory

US based investment company Westbrook Partners now solely owns the estate. It has responded by refusing to honour a pledge



The Socialist Party demands that Hackney's Labour council:

- Refuses any cooperation with Westbrook Partners
- Opposes any evictions and makes

"We will not move!"

Waltham Forest Socialist Party members

To shouts of protest and promises to fight on, Waltham Forest's Labour council made a disgraceful decision on 11 November - in the face of angry tenants fighting for their homes.

The council is trying to force through the redevelopment of Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers in Leytonstone, without proper consultation of residents. They want us to believe the only option is for a private developer to renovate. Blocks will become unaffordable for those who live there now.

Tenants protested outside the town hall and were pleased to be

joined by one of the Focus E15 mums fighting their own evictions.

Waltham Forest Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters have worked alongside residents for the last year. The protest was compered by TUSC prospective parliamentary candidate Nancy Taaffe. Many tenants declared "we will not move!"

Anger

The anger against this heartless Labour council is huge. "We will never vote Labour again!" Socialist Party members have pointed out that if Labour wanted to tackle the housing crisis, it could implement rent controls tomorrow and begin building council housing to meet local need.

But Labour won't do that, so we

need candidates who will. We called for residents of the towers to stand on the TUSC list in this May's local elections.

The blocks urgently need renovation - but residents want it done by the council. There is also a need for larger homes to solve overcrowding - but no four bed houses are proposed in the rebuild. Instead there will be 70 fewer homes!

But this is not the end of the matter. The bulldozers will not move in immediately - there is plenty of

time to build the campaign, appeal for support from the community and trade unions, and prepare residents to refuse to leave if that's what they decide they want to do.

This is a shortened version of the full story - read more at www.socialistparty.org.uk.

Public meeting: Housing for ALL

■ No to privatisation of our homes and our land!

■ Rent control now!

■ Build council housing!

Invited speakers

■ Nancy Taaffe - TUSC general election prospective candidate for Walthamstow in 2015

■ Housing campaigners from across east London, including Focus E15 mums

7.30pm, Wednesday 3 December. William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Road, London E17 6QQ.



Fred Wigg tower

Bedroom farce

"When the Con-Dems brought in the Bedroom Tax, they told us it was to get rid of 'surplus rooms' in social housing. They told us we should move to smaller properties, and that would reduce housing waiting lists.

My two young sons live with me for part of the week, and with their mum the rest of the time. They have done all their lives, they have two homes. This isn't unusual these days. I'm low paid and am entitled to housing benefit. But I'm hit by the bedroom tax, costing me £22 a week. No wonder so many people are facing eviction because they can't pay their rent.

I decided to exchange my three bedroom house with a family in a

two bedroom who want to move. But the Labour council has refused because my kids don't live with me full time.

I'm now in the ludicrous position of having to stay in a three bedroom house because a two bedroom is too big for me! Because one thing is certain - I'm not going to evict my own kids!

What happened to the human right to 'a family life'? What happened to government demands that 'fathers take responsibility'?

The Bedroom tax needs scrapping, completely, and now. And if they want to solve the housing waiting lists, a simple suggestion - build more council houses!"

A council tenant



Students' victory in housing battle

Aidan O'Toole
Coventry Socialist Students

Socialist Students in Coventry won a major victory for student accommodation on 11 November. We are plagued by high price, low quality and bad landlords. So we have been flying the banner for better housing.

Our motion to the Coventry all student meeting covered several points. We called for a Students' Union (SU) letting agency to break the power of landlords: a non-profit organisation where all surplus is reinvested into accommodation.

Accreditation

We also called for the SU to work with local residents' groups and the council to establish a mandatory accreditation scheme - so all landlords have to meet basic

standards or be prosecuted. This would benefit all local residents and build solidarity between students and locals.

Our campaign to back the motion, with leaflets and stalls, was really popular. Because of our fighting stance on various issues,

Socialist Students has been flying the banner for better housing

we already had three SU councillors and a National Union of Students delegate elected last year.

The motion was met with applause and cheers from most of the meeting. However, this cannot be said for bureaucrats in the SU council - one third voted against

and encouraged the meeting to do the same with pointless, bureaucratic criticisms.

We told students not to let bureaucrats hijack the motion: vote the motion through and your Socialist Student councillors will see it happens.

The earlier applause and cheers were repeated when the motion was overwhelmingly passed. We won - and so can students in other universities.

■ Coventry Socialist Students' victory follows a similar success in York. Socialist Students there led the campaign for York SU to set up its own non-profit lettings agency. Students then campaigned for and won the vote in the resulting referendum.

See issue 827 of the Socialist, or read more on this and other stories on our website, www.socialistparty.org.uk.

UNREPORTED NIGERIA: Class struggle and extreme inequality

Sophie Simcox reports on her recent visit to Nigeria.

When Nigeria is mentioned in the British press it is usually to report the horrors of Boko Haram's latest terrorist attack or the - at least for now - successful battle against Ebola. The nightmare that has developed in the North East of Nigeria - with an estimated 13,000 killed by both Boko Haram and state forces over the last five years - is an important element of what is taking place.

However, there is another side to Nigeria - the magnificent history of struggle by the working class - which is rarely if ever mentioned.

Yet at the start of 2012 the biggest general strike in Nigerian history, and the eighth since 2000, paralysed the country for a week. This strike was against the removal of the fuel subsidy by the government and therefore a dramatic 140% increase in fuel prices.

The Nigerian economy is literally fuelled by oil. In the first six months of 2014 its income from sales of crude oil was the fourth highest in the world. But such is its economic underdevelopment and corruption that it still relies heavily on fuel imports because of the state of its refineries.

The notoriously unreliable (in fact barely existent) electricity supply means that the price of fuel is not only about petrol, but also how much it costs people to light and power their homes via generators.

The major multinational companies make vast profits from Nigerian oil. In 2010, for example, British/Dutch owned Shell's profits from Nigeria alone were over \$8 billion, more than enough to cover the continued cost of the fuel subsidy. Oil wealth has also bought huge riches for a tiny elite at the top of Nigerian society, but has done little to develop society as a whole.

Poverty

Over three-quarters of Nigeria's vast 170 million population are under 25, with more than 68 million young adults without work. More than half the population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. Average life expectancy is only 51 years. Only around 60% of children finish primary school, never mind secondary school or university. Even graduate unemployment is running at 40%.

When the great Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, described 'the combined and uneven development' of capitalism outside of the most economically developed countries, he cannot have imagined how completely Nigeria today would confirm his analysis.

Some of capitalism's most advanced technology is widely used. Mobile phone usage has reached 60%, while 55 million people use the inter-

net. At the same time the fixed phone line system has never been developed - with only one in 100 people having a landline.

Middle-class Nigerians own more cars, yet the road network barely exists, with car drivers in Lagos and other major cities spending hours every day at a standstill on grid-locked, potholed 'roads' that are often no more than dirt tracks.

Nigerian manufacturing industry, far from developing, is a shrinking section of the economy. Only 3% of GDP growth came from manufacturing in 2007, compared with 10% in 1983. Thirty seven textile companies alone have closed since 1990.

The 2012 general strike unified and electrified the country. No terrorist attacks took place in the week it was ongoing, and it was common - including in the North East where Boko Haram is based - for Christian strikers to sur-



President Goodluck Jonathan

round Muslim strikers to protect them while they prayed and vice-versa. In the course of the strike an element of workers' power developed with agreement that small traders could open their shops after 4pm to allow workers to buy basic necessities.

The leaders of the two major trade union federations - the NLC (Nigeria Labour Congress) and the TUC (Trade Union Congress) - called off the general strike after the government decreased the hike in fuel price. The big majority of workers saw this as a defeat; the fuel price still increased by a crippling 46%.

In reality the trade union leaders were terrified by the scale and power of the movement they had called into being. It posed the question of the

working class in Nigeria taking power, even if this was not yet fully understood by the majority of participants in the strike, and using the enormous riches of Nigeria to begin to develop a democratic socialist planned economy in order to start to meet the needs of the majority.

Class collaboration

Unsurprisingly, in the aftermath of the defeat of the general strike the level of trade union and class struggle has been low.

Nonetheless, there have been some important strikes including prolonged action by university lecturers. Teachers' trade unions also refused to go back to work until hygiene measures were introduced to prevent the spread of Ebola.

There have also been struggles by students against 'fee hikes' (increased tuition fees) in which the student wing of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) in Nigeria, the Education Rights Campaign, has played a leading role. Importantly one of these struggle - at Lagos State University - has successfully seen the fee hike reversed.

The brutality of the Nigerian workplace, and the often rotten role of the trade union officials, was revealed by one strike that took place when I was in Nigeria. Over 1,000 workers at the Linda wig factory came out on strike after one of their workmates died at work.

The factory management ran a point system. Any worker who gets 27 points is automatically sacked. The worker who died had 24 points, so had struggled into work despite being critically ill. The management threw his body into the street, hoping to escape blame for his death.

The workers marched out on strike in response to this outrage. However, a local official for the union seems to have agreed to the point system in return for some 'reward' from the management. This is not uncommon.

May Day, traditionally powerful in Nigeria, has increasingly become a reflection of the trade union leaders' incorporation into 'the system'. At this year's May Day celebration in Lagos the trade union leaders brought a giant cake, which they proposed to present to the state governor!

For the second consecutive year the

Democratic Socialist Movement (the CWI in Nigeria) had their leaflets and newspapers confiscated on a number of the May Day marches as part of a general ban on any political material.

The role of the trade union leaders, however, will not hold back struggle indefinitely. The continuing misery facing the majority of Nigerians is preparing the ground for future huge social explosions.

Even before the general election, due in February 2015, the trade union movement has been forced to threaten further general strike action over an attempt to downgrade the minimum wage legislation.

Even though the 2011 minimum wage increase to 18,000 naira (£66) a month has never been implemented in most states, this latest measure is a provocation that the trade union leaders could not ignore. The TUC statement even quotes the example of 'Professor Sawant' and the victory for \$15/hour in Seattle! They do not, however, draw the necessary conclusions about the need to urgently build a political voice for the working class and poor in Nigeria.

Both trade union federations support the Labour Party, which they say needs to be a party for the working class. In reality, despite originally being initiated by the NLC, the Labour Party now is cut from the same cloth as the other capitalist parties in Nigeria. Out of a national executive of 100 members only three seats are held by trade union representatives, and these have never been filled!

Since its inception the Labour Party in Nigeria has acted to provide a career for capitalist politicians that have failed to make it in the major parties with candidacies being sold to the highest bidder.

The failure of the trade union leaders to break with this rotten method was demonstrated by one of their press statements declaring "there was nothing wrong in parties forming alliances" with pro-capitalist parties. Already in the 2011 presidential election the Labour Party backed the PDP candidate Jonathan and its leaders have said they will do the same again next year.

DSM

Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) has a long, proud history of fighting for the establishment of a genuine mass party of the working class and poor in Nigeria.

Most recently we have been campaigning to establish the Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN) as a platform for change - seeking workers to contest elections. SPN has successfully met the onerous and undemocratic criteria for registering a political party, including raising the vast one million naira (£3,700) 'processing fee' which the electoral registration body arbitrarily announced after the SPN had launched its campaign to register.

Despite meeting all the criteria



Top to bottom: General strike against fuel price hikes; DSM members protest; the aftermath of a Boko Haram attack

however, SPN's registration was refused, undoubtedly reflecting the fear of the capitalist elite at its potential. DSM has now launched a campaign to demand the registration of SPN, alongside SPN taking the battle to the courts.

The CWI internationally should do all we can to support the campaign by Nigerian socialists for the right to offer an alternative to the endless corrupt 'money-bags' politicians that dominate Nigerian elections.

It seems most likely that the current President, Goodluck Jonathan, will win the general election in February. This would not reflect widespread popular support for him or his party - the PDP - but rather that the PDP has deeper pockets, and a stronger influence on the state machine, than the main opposition party, the APC, whose anti-poor, pro-rich policies are not fundamentally different to those of the PDP.

What Nigerians call 'stomach infrastructure' (buying votes with free food and other basics) is practised by all the capitalist parties in Nigeria, but most successfully by the PDP. However, the unstable situation means that Jonathan's victory is not completely certain.

The character of the 'cease-fire' with Boko Haram is currently unclear. It may be that a ceasefire was agreed with elements in Boko Haram, which other sections of the group have ignored. It is also possible that this was always a pre-election bid for popularity without real facts behind it.

Whatever the truth, the backlash from the breakdown of a deal could potentially have an effect on the outcome of the general election.

Even if some kind of ceasefire agreement is established before the general election, which above all would have to include release of the kidnapped schoolgirls, it would not mark a permanent end to the nightmare developing in the North East of the country.

Divide and rule

Nigeria was created 100 years ago, like many African countries, to meet the needs of British imperialism. Over 250 different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria were given no say in the matter.

When Nigeria finally won independence in 1960, British imperialism attempted to protect its own economic and political interests by pursuing a 'divide-and-rule' strategy leaning on the feudal elite in the mainly Muslim north of the country. It was more than three decades after independence before a southerner became President.

Some elements of the northern elite are not unhappy to see the current Southern president undermined by the military success of Boko Haram. At the same time the extreme poverty in the mainly rural North East of the country - where three quarters of the population live below the poverty line

- creates conditions allowing desperate youth to turn to the ideas of Boko Haram, especially given the lack of an alternative and the vicious brutality they face from Nigerian state forces.

Another factor in Boko Haram currently holding an area with a population of about ten million is the demoralisation in the Nigerian army. Scores of soldiers have been sentenced to death for 'mutiny' and 'treason' as a result of their unwillingness to fight ill-equipped against a relatively well-armed force (much of its arms taken from the Nigerian military).

Working class

Beyond the general election all of the class and social contradictions in Nigerian society will become sharper. Further fuel price hikes have already been mooted. If the world oil price continues to fall this will speed up and intensify the attacks by the Nigerian elite on the working class and poor masses.

The response will be a renewed and mighty struggle of the Nigerian working class. The need for Nigerian workers to organise to get trade union leaders that actually fight in the interests of the working class is urgent, as is the need for workers to find their own political voice.

On the other side, the shrinking of the trough from which the elite is gorging itself would also lead to an increase in national and ethnic tensions between different sections of the elite, as they fight over what's left.

After 16 years of democracy, albeit of an extremely truncated and corrupt character, the capitalist class would not easily return to military rule, not least because of their fear of the terrible consequences of a new civil war. But such is the unstable character of

Nigerian capitalism, this cannot be ruled out at a certain stage; possibly with a democratic 'covering'.

However, the working class is potentially the most powerful force in Nigerian society, and will have opportunities to transform society. Socialist ideas, currently the preserve of a minority, can gain mass support on the basis of workers' experience of the brutality of capitalism in Nigeria, combined with the campaigning of socialists.

Only if the working class and poor take the enormous wealth and natural resources of Nigeria into its own hands will it be possible to build a society that meets the needs of all. On this basis it would also be possible to for the democratic and national aspirations of all religious and ethnic minorities to be genuinely met instead of, as at the moment, being used cynically as the tools of the different sections of the Nigerian elite desperate to further their own interests.

Read a fuller version of this article at www.socialistworld.net

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DSM activists with their newspaper Socialist Democracy

Israel/Palestine: New round of repression answered by wave of rage and protest

Yasha Marmer

Socialist Struggle Movement
(CWI Israel/Palestine)

The July-August brutal war on Gaza resulted in the slaughter of around 2,200 residents. Since then the Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank and particularly in annexed East Jerusalem, have refused to return to 'normal' life under the occupation.

Hundreds, and on some occasions thousands, of young Palestinians have been taking almost daily to the streets of East Jerusalem to protest against colonial settlement expansion, repression and nationalist and religious provocation.

This was then accompanied by a wave of protest in the Palestinian communities in Israel after the cold blooded police shooting and killing of 22 year old Khayr Hamdan in northern Israel. Tens of thousands took part in a one-day popular general strike, declared by the Supreme Committee of the Arab-Palestinian public within Israel.

Prime Minister Netanyahu reacted to the protests by saying: "to all those who demonstrate against Israel and in favour of a Palestinian state, I say something simple: I invite you to move there".

With the background of the horrific death toll of last summer's war and the growing settlement expansion and land confiscation since then, a series of tragic and desperate acts of stabbings and vehicles being driven into people were conducted by Palestinian individuals.

This resulted in the killing of six Israelis including a three-month old baby. Almost all of the attacks ended with on-spot killings of the attackers by the police.

Synagogue attack

Four Israelis were then killed in an attack on a Synagogue in Jerusalem on 18 November. Again the two suspects were killed on the spot. These assassinations without trials were fully backed by the head of the police and the government ministers.

Internal Security Minister (responsible for the police) Yitzhak Aharonovitch praised the police killings saying that he wishes that any act of terror will end with the on-spot death of the attacker.

This was obviously referring only to Palestinians, as Jewish terrorists that attack Palestinian communities



1,000 additional police and 2,500 troops have been deployed

go unpunished.

A week before Aharonovitch's statement, a five year old Palestinian girl was killed in a hit-and-run incident by a settler in the West Bank. He was freed immediately after a short police questioning.

In contrast to that, after Khayr was murdered by police he was immediately tagged by Netanyahu's government ministers as 'terrorist'. Those statements made crystal clear that the family and community of Khayr cannot expect any justice from the police investigation that was launched into his killing.

This brings back memories of October 2000 when 13 unarmed Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed during protests at the beginning of the second intifada. No police officers were indicted for that crime. Since then, 48 young Palestinians with Israeli citizenship have been killed by police gunfire. In only three cases was the officer convicted.

The situation in the occupied West Bank is obviously much worse. At least 50 Palestinians have been killed there since the beginning of the year by the Israeli army and

settlers. Those killings are another attempt by the Israeli regime to consolidate an image of military supremacy. The recent declarations of more settlement expansion and building of hundreds of new housing units in East Jerusalem aim partly for the same goal.

There is no doubt that those declarations encourage far-right and other settlers' groups. In the last month they managed to take over tens of houses in the Palestinian impoverished neighbourhood of Silwan – an act without precedence in the last 20 years.

This was done with the support of a big presence of riot police and border police and celebrated publicly by government ministers. The minister of housing, Uri Ariel, from the settlers-based racist party 'Jewish Home' even declared that he is going to move to one of the houses.

Settlers' tours

The expropriation of Palestinian families in Silwan comes along with the provocative tours by the same settlers' groups in Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. The declared aim of the tours is to 'reclaim' the already occupied and annexed compound of the Al-Aqsa mosque. Far-right members of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) and government ministers take part in these tours almost on a weekly basis.

There has been a stepping up of collective punishment against Palestinian neighbourhoods, villages and refugee camps in the Jerusalem area in the recent weeks. These

include: new restrictions of movement, house demolitions and draconian fines and traffic tickets.

This comes after almost five decades of systematic discrimination and criminal neglect of infrastructure, and lack of schools, housing and jobs. The levels of poverty (78%) and unemployment (40% for men, 85% for women) have now reached the highest point since the start of the occupation in East Jerusalem in 1967.

More repression

There's a growing fear among the Israeli establishment that the situation is spiralling out of their control. The answer of Netanyahu's government to the growing discontent is more repression. Since the start of the Gaza war around 1,000 Palestinian youth have been arrested in East Jerusalem, many of them minors.

The government is cynically playing on the yearning of the Israeli residents of Jerusalem for security and stability, while spilling more fuel on the fire it started.

It seems that a new uprising on a mass scale - a third intifada - is just a matter of time

With a promise to "restore calm" the government ordered a deployment of 1,000 additional police to East Jerusalem, 2,500 troops to the West Bank and increased police presence around the Palestinian communities in Israel. In addition to that, Netanyahu ordered more house demolitions, fining the parents of children involved in stone-throwing, and banning organisations in Jerusalem that encourage "incitement".

It seems that a new uprising on a mass scale - a third intifada - is just a matter of time. Some commentators in the Israeli media already refer to the recent events as a new in-

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 or see

www.socialistworld.net

tifada or "silent intifada" or "urban intifada". In some cases it is done deliberately to spread fear among the Israeli public and put pressure on the government.

But it needs to be stressed that the current protests are not yet on a mass scale and therefore it's not yet an intifada in the true sense of the meaning – a mass uprising against the occupation and national oppression. This kind of uprising is absolutely necessary to stop and reverse the arrogant and brutal policy of the Israeli regime.

The Fatah-led Palestinian Authority's (PA) policy of 'security cooperation' with the Israeli army means holding back and suppression of protests. Hamas, on the other hand, declared a few symbolic 'days of rage' in the West Bank but without the ability or the will to mobilise wider layers for an effective, prolonged, struggle.

The recent war on Gaza exposed the limitations of Israel military power, but it also showed that the military balance of forces is clearly on the side of the Israeli war machine.

There's also a clear limitation to PA diplomatic campaigning. This impasse can lead to more counter-productive, desperate acts, but also to a bigger openness to new methods of struggle and new political forces potentially emerging on the left.

Mass and semi-mass demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories can win an immediate solidarity worldwide, and potentially reignite the revolutionary struggle in the region. It can also change the outlook and win support from a significant section of Israeli society. Recent polls show that support for Netanyahu's government policies is far from solid.

Alternative

The socialist left in Israel should strive to widen further the cracks in the government's support, especially given the background of deteriorating economic conditions. There is an urgent need to build a working class-led movement in Israel that can put forward a socialist alternative.

The current stage of struggle poses the urgent need for setting up democratically elected popular committees in the Palestinian communities to plan further actions, mobilise a wider layer of workers and youth and organise effective self-defence, including with arms in hands, against the Israeli army's lethal repression and settlers' attacks.

Those committees can generate discussion in all levels of society on how to take the struggle for national and social liberation forward.



Socialist Party members on solidarity protests during the last Gaza war
photo Sarah Wrack

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Fraudster bankers couldn't give a Forex

Robin Clapp

Just two years after the exposure of a series of fraudulent actions in the banking sector connected to the fixing of the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor), five banks have been collectively fined £2 billion by UK and US regulators for rogue traders' successful manipulation of the foreign exchange market.

The fines have been levied against HSBC, RBS, Swiss bank UBS and US banks JP Morgan Chase and Citibank, while Barclays which was at the centre of the Libor scandal in 2012 has once again been heavily implicated in this latest scam.

Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) was one of those banks bailed out by the taxpayer and the government still retains an 80% stake in it. At its peak in the UK alone, taxpayers' direct subsidy to the banks stood at more than £1 trillion.

The Foreign Exchange (Forex) market is massive and much larger than bonds and equity (stocks and shares) markets. In 2013 its combined trades were equivalent to double UK economic output.

Almost all the trades take place electronically and in this virtual marketplace, over \$5.3 trillion in currency trades swap hands every day. Only a tiny amount of currency trades are related to facilitating cross-border trade. Most transfers are purely speculative, almost encouraging city boy spivs to engage in a bit of insider dealing for themselves.

Through the investigation conducted by the Financial Conduct

Authority, it has been revealed that manipulation of currencies has been occurring since at least 2008, yet it took a whistleblower to alert the FCA that there was compelling evidence of suspicious price movements in the Forex market.

Scandalously the Bank of England, while denying that any of its officials were involved in either improper behaviour or cover-ups, has been forced to admit there was an "error of judgement" by one official who knew bank traders were sharing information.

Scam

The scam was relatively easy to engineer. Because currency prices in the Forex market are changing second by second which makes it complicated to establish the going rate at any one time, a daily exchange rate fix is held.

This is done by analysing actual currency deals that take place in a window 30 seconds before and 30 seconds after 16.00 London time. The fix rates are then calculated based on these specific transactions and a daily benchmark exchange rate is arrived at.

All it requires to manipulate the fix rate is for a group of market players to coordinate their orders during these 60 seconds and if large enough, these orders will affect the benchmark calculation.

Using online private chat rooms, dodgy traders created secret cabals which swapped confidential customer information and trading positions, so they could effectively coordinate their bets in order to trouser very large sums of money.



City traders are the winners in capitalism's casino economy

The revealing of this scandal has forced Chancellor George Osborne to demand a clean-up of the Forex market. An unnamed financier refers to the City as a 'cesspit'. Meanwhile, bank chiefs make grovelling apologies, while stressing they had no idea what was happening on their watches. The Daily Mail demands to know why these bankers are not in prison.

In unison they all thunder that it must not be allowed to happen again. The think tank ResPublica offers a novel solution. With unbelievable naivety it believes that bankers

should be made to swear an oath declaring they will "confront profligacy and impropriety wherever I encounter it."

Like the Libor scandal before it, where the inter-bank lending rate was rigged for years for the benefit of those traders who believed themselves to be 'masters of the universe', new scandals in finance are brewing daily.

The rotten derivatives market, short-selling, uncontrollable hedge funds and the obscene futures market, where traders force up the price of basic commodities including

wheat and grain, all underline that capitalism is criminal.

This scandal shows again that financiers will always run rings around attempts to regulate their speculative deceptions. That's why we call for the nationalisation of the big banks and financial sector.

A socialist nationalised banking sector would be an enormous step forward for ordinary people, alongside the taking into public ownership the 150 big corporations, which ever more intimately entwined with the banks, dominate and ruin so many lives.

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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Smartphones to blame?

Birmingham city council has a new smartphone app for unemployed 18-24 year olds, which the council "are confident will bring down the high rates of youth joblessness". They blame the recession and massive job cuts, and the vacancy famine on not having access to information on this app!

Birmingham council have helped increase youth unemployment by carrying out Westminster-ordered cuts since 2010. £460 million had already been cut with another £360 million to be found by 2018. Council employment went down from 21,000 to 13,000 and by 2018 will be about 7,000.

The council say they have a legal obligation to carry out cuts which are so

severe that the council may not be able to fulfil its statutory services. If this is so, which legal obligation will the council fulfil?

Not one Birmingham councillor voted against the cuts. They ignore the existence of anti-cuts councillors in Hull, Southampton, Warrington and Leicester and claim there is nothing that they can do. But the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will fight and stand candidates in next year's elections.

Clive Walder,
Birmingham Socialist Party.

Heart-breaking cuts

The tragic death of Tamara Holbroll, stabbed by her 44 year old mentally ill son Peter in Kentish Town, London, is truly heartbreaking. Peter himself asked medical staff to put him in hospital, fearing he would harm his mum. Dismissing his and Tamara's plea's as over-dramatic they prescribed Peter pills. Peter has now been detained indefinitely under the mental health act and we have another avoidable death in the community.

Care in the community was seen as a cheaper option when closing psychiatric hospitals. I believe these catastrophes are occurring more and more because implementing savage cuts has now become more important than human life.

Eric Thorpe, Salford



The beautiful game looking ugly

Paul Callanan

Yet again the world of football finds itself mired in a corruption scandal. This time it is over the Fifa (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) decision to allow Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup.

Qatari football officials had been accused of making payments totalling £3 million to secure backing for its bid from other football federations and big wigs.

A report by Hans-Joachim Ekhart has sensationally cleared the Qatari footballing authority despite thousands of pages of evidence showing dodgy dealings going on behind the scenes.

Football fans can have no trust in an inquiry into alleged corruption in the higher echelons of Fifa carried out by none other than Fifa themselves. Indeed, Michael Garcia, the US lawyer who spent two years investigating claims of wrongdoing, has disowned Fifa's 'unique' interpretation of his findings!

Counter-allegations by Fifa have been made against the Football Association governing body in Eng-



land, the most fervent accuser of the Qatari FA over their own failed 2022 World Cup bid.

Fifa says the England 2022 bid team improperly attempted to

It's time for us to reclaim the game and kick out big business

curry favour with former Fifa vice-president and Concacaf's (football's governing body in central America) Jack Warner by, among other things,

sponsoring a lavish gala dinner for the Caribbean Football Union costing £35,000.

It seems that no one's hands are clean. The report and the accusations and counter accusations that have followed in its wake will only further add to the sense among fans that 'the beautiful game' is simply a multi-billion pound rat race.

The latest outrage comes on the back of the 'Price of Football' study by the BBC last month that the cost of tickets for Premier League matches is rising at double the rate of the cost of living.

Football officialdom and big business are reaping huge rewards, clubs are going bankrupt, while fans suffer sky high prices and most workers at clubs are now paid below the living wage.

It's time for us to reclaim the game and kick out big business. We need a massive fans-led campaign to bring football under the control of supporters and local communities. Only on the basis of democratic public ownership can we truly save the 'people's game' from the corruption and scandal it now finds itself in.

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- **Climate and change**
Naomi Klein's book reviewed by Bill Hopwood
- **Ebola crisis**
Rich-world reaction

We can win decent working conditions



Zero-hour, minimum wage, and no chairs

"I earn roughly £5,000 a year"

Jack
Hampshire Socialist Party

The Conservative Party boasts it has 'created new opportunities for youth' and 'got Britain working again.' However, anyone who works in the type of jobs that have become the norm under the Con-Dems knows there are no new opportunities.

Zero-hour contracts mean sporadic shifts. There's the nagging knowledge you're working a dead end job. Young workers like myself are left depressed and distraught.

This month marks my first anniversary of work. Like the majority of young people, I work in the service industry. My experience can be summed up in seven words: zero-hour, minimum wage, and no chairs.

I earn roughly £5,000 a year - though because it is zero-hour, the actual amount is unknowable. The average price for renting a one bed-

room flat in Southampton is £600 a month, which means £7,200 a year. This doesn't take into account bills, food or clothing.

Yet the corporation I work for generates £6.8 billion annually. They have the money to pay their workers a living wage, but won't.

Two managements

The supermarket I work in is run by a multinational. Because of this there are two managements. The local management runs the store daily and is basically maintenance. The other management, our billionaire parent company, could visit once in two months or twice in a week.

On one visit, the head of marketing for southern England decided he didn't like till staff having chairs - because it made them 'look lazy'. When I spoke to Socialist Party members about this, they said it could be considered discriminatory action.

I managed to talk to this manager.

He said the chairs were removed because an employee tripped and had a serious injury. When I said this to the local management they had never heard of any such incident.

If you have experienced the same type of thing in your workplace and feel powerless, don't be disheartened - there is another way. Strong trade unions, like the BFAWU bakers' union, are fighting hard for workers' rights. I urge you to research the unions organising in your industry, and join one.

\$15 Now

Just look at the \$15 Now campaign in Seattle. It fought for a \$15 minimum wage in the city. Young workers joined together and became involved in unions and campaign work. They won through action and sheer determination.

If they can do it in the beating heart of capitalism, surely we can do it here!

"Black Friday" marked with strikes and protests across US

In the United States the day after Thanksgiving (known as "Black Friday"), has been transformed from a day to spend with family into a day that the bosses look forward to every year.

Low-paid workers are expected to work extended hours at no extra pay while the bosses rake in money and make record profits. More and more shops are opening earlier and earlier, even staying open on the holiday itself. For the bosses this means more money, for working class people it means less time with the family and more time working in a low wage environment.

With Walmart expected to call in nearly one million employees on Thanksgiving, workers are becoming increasingly frustrated. This is just one example of the mistreatment of Walmart workers who are now organising against their cruel employer. This year strikes and protest will take place around



Protests and strikes are expected at over 1,500 Walmart stores

the country involving community campaigners as well as workers at over 1,500 stores.

Walmart is the largest employer of the working poor. Workers are calling for better working condi-

tions as well as \$15 an hour and full-time work. These demands could easily be met by the company but will have to be fought for.
Hannah Zucherman
Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Protesting against Sports Direct Miliband's words need to become action

Trade unionists and campaigners marked the opening of the new Sports Direct store in Lincoln on 15 November with a protest against the use of zero-hour contracts and low pay.

Activists gave out leaflets contrasting the lack of holiday and sick pay for the 90% of Sports Direct workers on zero-hour contracts, with the £240 million in profits that were made by the company in the last financial year.

The protest coincided with a major speech made by Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, who singled out the "Victorian practices" of Sports Direct and described it as a "bad place to work".



photo Ian Pattison

£10 an hour!

Nick Parker, Socialist Party member and secretary of Lincoln and District TUC, said: "A company like Sports Direct, owned by a multi-billionaire like Mike Ashley and making annual profits of £240 million, can afford to pay their workers at least £10 an hour and give them regular hours of work."

"The Lincoln protest was part of the ongoing Midlands TUC "Decent Jobs" campaign to encourage particularly young workers to organise together to stand up for

their rights at work.

"We welcome Ed Miliband's speech today in drawing more attention to this crucial issue. But the Labour Party leadership needs to go further to strengthen workers' rights by committing to reverse the Con-Dem attacks on employment tribunals and scrap what are some of the most repressive anti-trade union laws in western Europe."



Enough is enough!

- ▶ Give us proper contracts, guaranteed hours and full employment rights
- ▶ £10 an hour minimum wage now!
- ▶ Decent tea and lunch breaks
- ▶ Stop the bosses' fire-at-will attitude
- ▶ We won't be used as cheap or free labour
- ▶ We have the right to get organised at work
- ▶ Scrap anti-trade union laws
- ▶ Build democratic campaigning trade unions
- ▶ No to benefit cuts

Join Youth Fight for Jobs:

www.youthfightforjobs.com

Text JOIN plus name and postcode to

07749379010

youthfightforjobs@gmail.com

@youthfight4jobs

WE CAN DEFEAT LOW PAY AND ZERO-HOURS!

Protest 21 November

Amy
London

The Fast Food Rights campaign, organised by the bakers' union BFAWU, Youth Fight for Jobs and others, has been causing a stir with our protests outside McDonalds, KFCs and Burger Kings across the country.

Many worried looking customers have stopped to ask: "Is there something wrong with the food?" Well...probably! But worse than the rumours of 'pink slime', chicken beaks in the nuggets and food that inexplicably refuses to decay, is the rotten way these multi-million pound companies treat their staff. Fast food workers are often on poverty pay, zero-hour contracts and denied basic rights.

Insecurity

I am a temporary hospitality worker and one of the 2.7 million people employed on a zero-hour contract. I know what it's like to worry about whether I will get enough hours to live on each week, to travel miles at my own expense only to find I'm needed for just a few hours, and to fear that speaking out will result in me being dropped completely.

I also know how easy it is to feel powerless against such huge companies. But as experience has shown time and time again, when the workers unionise, organise and fight back, we are incredibly powerful.

Last November, socialist Seattle city councillor Kshama Sawant led a successful grassroots campaign to raise her city's minimum wage to the highest in the country - \$15 an hour. This movement, whose success will lift 100,000 workers out of poverty, had to take on the same multinationals who are keeping workers on unjustly low pay in England. They won, and so can we.

BFAWU organised its members at the Hovis factory in Wigan in a two-week strike against zero-hour contracts and won. We should look to Wigan, Seattle and countless other towns and regions where victories have been won by the workers. We can defeat the traps of low pay and zero-hours!

Fast Food Rights fights for a minimum wage of £10 an hour and guaranteed hours of work. These companies' obscene profits every year prove that they can more than afford it. The campaign is holding a lobby of parliament over these issues on 21 November. Join us!

Fast Food Rights protest
12. 30pm, 21 November
Old Palace Yard, Westminster, London



See
page 11
for more on
the fight for
decent jobs

What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £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 un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

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

NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- 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!