

Scandal of unequal Britain

14 DAY DEADLINE TO BREADLINE

Alison Hill

Many MPs will be looking forward to 2015 - perhaps not to the general election but to the 11% pay rise they'll get if they survive it. And if £74,000 a year isn't enough to live on, and some of them claim it isn't, there's always the Westminster Food Bank - the House of Commons canteen. Some are a bit embarrassed by this generous pay deal, on top of a series of equally generous packages. 'We can't do anything about it' they cry, 'it's all decided by an outside body.'

But all this flannel doesn't conceal the real scandal of unequal Britain which has been revealed once again in a recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

It paints a horrifying picture of working families living in poverty. Where the much boasted about fall in unemployment is in reality a picture of people working for much less than the living wage and in many cases lower than the minimum wage.

The scourges of zero-hour contracts and 'self employment' have plunged thousands of families into poverty and uncertainty. The report found that nearly 1.4 million people are on zero-hour contracts and 13% of self-employed people are earning less than they did five years ago.

And once your income is uncertain your housing becomes uncertain, your heating becomes uncertain and even your next meal becomes uncertain.

The average UK household has so little in savings that it has just 29 days after losing its main income before becoming dependent on benefits and friends. For working age households this is reduced to 14 days. They call this the 'deadline to breadline'. What a scandal in 2014!

Families are teetering on the edge of poverty. Parents are giving up meals to feed their children. People are living on credit cards and pay day loans, selling posses-

The much boasted about fall in unemployment is in reality a picture of people working for much less than the living wage...

sions and not surprisingly suffering from stress-related illnesses.

Who is speaking up for these millions? Not the cosseted MPs having to suffer the embarrassment of another fat pay rise. Time to organise to kick them out. Time to build a party that will really represent and fight for working people and change the system that can only offer us breadline Britain.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition which aims to stand 100 anti-austerity candidates in next year's general election.

see www.tusc.org.uk



photo Paul Mattsson

"As a minimum wage fast-food worker I find living on £6.50 an hour impossible. On a zero-hour contract and with the price of living soaring, a social life is both too expensive and difficult to organise as I could be pulled into work at any time. Things like moving out from home are stressful rather than enjoyable and liberating.

This is why I campaign with Youth Fight for Jobs against zero-hour contracts, for guaranteed hours and a £10 an hour living wage. Only by organising a mass campaign of working class people can we better our lot and win a decent standard of living for all.

I will be attending the day of action in Cardiff for £10 now on 4 December and have decided to get organised and join the bakers' union BFAWU."

A fast food worker, Cardiff

Rochester byelection: 'Business as usual' politics falling apart

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." William Butler Yeats wrote these words in the aftermath of World War One.

The Rochester and Strood byelection on 20 November may seem an undeserving event to expend Yeats' words on, but the result was an expression of one of the major developments of the post-economic crisis world we live in.

The growing anger of the 99% is starting to find expression at elections and the utter inability of the defenders of capitalism to offer any way forward is revealed. Maybe it's enough to quote the Ukip leader on the general election: "all bets are off".

The Rochester vote resulted in the expected election of a second ex-Tory Ukip MP. Mark Reckless won with 42% of the vote, 16,867 votes. The Tory vote fell by 14 percentage points on 2010, Labour by almost 12 and the Lib Dems by over 15 to 300 odd votes.

Reckless outrageously claimed the legacy of protest of the Levellers, Chartists and Suffragettes in his 4am victory speech (see below).

A pampered, anti-working class Tory and Ukip can attempt this trickery only because of the absence of a mass workers' party today that genuinely stands in those traditions. The trade union leaders who have hesitated from taking action to build a new party bear heavy responsibility for contributing to this process.

Research has found that 81% of Ukip supporters believe "big business takes advantage of ordinary people" but they will be bitterly disappointed by Rochester's representative and the entire Ukip leadership and decision makers. Reckless voted strongly for reducing the rate of corporation tax as a Tory MP. The millionaires and other members of the 1% who fund Ukip agree with him.

Rochester further reflects a trend in politics away from the two-party domination, what has been called the 'new fragmentation'. It is an expression of the crisis of legitimacy that has beset all the former pillars of capitalist society - governments, mainstream press, banks, police, etc.

Today only 10% of voters think that British 'politicians' are out to do their best for the country. Since 1979 the share of the vote

going to Labour and the Tories at general elections fell from 81% to 65% in 2010 and has plummeted since then. That period corresponds with three decades in which a doubling of the numbers living in poverty, vast numbers of workers included, coincided with a doubling of the size of the British economy.

The Socialist Party has explained that low turnouts have not been due to voter apathy but huge anger. The turnout in the Scottish independence referendum was a dramatic example of that when working class people, and the youth especially, saw an opportunity to punish Westminster for austerity. In doing that 1.6 million people defied the Lab-Con-Dem attempts to terrify them with the threats of Project Fear - of bank closures, job losses and currency crises.

Miliband aping Farage

In England, Ukip has been the main, but not the only, recipient of protests on the electoral plane. Researcher Matthew Goodwin found that in the first ten months of 2013 there were 23,000 media mentions of Ukip in the papers.

But it is not only the press that promotes Ukip. A writer in the right-wing Spectator summarised the Tory approach to their electoral challengers as: "Ukip are right - don't vote for them". Cameron, faced with an insurgency on the right of his party, appears to be running to keep up with Ukip's policies on Europe and immigration.

Labour has only mirrored this. New research has found that concerns about immigration are often motivated by worries about the impact on jobs and public services. But instead of committing to a meaningful increase in the minimum wage, supporting trade unions that take action to defend the rate for the job to stop the race to the bottom, etc, shadow ministers announce that Labour would restrict benefits which jobseekers from the EU can claim, including child benefit.

In reality, instead of showing 'respect' for the working class, with all its variations of race and ethnicity, Miliband is aping Cameron and Farage who use immigration to distract from the responsibility of big business, the finance industry and capitalist politicians



Rochester reflects a trend in politics away from two-party domination

for the economic crisis and the attacks on the working class in the name of austerity.

But it was the tweet and subsequent resignation of Emily Thornberry, a shadow front bench, that caught the (short) attention of journalists in the capitalist press reporting on the byelection. Thornberry's tweet of a photo of a house bedecked in England flags sent Labour's high command into paroxysms of panic as it was claimed by the right-wing tabloid rags that this was evidence of Labour's snotty approach to the working class.

Labour's attitude to the working class is revealed every day in much more meaningful ways - repeated commitments to carry on Tory cuts if Labour forms the next government, implementing cuts and privatisation at local council level and during 13 previous years of government, and their refusal to remove the Tory anti-union laws from the statutes when in power.

With half a year to go to the general election Labour is hardly ahead in the polls. However, the response to Thornberry's tweet is nothing compared to the fear the Labour leadership has of being seen as 'Red' - although they are clearly not.

In Ireland the attack dog defenders of capitalism in the big business owned press have mined new depths of vitriol to attack the Socialist Party TDs (MPs) who are playing a central role in the mass movement against water charges that has erupted.

The Irish working class has gone from being derided as "sheeple", unwilling to raise a peep against the austerity wolf, to 'rising like lions' to resist this latest vicious tax. Everywhere that government ministers, including

Irish Labour, dare to show their faces they are greeted by mobilisations of local people from the working class communities who are saying, "Enough is enough!"

Although we have not seen protests of this scale in Britain - 200,000 demonstrated on one day out of a population in the Republic of Ireland of less than five million - the same conditions of austerity for the 99% and recovery for the 1% are preparing the ground for eruptions of anger here.

The existence of Socialist Party TDs, partly down to the Proportional Representation electoral system as well as the superb record of struggle of the Socialist Party in Ireland, has meant that the movement has a voice in the Dáil (parliament).

UK Labour's Douglas Alexander has deigned to acknowledge that anger is transforming the "entire business model of UK politics". But the point is that Labour offers no 'working class model' - instead striving to act in the interest of big business.

The only way to end the politics of 'business as usual' is to build a new vibrant, democratic, mass party based on struggle and the organisations of the working class. The Ukip bandwagon can be stopped by the labour movement stepping up now to call for the building of a workers' political voice.

As part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, the Socialist Party is campaigning for 1,000 no-cuts council candidates and 100 parliamentary candidates in May next year to show in action what is needed and to involve those working class people who have already drawn the conclusion that there must be an alternative.

Reckless claims to have stood in the tradition of the Chartists. What rubbish! The Chartists were a working class movement for political representation in the 19th century.

But it gets worse. Reckless's constituency contains the home town of William Cuffay - Old Brompton. Wikipedia explains that Cuffay was "the son of a Kent woman and a black man who was previously enslaved and originally from Saint Kitts (then a British colony)."

A trade unionist, Cuffay was one of the most militant Chartist leaders. He would not have made a political home in Ukip - or any of today's main parties.

Most likely he would have been a champion for TUSC!



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Anger erupts in Ferguson over acquittal of killer cop

Protests have erupted in many cities in the USA following the Grand Jury decision not to charge white policeman Darren Wilson who shot dead unarmed black youth Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on 9 August. The following statement on this outrageous verdict was released by Socialist Alternative in the USA, co-thinkers of the Socialist Party.

"The Grand Jury acquittal of Darren Wilson was rigged. The entire criminal justice system is a racist set-up to criminalise black youth. Over a million are in prisons for non-violent offenses while the real criminals on Wall Street never see the inside of a prison cell.

Four times a week, a black man is killed by the cops or racist murderers like George Zimmerman, Trayvon Martin's killer. Enough is enough! These demonstrations need to spark a new Black Freedom Coalition for justice, jobs, education and an end to racist policing.

We need to continue the movement against racist police violence to demand not only an indictment of Darren Wilson but also an open investigation into the Ferguson police department by community groups and trade unions.

The criminal 'injustice' system is connected to economic racism inherent in US capitalism. Black workers are often the last hired and first fired, while schools and housing are underfunded in neighbourhoods of colour.

The youth leading the movement in Ferguson have rejected the mil-



Protesters demand justice over the killing of Michael Brown

lionaire politicians of the Democratic Party like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. They have built on their own strength, courage and determination to continue their struggle, despite being vilified and told to end their protests.

We need national days of action with protests in every city to build a movement out of the current anger. These actions should demand community control of the police through democratically-elected civilian review boards with the power of hiring and firing. We should demand a \$15 an hour minimum wage as well as guaranteed quality jobs, health care, education, and housing.

The unions, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and community organisations could mobilise millions

of motivated people for protests like this throughout the country. This could be the beginnings of a new, youthful coalition to challenge racism and poverty.

These coalitions could be run democratically, refuse to take money from the super-rich, and campaign in schools, workplaces and communities to build protests against police violence and economic injustice.

President Obama and the Democrats aren't delivering real change for working people, young people or the black community. We need to get organised with clear demands to win."

**For updates and analysis see www.socialistalternative.org
See also www.socialistparty.org.uk for background articles.**



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World economy – heading for the junkyard

Tom Baldwin

David Cameron seems to have woken up to the problems facing the world economy when he said "red warning lights are once again flashing on the dashboard."

For once the Socialist would agree with him, but of course the Tories offer no answers. Having blamed Labour for the last crisis they are now trying to get their excuses in first. Cameron promises only more of the same failed policies of austerity. For him protecting the economy means bolstering the profits of his big business mates - and to hell with the rest of us.

The world economy doesn't just have lights flashing on the dashboard, there's smoke billowing out from under the bonnet. On the day that Cameron's warning appeared Japan, the third largest economy in the world, announced that it had



Cameron - red lights flashing

gone into recession.

This represents a failure of 'Abenomics', named after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Stimulus packages have not been enough to overcome the ongoing effects of capitalist crisis.

The slowdown of growth in the second largest economy, China, is a blow to those who thought it could rescue the world economy. It seemed to have weathered the crisis better than many countries on the basis of huge government stimulus, however this has inflated an economic bubble.

Reflecting weak demand at home and abroad China now has a problem of industrial overcapacity where the ability to produce far outstrips what can be sold. However, the epicentre of the crisis remains the eurozone, the UK's largest market for exports. Here harsh austerity measures have exacerbated economic differences between members and further cut demand as living standards fall. Unemployment across the zone is 11.5%, twice that among young people.

The financial sector still contains timebombs, 1 in 5 European banks failed recent "stress tests."

Weak demand means there is now a worrying trend toward deflation, a generalised fall in prices. This may sound good but it means consumer spending falls further as people don't buy today what will be cheaper tomorrow. Businesses are even less likely to invest while debts get bigger in real terms. There is still a huge amount of debt among consumers, companies and nations.

Cameron may trumpet UK growth as an exception but this pride will come before a fall. The British economy is not immune from problems elsewhere but also shows many weaknesses of its own. For example, the growth in house prices forming an unsustainable bubble.

The headline growth also masks a rise in inequality. While the rich have got richer, workers' living standards have fallen - there's no recovery for us.

Capitalism has never found its way out of the crisis of 2007-08, the

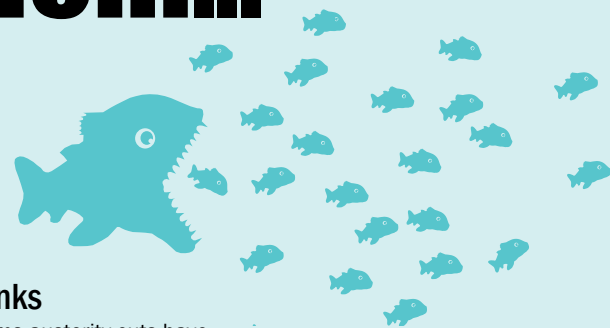
deepest for generations. In reality it remains in a depression that neither policies of austerity nor stimulus are able to shift.

The best this system has on offer is more of the same - low wages and high unemployment. But all the material is there for another crash and a new stage of the crisis.

Unplanned production for profit can never deliver economic stability and capitalist exploitation means workers cannot afford to buy back all the goods they produce. Crises like this are not an exception for capitalism; it's the way the system operates.

The only way out is the socialist alternative. The economy can't be left in the hands of those who exist only to make a profit. Instead, workers should own and control the wealth that we produce. Only democratic socialist planning can deliver a stable economy where production is geared to meet people's needs.

Them...



Food banks

The Con-Dems austerity cuts have pushed hundreds of thousands into poverty. According to the Trussell Trust that operates emergency food banks, 492,641 people were given three days' food between April and September this year - a 38% increase on last year. Benefits sanctions, cuts and delays accounted for 45% of food bank referrals.

Xmas cheer

It seems that the spirit of Scrooge - the fictional tight-fisted employer in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol - has arrived early this year. Nurses at Great Ormond Street Hospital for children in London have been told by their employer to work for nothing following an accountancy mess-up resulted in them being overpaid by six and a half hours a year - an average overpayment of £82.

Pocket money

Tony Blair - warmonger, adviser to tyrants and multi-millionaire - is trousering some additional pocket money courtesy of a taxpayer funded £115,000 allowance for 'carrying out public duties'. Apart from standing to attention at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday for a minute, can a reader recall any other public duties performed by the at-large war criminal?

Mental health crisis

NHS workers have denounced the savage cuts in mental health provision. According to the Royal College of Nursing there are now 3,300 fewer posts in mental health nursing (an 8% decline) and 1,500 fewer beds, than in 2010. Inevitably, patient care for some of the most vulnerable people will suffer.

Minimum wage delay

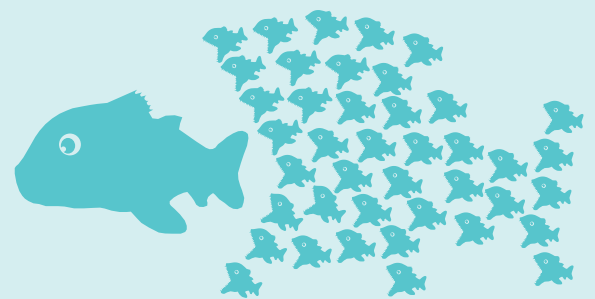
According to the Office for National Statistics 287,000 workers were paid below the legal minimum wage, currently £6.50 an hour. The Trades Union Congress reckons the figure is nearer 350,000.

Despite this blatant flouting of the law the government has only prosecuted two employers for paying less than the minimum wage since coming into office. At that rate it will take 700,000 years to deal with the current case load!

Polluters don't pay

Fracking - the environmentally damaging but highly profitable method of extracting shale gas and oil - is a central part of the government's energy agenda. But they tell us not to worry too much as any potential pollution or earthquakes caused by fracking as the process will be monitored by drilling hundreds of boreholes. However, the cost of this 'reassurance' won't be met by 'big oil' but instead from public funds costing £60-£80 million.

...& Us



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

Health workers walkout in second NHS pay strike

Socialist Party members

Nurses, cleaners, porters, midwives, occupational therapists, paramedics, scientists, radiographers, admin, catering, security staff and other NHS staff in England took part in a second four-hour strike on Monday 24 November.

The strike has been followed by six days of 'work to rule'.

Eleven health service trade unions were involved, united against the government's attack on pay, which means a majority of staff won't even receive a miniscule 1% pay rise.

One nurse on the picket line at Gateshead's Queen Elizabeth hospital said emergency cover was being given on her ward. However, she went on to say that, in reality, this meant the same cover as any other day as the service was constantly run on a bare minimum.

Unite members explained that the QE hospital is privatising their estates department. From 1 December, 52 workers will be employed by a new company, QE Facilities Ltd.

Pickets were out across Southampton, supporting the fight against the austerity pay freeze at the Royal South Hants, Southampton General and Princess Anne hospitals, with militant midwives in the biggest numbers.

There were calls for the unions to organise more effective action and give a convincing lead, showing that they mean business.

Wales strike cancelled

Welsh health union leaders have suspended NHS Wales strike action after welcoming a two year offer from the Labour Welsh government.

The offer includes a cash payment this year, all workers to receive at least the £7.85 living wage from January and a 1% pay rise from April.

But, as a Unison Wales' Dawn Bowden said: "Clearly this agreement does not make up for the real term loss that NHS workers have suffered in recent years". Many NHS Wales workers will be asking why the strikes have been called off and the unions aren't fighting for more.

Woolwich ISS workers

Over 200 GMB members working for ISS at Woolwich hospital, south London, took 48 hours of strike action on 24 and 25 November to demand the same pay, weekend enhancement and unsocial hour rates as workers employed directly by the NHS Trust.

This was the second walkout following a 24-hour strike on 8 October. But this time the ISS workers started their pickets alongside NHS employees taking part in the four hour national strike.

The ISS workers, including cleaners, security staff, ward hostesses, caterers, switchboard operators and porters, are paid as low as £7.10 an hour. Directly employed NHS staff start at a minimum of £7.33 an hour, which then increases in yearly increments to £7.51 and £7.69.

Horror stories a plenty were told on how the NHS is riddled with the privatisation profit-virus. 50 mental health patients had been farmed out to the private sector while wards were closed due to staffing shortages.

There were well over 100 pickets in total at Leeds General Infirmary and St James hospitals. John Rattigan, an operating department practitioner and Unite rep at LGI (personal capacity) said: "People at the top of their band, such as myself, get a 1% pay rise that's unconsolidated, which is a one-off, so it's not a real pay rise."

"But we're also here for low paid members of staff. The kitchen staff were TUPE'd across to a private contractor. Although they were at the time given guarantees about their conditions, I was speaking to someone recently and she's now on the minimum wage, just £6.50 an hour."

In Salford, a Unison health service activist told the Socialist: "I would like a timetable of strike action between now and May. Jeremy Hunt's made it quite clear he's not willing to negotiate with the unions, I think we need to build on the action, escalate it, and carry it forward to at least the general election, until our demands are met."

Read more picket line reports at www.socialistparty.org.uk



Midwives in Gateshead photo Elaine Brunskill



Radiographers in Leeds photo Leeds SP



Ambulance workers in Leicester photo Michael Barker

In brief

Crane drivers' wage lift

Crane drivers at HTC Plant have won a 14% pay increase following strike action on 7 November. The Ucat members struck after rejecting a 3% offer that did not match the money lost through recession pay freezes.

Haringey school victory

Teachers at Highgate Wood and Fortismere schools in Haringey, north London, have voted to suspend further strike action after agreement was reached over funding union representation. The NUT members had taken four days of action over the withdrawal of facility time. The Haringey schools forum will resume facility funding. This victory would not have required strike action if the headteachers concerned had been willing to negotiate. However, Haringey council's victimisation of NUT branch secretary Julie Davies remains in place. If disciplinary action against Julie is pursued further, borough-wide industrial action will be taken. A protest took place outside the town hall on 24 November.

A Haringey teacher

Jacob's crackers

Around 800 GMB members at Jacob's biscuit factory in Liverpool took strike action on 23 November over management bullying. GMB branch secretary Betty said: "Over the past two years there have been no meaningful negotiations over changes to work practices. Consultation meetings are no more than management telling the unions what is going to happen." The mood of the pickets was buoyant and they received great support from passing motorists honking on horns. Another picket said: "Workers here have always been willing to discuss changes and there have been many over the last twenty years, but we're not going to carry on being dictated to."

Dave Walsh

Lambeth college

UCU members at Lambeth College, south London, have voted by 83% on a 58% turnout to recommence strike action against new contracts with inferior conditions. The new contracts include two weeks' less holiday and one hour extra contact time with sick pay entitlement reduced almost by half. The lecturers took five and half weeks of strike action last term. Management have now made some minor concessions but the main attacks still remain. Strike dates will be announced soon. Messages of support can be sent via UCU branch secretary Mandy Brown: mandybrowncow@yahoo.com

Trelleborg engineers

Over 160 workers at the Trelleborg engineering factory in Beaumont Leys, Leicester, took strike action on 20 and 21 November in demand of a decent pay rise. So far the bosses have offered just 2p an hour despite record profits!

Unite union rep Mark Potter said: "Operating profits for 2013 broke all their own records, with 2014 looking like it will be very similar... We had members on the first day of picketing who had just finished a full eight hour night-shift who then stood on a picket line for twelve hours solid."

TUSC councillors Wayne Naylor and Barbara Potter backed the strike. This was the second strike action following the first walkout on 12 November. Three days more days of action are due to start on Wednesday 26 November as we go to press.

Michael Barker

UCU pensions: reinstate the action!

Sam Morecroft

Sheffield UCU education officer (personal capacity)

On 20 November the UCU lecturers' union suspended the marking boycott started two weeks earlier.

The boycott, in opposition to pension cuts at pre-1992 universities, began after the highest ballot turnout in UCU history, with 78% voting to strike and 87% voting for action short of a strike.

Although marking boycotts can be difficult, the action held strong. At my own university, I've been blown away by the determination of young and casualised members to fight.

The employers are clearly divided. Five universities - Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick, Essex and SOAS - publicly declared the proposed

changes are unworkable, unsustainable and unnecessary.

But some universities, including York, Liverpool and Bradford, threatened to dock 100% of pay for

This dispute was winnable. Our strong position has been squandered by the union executive

workers taking part in the boycott. York backed down following a national backlash from staff and students. Other pay docks resulted in

local strike ballots.

This dispute was winnable. Our strong position has been squandered by the union executive.

The promise of a national strike if members were victimised never materialised. Following the strong ballot result, UCU promptly abandoned its opposition to moving from final salary to career average pensions - a red line for many members. Finally, UCU has suspended the marking boycott until 15 January with just the promise of more negotiations.

Branches should support the call for an emergency pensions conference and to censure the leadership, the majority of which are Labour members.

Preparations should begin now to resume the dispute in January, this time including strike action to show the employers we are serious.

Defend the NHS!



A compilation of articles by campaigners fighting to stop the destruction of the NHS: £5 (+p&p) www.leftbooks.co.uk 020 8988 8789

Students march for free education

Socialist Students

On 19 November, over 5,000 students joined a lively march calling for free education. The demonstration was a brilliant display of huge anger and determination to fight back. Students had come from around the country, some without any support from their student union, instead organising with friends to make sure they could attend.

Socialist Students had a vibrant contingent with lots of chanting and some fiery speeches. Over 60 Socialist Students members joined this bloc on the march, with more throughout the demonstration.

Socialist Students had a vibrant contingent with lots of chanting and some fiery speeches

One of our chants was "students and workers, unite and fight!" The most immediate task following the demonstration is organising solidarity with university staff in their battle over attacks on pensions.

Students who took part were rightly outraged that the right wing leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) had withdrawn support for the demo.

2010

This kind of betrayal is not new. The inspiring 2010 student movement against the trebling of tuition fees and scrapping of EMA was kicked off by an NUS-organised demonstration but then they abandoned the fight. This, combined with workers being blocked from taking action at the same time by their own weak union leaderships, meant that

the movement ended in defeat.

We have to fight to avoid the same this time. We have to step up the action with more protests, strikes and occupations.

We also have to have discussions on every campus about what students should do at the ballot box in May. The rich 1% have four big parties all organised to represent their interests. We need our own party - one that fights in the interests of all workers, young people, poor and oppressed. Organisations like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition have stood in elections as a no-cuts challenge to the big business parties.

Socialist ideas

And we have to make sure that the movement is armed with ideas that can lead to real change. Socialists reject the notion that ordinary people must shoulder the burden of paying for a crisis created by bankers, big business and the super-rich.

We oppose every cut and fight for a society in which the big monopolies are owned publicly and run under democratic control. Rather than production being organised to satisfy capitalist greed, the economy would be planned democratically to meet the needs of ordinary people, without destroying the planet.



photo Jonny Dickens



photos Sarah Wrack



Young Greens and the Socialist Party

In the run up to the 19 November free education march the right wing leadership of the NUS pulled out from backing the demonstration, citing concerns over the safety of the students participating. Some NUS officers also raised the presence on the demonstration of left wing organisations, including the Socialist Party, as an excuse for pulling support, outrageously presenting this as a 'concern' over the issue of violence against women and sexism within the student movement (see statement on the Socialist Party website). The NUS officers, and others who repeated their attacks, were careful not to be specific enough in their published

comments to risk legal action for defamation. The youth section of the Green Party, the Young Greens, however, did post a statement on their website which was clearly defamatory in its allegations about the Socialist Party. They had made no attempt to contact the Socialist Party beforehand. The Socialist Party wrote to the Young Greens, offering to meet them to answer the misinformation they had clearly repeated without question, but also demanding that the offending post be removed within 48 hours. The Young Greens agreed to remove the statement and no further action was taken on this occasion.

Victories against sexism in Leeds

Mary Finch

Leeds Socialist Students

Misogynist comedian Dapper Laughs was recently set to tour the whole UK, performing in Glasgow, London, and among other places, Leeds.

Leeds Socialist Students immediately started a petition, which got 80 signatures in under an hour. At that point we achieved victory! The entire tour was cancelled after similar pressure nationally. The next day he announced that the Dapper Laughs 'character' was to be retired.

Outrage

Thousands signed a petition to ITV2 demanding that they cancel his show 'Dapper Laughs: On the Pull', which was quite literally a compilation of footage of Dapper Laughs following, verbally abusing, and sexually harassing women in the street. Dapper Laughs, and other misogynist comedians, reinforce the idea that it's acceptable for men to behave this way, and that women just have to put up with it.

Socialist Students have been using the Rape is No Joke campaign in Leeds to tackle these issues across campus. At Leeds Beckett University, we won consent workshops, and we're campaigning to do the same



photo Paul Mattsson

at Leeds University. We're hosting our own Rape is No Joke night on 28 November, at The Fenton pub in Leeds, to prove that you don't need misogyny to have good comedy.

Rape is not funny. Sexual harassment is not funny. Intimidating and abusing women is not funny. We should all have the right to feel safe. We should all have the right to walk home at night alone, without having to keep your hand in your pocket,

thinking about how to use your keys as a makeshift weapon.

We have to challenge misogyny wherever we see it, on campus, in culture, and especially in politics. The three main parties, Labour, Lib Dem, and Tories alike, have slashed funding to services that women vitally rely on.

Socialist Students campaigns against sexism wherever it occurs, whether it's from Dapper Laughs, or David Cameron.



50 supporters of the Fast Food Rights campaign lobbied outside Parliament as those inside were discussing a private members bill to limit the use of zero-hour contracts. Ed Miliband likes to criticise zero-hour contracts, but why was it left to a handful of MPs to oppose them in Parliament? Sarah Woolley (pictured), member of the national executive of the bakers' union BFAWU, was unequivocal when she said: "zero-hour contracts are driving people into poverty - we need to get rid of them." Helen Pattison from Youth Fight for Jobs and Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, spoke at our rally as well as giving solidarity greetings to NHS protesters condemning privatisation who had turned up to support another private members bill heard that day. Rob Williams raised the now TUC-backed demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage which MP John McDonnell is putting to Parliament Ian Pattison

HOUSING CRISIS! WHAT DO SOCIALISTS SAY?

Sarah Wrack

The housing crisis is hitting everyone in the face. The mainstream press, politicians and economists all feign concern. Not to mention the real concern of those of us actually affected by it! Every potential avenue to decent housing is being shut down.

While 65% of homes are still owner-occupied, for most young people the prospect of ever being in the position of owning their own home is fast slipping away. In London, the age that the average person can buy their first home is 52. Over three million people in their 20s and early 30s are stuck living with their parents. Half of those who don't own a home have given up hope of ever doing so.

It's clear that homes are still being sold. But particularly in London and the South East, most of the buying is being done by the super-rich, property speculators and wannabe-landlords. In 2012 85% of prime property purchases were completed with overseas money and in 2013 40% of house purchases were paid for with cash.

In the past, many who couldn't afford to buy would turn to social housing. But that is now impossible for most. There are an estimated 1.7 million on social housing waiting lists in England alone – that's one in 12 families.

Even getting onto the list has been made incredibly hard for all but the most desperate. Once on the list, people are potentially faced with years of hell – being expected to live in 'temporary' bed and breakfast accommodation for a long period, for example.

Social housing attacked

If, after jumping through all these hoops, someone does make it into social housing, their problems don't necessarily end. In the past social housing was meant to guarantee cheap rent, a secure tenancy and oblige the council to maintain and repair its housing stock. But this is being rolled back.

Social housing grants are now only given to housing associations and arms-length management companies, not directly to councils. Secure tenancies are being attacked. Much council housing is being essentially left to rot – purposely run down to give councils an excuse to demolish, sell off or renovate in a way that leaves homes unaffordable to original tenants.

If you can't buy and you can't get social housing, the only real option left is the private renting sector. This leaves tenants completely at the whim of private landlords who only feel responsibility to ensure their rental income. The 2011 census

showed 3.5 million people privately renting – almost double what it had been ten years earlier.

But private renting is not an easy option either. Increasing competition for rented housing means that landlords and letting agents feel they have all the power. It's not uncommon to be told you can only view a property if you don't have any other viewings booked and are able to make a decision and pay the deposit on the spot.

Completely unregulated

Unlike in the past and in some other countries, rents in the private sector are completely unregulated. Private renters spend an average of 43% of their income on rent. This doesn't only put a strain on individuals but on the welfare system, as housing benefit increasingly has to be relied on. Between 2008 and 2012 there was a 9% increase in the proportion of households receiving housing benefit who are in work.

52

average age a person can buy their first home in London

Conditions are also much less regulated in the private sector. A recent example highlighted in the press was of a room in a London shared house costing £420 a month that could only be accessed by crawling in on all fours. Damp, overcrowding and rodents are all to be expected.

On top of all of this, there's a huge and growing shortage of homes available. In London alone it's estimated there are already 283,000 too few homes. Most estimates say at least 250,000 homes a year need to be built to keep up with the demands of a growing population.

In 29 of the 30 years leading up to 1978, local councils built more than 90,000 homes a year. But from that point neoliberalism ate into the idea that councils should provide homes for local populations. By 1999 only 50 homes were built by councils and 19,000 by housing associations.

The only option, we're told by politicians from all the main parties, is to rely on private developers. Just like private landlords, private developers' motivation is how to make money. They have no incentive to build homes that

Democratic committees of local people, including tenants' representatives, trade unions, and elected councillors could be set up to decide fair rent caps



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stands for rent control and building council housing photo Waltham Forest TUSC

people can afford. None is being given by government.

The Con-Dems changed the definition of 'affordable' to mean 80% of market rent. This means, for example, that some 'affordable' homes were recently approved by London Mayor Boris Johnson that could cost £2,400 a month.

They also changed the rules on the proportion of affordable housing that new developments have to contain to allow developers to negotiate or provide none at all if they plead poverty. 60% of developments fall short of targets set by local councils. In London, Johnson ruled out the idea of setting a target for the percentage of new homes that should be affordable.

These companies are being handed billions of pounds of public money in subsidies. All around the country public land and buildings are being sold to private developers for sometimes almost nothing. Campaigners should make a clear stand against this land grab. Recent figures showed that there is enough public land to build two million homes, with councils owning enough for one million. Public land should be used for public good, not for the development of homes so expensive they force local people out of the area.

No alternative?

While mainstream politicians claim they are doing everything they can to tackle the housing crisis, it's clear that there are things that can be done, and in some areas, to a limited extent are being done.

Some councils, for example, provide cheap mortgages to local residents. Many councils are setting up compulsory licencing schemes for private landlords. These require landlords to meet certain requirements, for example proper referencing, not overcrowding, etc. Why don't Labour councils make a stand and include in these requirements not charging rip-off rents? We need rent control now.

Democratic committees of local people, including tenants' representatives, trade unions, and elected councillors could be set up to decide fair rent caps.

These committees could include representatives of local landlords too and allow them to make their case on what income they need. The starting point though, should be that having a decent and affordable home is a right that individual landlords should not have the power to deny.

There are one million empty homes in the UK, including 300,000 that are empty long-term. Councils have powers for compulsory purchase of such homes but hardly ever use them. Homes sitting empty for no good reason should be taken over and used to house local people.

1.7m

in England on waiting lists for council housing

And councils have borrowing powers that mean they could finance big house building programmes in every area. This funding wouldn't last forever but should be combined with campaigning for the government to divert its subsidies for private developers to the much more cost-effective and beneficial building of council housing.

Clearly, no council is carrying out all these things, but they demonstrate just a fraction of what is possible. Tackling the housing crisis could only be done with policies like these which require a head-on confrontation with government, big property developers, mass landlords and the super-rich.

But being willing to have such a confrontation is not without precedent. Look at the example of Liverpool City Council in the 1980s. Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party, played a leading role in that council. It came to power, as with councils now, when big cuts were being made to local government budgets.

Instead of meekly passing on those cuts, that council stood up and fought for the things needed by the people of Liverpool. It set a budget based on those needs, invested in jobs, housing and local services and led a mass campaign to demand the money back from central government.

Among other things Liverpool City Council demolished nearly 5,000 slum homes, built 4,800 good quality houses and bungalows, refurbished 7,400 houses and flats, and at one time had 16,000 employed on council projects including these building works. At the time Militant was part of the Labour Party. It would be hard to imagine a Labour council taking a similar stand today!

Miliband's Labour Party is trying to run the general election campaign on a pledge to tackle the 'cost of living crisis', including housing. But what they're promising is minimal, to say the least.

They say that by the end of the next parliament in 2020 200,000 homes a year will be built in Britain. They plan "up to" an extra 30,000 council houses between now and then. These figures are not enough for what's actually needed or anywhere near soon enough.

They say there will be a new formula to stop excessive rental increases – possibly

linked to average rent rises – but the average is too high! Despite Labour leaders being very keen to stress that this won't be actual rent control, the plans have been attacked by the Tories as 'Venezuelan-style rent controls'.

In Venezuela rents are set by the Ministry of Housing, at 3-5% of the total value of the property, with landlords who own more homes able to charge proportionally less. Volunteers from tenants and civil society groups have oversight on the valuation process. This is by no means perfect and as the Socialist has pointed out before, without mass, democratic workers' organisations playing an active role in organising society, government schemes will always be limited. However, it's clear that this is a long way from the minimal proposals being made by the Labour Party!

Half-hearted

If instead of his half-hearted pledges, Ed Miliband made the call now for all councils to begin the kind of policies outlined above – introducing rent controls, building council homes, making sure housing benefit covers rent, etc - and promised to back them up when Labour is in power, he could win a Labour victory in May. But he wouldn't dare to take this path.

Working class people have to rely on themselves to fight for a solution to the housing crisis. A number of local campaigns have sprung up over the last year or so.

Perhaps most notably, the Focus E15 campaign has highlighted the case of young single mothers in the east London borough of Newham who were evicted from a homeless hostel because of funding cuts by the local Labour council. Through protests, occupations and stunts, they have exposed the madness of the social cleansing taking place, particularly in the capital.

Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers in Leytonstone, east London, where residents are fighting against plans for a private developer to renovate, which will result in fewer social homes being available

This type of action needs to be replicated hundreds of times around the country, with occupations, protests and defence against eviction. We also have to link up and expand these local campaigns to become a national, political, working class movement for decent housing for all. What won improvements in the past was politicians feeling the hot breath of mass movements on the backs of their necks.

Trade unions

Some have mistakenly suggested that these impressive and vital community campaigns are replacing 'traditional' workers' methods of struggle such as strikes and other workplace organisation. But the two shouldn't be, and never have been, separate.

These campaigns should be backed up by the weight of the organised workers' movement. There are seven million workers in trade unions. That gives those organisations huge potential political and organising power. This shouldn't just mean passing motions in support of campaigns or even giving money. Unions should mobilise their members to protests, pass policy along the lines of what has been outlined here, produce material and publicise campaigns, organise educational and political meetings, and come to the defence of their members when they face housing crisis themselves.

In Scotland there was a mass campaign against the bedroom tax, organising in the estates and through big demonstrations. It forced the Scottish government to act and now bedroom tax is dead in Scotland – that shows the power that ordinary people can have when they get organised.

New party

But there has to be another side as well. Who's going to be arguing in support of such a movement in parliament and town halls around the country? Labour councils up and down the country are implementing the bedroom tax and other benefit cuts, evicting people, selling public land to be developed into luxury apartments and so on.

We don't just want to be making demands of right-wing, Eton-educated politicians who've never had to worry about rent in their lives. Workers, young people, unemployed people and housing activists should stand for election on these types of demands.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which allows people to do just that. TUSC stands for rent control and for building council housing, against the bedroom tax and all cuts to benefits, jobs and services. TUSC is a first step to a new mass party

for working class people. A party like that could put forward an entirely different way of organising society – a socialist way. How many homes could be financed if we nationalised the banks and biggest corporations and used those resources to plan a society that could satisfy the needs of all? With a society democratically run by the millions, for the millions, we could genuinely eradicate homelessness and poverty.

43%

income spent on rent by the average private renter

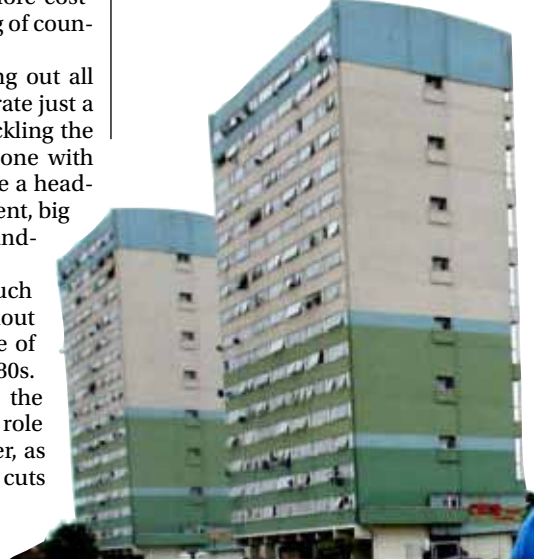
If we build both of those arms – mass struggle and a political voice, anger over the housing crisis can not only force big improvements in the housing situation but also play a role in leading to movements that change society completely to ensure that future generations never again have to worry about something as simple as a roof over their heads.

The Socialist demands:

- Rent control now! Democratic rent councils to decide fair levels in each area
- A mass programme of council house building and renovation to meet demand
- Hands off our homes! Bring all housing association stock and housing services back in-house
- Living housing benefits that reflect the real cost of renting
- Councils should use their compulsory purchase powers on long term empty properties and use them as council housing
- A new mass workers' party to fight for affordable housing for all. Stand working class candidates in May's general and local elections to fight for these policies
- Nationalise the banks and biggest corporations. For a democratic socialist society that puts the needs of the majority, including decent, affordable housing, before the profits of the tiny minority



The New Era campaign in Hackney, east London is fighting rent hikes and evictions at the hands of a US investment company which owns the estate photo Paul Mattsson



The Focus E15 Mothers campaign has highlighted social cleansing housing policies after the young women were evicted from their homeless hostel because of funding cuts

Are you a socialist?

Do you...

...stand for a minimum wage of £10 an hour now?
...agree with kicking private profit out of our NHS?
...want rent control and decent council housing?
...feel sick as the wealth of the super-rich 1% piles up while the world's 99% suffer poverty wages, joblessness and underemployment, are denied a decent education, and face death from war and curable and preventable diseases?
...agree that working class people, when organised, could run things better than big business and its politicians?

Then you're a socialist!

You need to join the Socialist Party!



Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Socialist Party national organiser

We need you to help with our latest campaign. We have set ourselves the goal of 100 new members by the end of 2014. If you're not a member of the Socialist Party, please consider joining now.

If you're already a member, we need your help too. You could start by asking all those people you know - at work, in your trade union, on your street, in your family - if they agree with us.

Do they want to join the socialists too?

Angry

In the last week alone, more than 20 people took that step. They went from being angry individuals to members of an organisation that unites working class people, young people and all who stand for an alternative to the misery of capitalism.

Socialists are not simply aware of the gross inequality and injustices visited on the lives of millions of

people. We propose an alternative way of running society in the interests of the overwhelming majority, and a strategy to change the world - based on the enormous potential strength of the working class.

We ask members to be as active as they can, promoting socialist ideas in their workplaces, trade unions, colleges and communities.

Building

Members also pay a financial contribution to help build our party. Big business pours money into the parties that do its bidding; we get our financial backing from the people we fight for and struggle alongside - the working class.

There is a role for everyone in the Socialist Party. Taking on an organising position in your local branch, spreading socialist ideas, participating in campaigns, to asking the questions that help everyone understand things better.

If you agree we need to change the world, joining the Socialist Party is the best thing you can do!



Get in touch today!

We'll arrange a meeting with one of our members to get you signed up.

- Text "JOIN" with name and postcode to 0776 1818 206
- Email join@socialistparty.org.uk
- Call us on 020 8988 8777
- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- Write to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Council beaten on austerity tax

Brent Kennedy
Carlisle Socialist Party

Cumbria's Labour-Lib Dem council has been forced into a humiliating defeat over part of its austerity budget.

Local Socialist Party members played a leading role in organising the campaign against unfair compulsory parking charges.

There can be no doubt that the highpoint of this opposition was the 150-strong public meeting of "Denton Holme Stop the Parking Tax" we organised.

Local Socialist Party members systematically leafleted the work-

ing class area of Denton Holme. Residents spontaneously collected signatures from neighbours on

This shows councils can be forced to retreat if enough pressure is applied

their own petitions. In addition to the meeting, we organised the street protest outside the council offices, and successfully spread the message through local press and regional TV.

In the words of the local News and Star: "For long enough the fight was deemed futile by a council determined to see through its plans to claw back cash when faced with massive central government funding cuts."

"But overwhelming public opinion is never futile." This shows that the council can be forced to retreat if enough pressure is applied.

Of course the council will now look for other ways to take money off the working class. But this small victory sets a positive precedent - in particular for local government unions facing 1,800 job cuts in the area.

TUSC says no to cuts in Notts

Karen Seymour
Mansfield Socialist Party

Not everyone is happy about the Netherfield by-election on 4 December.

One independent councillor complained it would cost too much to hold. In between now and May, residents should take any issues to the Labour councillor in neighbouring Warsop!

It must have slipped his mind that in early 2015 Nottinghamshire county council will vote on millions of pounds of cuts.

I have been selected as the TUSC candidate (see box below) for the

election. On the doorstep, people like our message - no cuts.

Fed up

They're fed up with their local bus service being cut back - again. Their doctors' surgery is rumoured to be under threat.

Their fire station always seems to be first in line for closure when cuts are considered. A strong local campaign saved it - this time.

Labour and Ukip, my opponents, wouldn't think twice about cutting these essential services.

Netherfield deserves a councillor who will fight their relentless attacks.



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

Way to go, Watford!

Hatfield Socialist Party members have collected around 900 signatures and £200 of fighting fund. In the last four months we have led campaigns on issues including bus service cuts and Israel's blockade of Gaza.

Members joined TUSC supporters and the Watford and Three Riv-

ers Anti-Cuts Union to petition Watford's Tory MP Richard Harrington on 22 November.

Local trade union branches, community campaigners and the Watford Friends of Salfet (a town in Palestine) have expressed their support.
Richard Shattock



photo Rob Williams

Residents of Cressingham Gardens in Lambeth, south London, face losing their homes to threatened "regeneration". Coincidentally, the estate sits next to Brockwell Park - a prime location for luxury accommodation.

Elsewhere in the borough, sheltered

housing tenants in Leigham Court could also be turfed out to make way for yuppie flats.

Lambeth Socialist Party members and TUSC supporters (see box above right) have worked closely with the Leigham Court campaign. We are also

discussing with representatives from Cressingham Gardens.

TUSC joined both campaigns on a 100-strong lobby of Lambeth council's full meeting on 19 November (picture above).

James Ivens

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	October to December 2014	Deadline 5 January 2015
East Midlands	1,600	1,947	■	■
Eastern	1,200	300	■	■
London	6,100	3,319	■	■
North West	1,200	1,093	■	■
Northern	600	540	■	■
South East	750	1,014	■	■
South West	1,400	592	■	■
Southern	1,200	844	■	■
Wales	2,300	2,357	■	■
West Midlands	2,100	2,564	■	■
Yorkshire	2,900	2,436	■	■
England and Wales	3,650	3,292	■	■
TOTAL	25,000	20,297	■	■



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/CWISocialistParty

Ireland: establishment attacks anti-water charges protests

But movement stronger than ever

See socialistparty.ie for up-to-date analysis and reports from the movement in Ireland

Socialist Party (CWI Ireland)

On 14 November, an anti-water charges protest took place in Jobstown, Tallaght against Labour Tánaiste (Irish deputy prime minister) Joan Burton. Protesters, including Socialist Party member and Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA) TD (member of parliament) Paul Murphy, blocked Burton's car for two and a half hours. During the protest the police tried to violently drag protesters away, targeting Paul Murphy in particular.

Following this the entire media, government and establishment went into overdrive. They cast the community, AAA, the Socialist Party, and Paul Murphy, as being a violent, anti-democratic mob.

This was a spontaneous mobilisation of hundreds of people in the community. When word spread that Joan Burton was in the area, it was inevitable that the raw anger and disgust people feel, particularly at Labour's sell-out, was going to be expressed.

Exaggeration

The events are being consciously exaggerated. The Taoiseach (prime minister) Enda Kenny ridiculously said that in effect that Joan Burton had been kidnapped.

Paul Murphy has been accused of multiple crimes including, disgracefully, incitement to hatred and leading a mob. The reality is that Paul was one of the victims of a very heavy-handed approach by the police. There is video evidence that their actions caused him to be choked and to end up bare chested after his clothes were dragged off him.

82%

polls show 60% - 82% will not pay water charges

The coverage of this protest and in particular the demonisation of Paul Murphy, the Socialist Party and AAA, has dominated the news since. We and the community of Jobstown have nothing to apologise for. It is not the working class fighting back that is the threat to democracy, but politicians and parties that break their promises when in power. If they think it's business as usual and

that government politicians will be welcomed regardless of the policies they are implementing, they are making a bad mistake.

The equating, by a Fine Gael TD in the Dáil (parliament), of the protest in Jobstown and Paul Murphy's role to that of the Islamic State is disgusting. The idea has also been put that the people of Jobstown, the Socialist Party and other activists are part of a dangerous "sinister fringe".

But these attempts are failing. An online poll found 49% disagreed with the protest, 45% agreed and the rest didn't know.

Paul Murphy's strong defence of the community of Jobstown in the media, powerfully backed up by Socialist Party TDs Ruth Coppinger and Joe Higgins, has had an important impact in exposing the distortions. Paul has been warmly welcomed at meetings since the protest, including receiving spontaneous applause when entering the room.

There is a significant prospect that the water charges will be an intractable crisis for this government

Neither has the government had success with their attempt to make the water charges acceptable. They have made major cuts to the bills, delayed the start date, suspended metered bills, and are giving €100 back to people if they register with Irish Water.

But it is widely understood that the lower charge would be increased once accepted and so the campaign to completely scrap the charges must continue. Recent polls show anywhere from 60% to 82% planning not to pay.

Government

There is a significant prospect that the water charges will be an intractable crisis for this government, and could even lead to its collapse. The activists who have emerged in this new sweeping movement should consider what they can do to ensure that people are given a real choice in the election, whenever it may be. We need a fighting, working class and genuinely left alternative.

If a slate or umbrella stood on the programme below, it could achieve a huge breakthrough:

- Mass non-payment of water charges
- Scrap the water charges and all the new taxes and charges
- No support for coalition government with the parties of the capitalist establishment
- For a government that breaks with austerity and capitalism - put the key economic resources under democratic public ownership to ensure people come before profit

On this basis a strong and principled working class left could emerge out of the next general election, not just as a force in the Dáil but as a real force in the communities and the workplaces. The political situation in the country could be completely changed. Such a force could put a real fight for genuine democratic socialist change on the agenda.



Paul Murphy (centre) and others on an anti-water charges protest

Anger grows over missing Mexican students

Dave Carr

Led by the families of the 43 students who disappeared two months ago, thousands of protesters marched through Mexico City on 20 November to demand answers and action from the government.

In a country where, in the last decade of a failed 'war on drugs' over 100,000 people have been killed and 20,000 gone missing, the fate of the 43 students has galvanised the population against violence and political corruption.

As one political commentator pointed out: "It's the most severe crisis that the country has experienced in the last 20 years. It's a sort of catharsis in which everything is rotten; government, parties, the economy, etc. Patience with (Mexican President Enrique) Peña Nieto has reached its bottom."

Adding to ordinary Mexicans' disgust at the political establishment, a new scandal has emerged over first lady Angelica Rivera's \$7 million mansion, which was reportedly purchased through a loan from a government contractor. Anger over the widening inequality in Mexico has also fuelled the protests.

Attack

It was on 26 September when a bus carrying student teachers from Ayotzinapa to a protest over discriminatory hiring practices and funding of rural colleges was stopped by police under orders from the mayor of Iguala, Jose Luis Abarca.

Six students were shot dead by police at the scene and 43 handed over to a local drugs gang who, according to the authorities, then murdered them and incinerated the bodies.

The authorities say the mayor ran Iguala as a local fiefdom and was in the pay of the drugs gang. He had ordered the police to intercept the



Protests are continuing two months after the students disappeared

students because they intended to disrupt an event where the mayor's wife was speaking. Both the mayor and his wife then went on the run before being captured.

Justice?

Over 70 people have been held over the murders and abductions but given the thousands of other unsolved kidnapping crimes, many doubt whether the authorities will deliver justice.

Protesters also point out that it took two weeks before Mexico's president made any statement about the student disappearances. The father of a missing student, Felipe de la Cruz, has criticised the government's response: "They've been trying to fool us. They've not been carrying out a proper search", he said.

Like many areas of Mexico, Guerrero state has a recent history of political violence. Student campaigners, viewed as left-wing subversives by the authorities and as a threat by organised criminals, have previously been gunned down.

Vigilante groups have sprung up in parts of the country because of the failure of the government and police to tackle gang-related crime. The militias have blamed police for collaborating with the gangs.

The US Obama administration has remained tight-lipped about the current protests, yet it and its predecessor governments have spent billions of dollars supporting Mexican governments' 'war on drugs'. This is despite the Global Commission on Drug Policy concluding that "repressive measures will not solve the drugs problem" and that "the war on drugs has not, and cannot, be won". Indeed, there is clear evidence that the US's drugs war has actually deepened and perpetuated the violence.

Causes

Criminal violence is also fed by inequality, poverty and corruption. In the absence of decent education provision and jobs there is a 'lost generation' of young people who are lured into working for criminal gangs.

The improvement of young people's lives depends on major spending reforms. But such reforms are opposed by capitalist politicians who instead advocate shrinkage of the welfare state and who see the role of the state as simply a financial guarantor for capitalism.

The students' tragedy underscores the impasse in capitalist society and the need for socialist policies through a socialist government.

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

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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

Derby's day at the movies

Derby TUSC supporters went to see the excellent film 'Still the enemy within' recently, giving out the new national TUSC leaflets. One moment in the film brought a lump to my throat.

A tramp goes up to a striking miner holding a collection bucket saying: "I only got 7p, here is 5p for your collection." The miner with tears in his eyes reached into the bucket got a fistful of money and gave it to the tramp saying "here you need it more than us".

After the film there was a question and answer session with the producer and a striking miner in the film. The ex-miner said that today the parties are all the same. He said he was now a teacher but would like to get involved in TUSC. Then a woman from Doncaster whose mother was in the film told me: "I went to Socialism 2014 and will be joining the Socialist Party."

Chris Fernandez

whose property values (which in most cases will never be realised) will rise and let people live in overcrowded and sub-standard accommodation as a result

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

**Housing problem solvable**

The estate agents, Savills, have just concluded a study that found that the government owns enough land to build two million houses or a decade's supply of new housing.

Clearly they could make a major contribution to solving Britain's housing shortage but they would rather leave the land undeveloped, create a shortage and allow developers to make a killing, appeal to the greed of homeowners

Viral soviets?

A recent TV documentary 'The Long Shadow', aimed to show how World War One spurred on 'nationalism', 'democracy', 'communism' and 'fascism'. Presenter, Oxford historian Professor David Reynolds, is an 'expert' claiming to be 'without bias' yet his own viewpoints become obvious.

Reynolds (briefly) told how Russian workers and peasants rose up and took power via the many soviets or workers' councils. He said the soviets (the power behind the world's first workers' state) 'spread like a virus', as if it was a disease.

That showed Reynolds' opinion of the 1917 revolution, one of the greatest events in human history. Socialists are always misrepresented, smeared or ignored by the capitalist media. That's why our workers' press, the Socialist and Socialism Today is so important. We're openly for workers and youth, and for a democratic socialist society.

Chris Robinson
Merseyside

Video game review

Assassin's Creed Unity



The game is set during the French Revolution

Iain Dalton reviews
Assassin's Creed Unity

This year is the 225th anniversary of the beginning of the French Revolution. It forms the backdrop to one of this year's popular Assassin's Creed series of games.

Revisionist

Unfortunately, the game follows the standard revisionist history of the revolution. It tries to separate out the early phases of the revolution (bringing "liberté, égalité, fraternité") from the 'Reign of Terror'. They show this later period merely as madness rather than the logic of an isolated revolution desperate for survival against both the armies of European feudalism and internal grain speculators.

Its skewed portrayal of the revolution drew criticism from leading figures in the Parti du Gauche (left party) in France, who

call it 'propaganda' portraying the French masses as bloodthirsty murderers while showing sympathy for King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

It also contrasts their treatment of the US War of Independence in Assassin's Creed III. In that game you played from the perspective of a half-Native American taking the side of the revolution, but also saw its limits, with slavery continuing and the virtual annihilation of the Native American population.

Innovative

Despite this, the heady atmosphere of revolution soaks through the game. Huge crowds line the Paris streets, in taverns revolutionary songs are sung.

Some of the side 'missions' try to slightly amend the distorted view of the revolution given by the main narrative - a mission where you solve the murder of the Jacobin Marat springs to mind.

Technically, the game pushes the boat out - both in the scale of Paris and integrating cooperative game play into it rather than a separate add-on. This is innovative, but also potentially lucrative with companion apps and websites to unlock extra features, but at a small cost.

Masses

Yet, as with most video games, the game focuses on the individual player and history revolves around them. The crowds look and feel epic, but they are largely passive rather than active participants in any struggle. A game that integrated the player with the movement of the mass would truly be groundbreaking.

As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky commented "The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historical events." By these standards, Assassin's Creed Unity didn't feel revolutionary enough for me.

Book review

The People Speak: Democracy is not a spectator sport

Pete Mason

Google up The People Speak: Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport and you find a BBC news video. Actor Colin Firth tells a large audience, through playwright Harold Pinter's words, why Tony Blair and George Bush should be in the international criminal court for mass murder!

Firth was inspired by US historian Howard Zinn's documentary project, A People's History of the United States, to develop it for a UK theatre audience in 2010.

The People Speak, by Colin Firth, Anthony Arnone, and David Horspool, now out in paperback, begins with the monk Orderic Vitalis condemning the 'Norman Yoke' of the 1066 Norman Conquest.

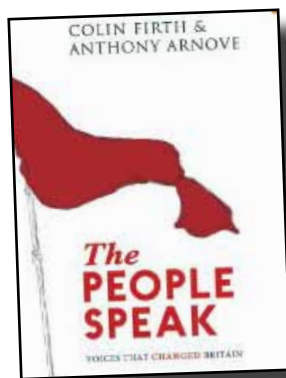
It includes a brief, moving account from Edinburgh pensioner Nellie in 1990, who defied the poll tax, in

a mass movement led by Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party. Up to a fifth of Britain's population defied the tax, and Nellie was one of the first organisers of the Gorgie/Dalry anti-Poll Tax Union in a movement which removed hated Prime Minister Thatcher from power.

Voices

Nellie's account says, 'I won't be paying my poll tax, no way, even if I had to go to jail'. The 69 year-old details how she had lost all her four children during her hard life, how the pits and the factories had closed. "The poll tax is the final straw."

The epic Liverpool city council struggle of 1983-87 is overlooked, and the great miners' strike of 1984-85 gets only one excerpt, but this is a huge project. The Cable Street battle, the 1888 Matchgirls' strike, the Handloom Weavers Lament, an anonymous



'Walthamstow Anti-Slavery' epistle, Engels' Condition of the Working Class in England - this reflects 1,000 voices struggling against injustice.

As Firth says "I hope these voices - socialists, anarchists, agitators, Chartists, suffragists, Lollards or Levellers - serve as a reminder that much of what we feel entitled to today... began as treason."

The People Speak: democracy is not a spectator sport £7.99 paperback

NHS campaigners must fight all cuts

On the NHS Jarrow March, I spoke to one of the organisers. The march was creating incredible awareness about selling off the NHS. I said we must oppose all cuts, that the anti-cuts movement and all defenders of the NHS should be clear that the NHS isn't deemed as more important than other services offered.

The organiser then said that, although many agree with that position, the march was in fact a single issue campaign solely to defend the NHS.

Knock-on effect

But, working as a student nurse on the wards, you can see how cuts to other services have a direct effect on the NHS. Numerous hospital beds countrywide are filled with medically fit patients in beds because there aren't the care packages in place to safely discharge them. Cuts to services for those with mental illnesses resulted in



photo Senan

an increase in hospital admissions with increased medical problems.

This is a direct result of a lack of support. A lack of homeless support and shelters will result in more avoidable hospital admissions as people are forced to sleep on the streets due to the crisis of capitalism.

Cuts to what are termed as 'luxury services' show they are key in delivering effective care to society. All campaigners should stand united in calling for no cuts to any services.

Matt Whale

Education under threat: “a hurricane of ill thought through initiatives”

Phil Clarke

Teacher, Brighton Socialist Party

In a 2010 election manifesto, the young people, teachers and parents of Britain were promised this:

A Conservative government will give many more children access to the kind of education that is currently only available to the well-off: safe classrooms, talented and specialist teachers, access to the best curriculum and exams, and smaller schools with smaller class sizes with teachers who know the children's names.



Looking back at the last four years of education policy, I believe we can write this pledge more accurately. I would suggest the following:



A Conservative government will give many more children the kind of education that is best for the market. Free schools and academies will further our long term desire for profit making schools.

The well-off, safe in private education, will be sheltered from this hurricane of ill thought through initiatives - as they always have been.

Requirements to be qualified will be stripped away. Because we do not need talented and specialist teachers - after all, anyone can walk into a school and teach can't they?

The curriculum and exams will not only be endlessly changed, but narrowed to be about 'British values'. We will shrink access to the



Gove: state education snatcher photo Iain Dalton

arts, music and vocational education. Because let's be honest, if you're not academically minded at 16, you're not going to help us in the league tables, are you?

Smaller schools will be eaten up by large academy chains out to stake their claim on future opportunities to make profit. So what if they are unaccountable to any local community, and even remain uninspected by Ofsted? We can't have a situation where mere financial mismanagement and poor leadership undermine our policy!

Class sizes will continue to be high. And just to be sure children are treated as data rather than human beings, we are going to crank up teacher workload to ever increasing levels.

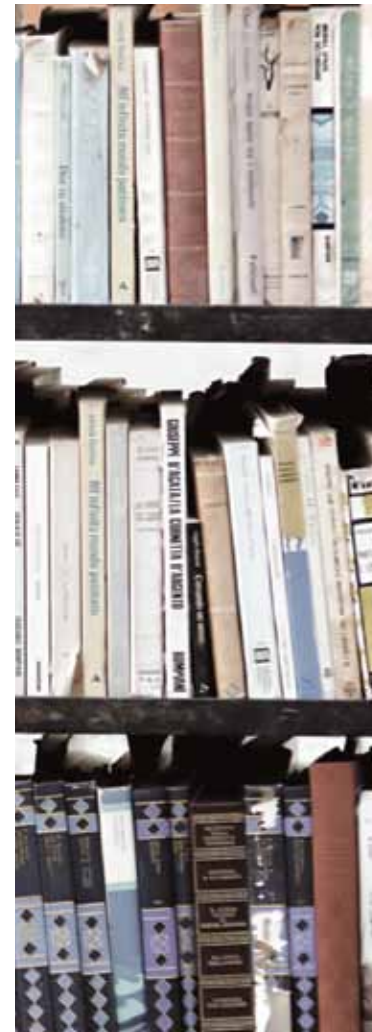
Detailed planning, a new ini-

tiative or priority every week, increased testing, endless appraisal targets and tearing up workload protection - we will make sure teachers are unable to recall even their own names.

Oh, and by the way, we will also raise tuition fees to create a lifetime of debt for students. And we will make it easier to sack teachers - even though two out of five quit within five years.

Teachers will have to compete for pay rises. We will stop them being able to move schools without fearing a pay cut.

And we will make Michael Gove so hated by the profession that hundreds of thousands of teachers will undertake strike action with more anger and passion than ever before - then we will sack him.



I should for balance mention something of the Labour manifesto for the coming election. I am expecting it to look something like this:



Labour agrees with all the policies carried out by the Tory-led government. We would only add that we think teachers do not really care about their students.

So we will make them take an oath promising to do their job.

Oh, and we will give them a compass - a symbol for the moral compass they must be for young people. After all, we have no use for ours anymore.

A day in the life of a teacher

Nicky

Primary school teacher

6.00am: coffee and browsing for education news.

8.00: arrive at school. Planning will have been done on Sunday or the weeknight before. The expectation is that planning is done daily to reflect learning from the day before. This makes it very difficult to have evenings out. Check emails. Get resources ready.

8.40: children arrive in school. I listen to readers if possible. But at the moment I'm supposed to have structured conversations with 13 sets of parents by next week. Each takes 15 minutes.

9.00: one to one maths tutoring.

Gaps widen

9.30: maths target group. The teaching part of my job is the easiest and by far the most enjoyable. However, the expectations for accelerated and wider learning are unrealistic. It usually takes two to three lessons to embed each new concept - I'm supposed to do it in one. The gap between children's achievement and what they are expected to achieve widens.

10.30: break. Not on duty so able to grab a coffee. Pop in to see nurture group which I also have responsibility for planning. Check emails.

10.45: literacy. I used to have a small group of children newly arrived from other countries or with specific special needs. Now the move is towards "quality first teaching". This means these children are taught within a class of 30. My job is to make sure they can access the curriculum. There are currently 20 children needing my help

I spend on average two hours a night working at home, and all day Sunday

across three classes, and I can't be in all classes at the same time. At least once every day I feel frustrated I can't do more.

11.45: phonics group. I love my group; they really enjoy the structure of the lessons and make progress. Unfortunately this is not seen in other areas of the curriculum. We are beginning to phase it out.

12.20pm: lunchtime. Usually spend most of it discussing the needs of individual students with colleagues, and marking work. I make sure I eat though - some do not even do that!

1.15: once a week I teach another year group to cover for planning, preparation and assessment

time. We have extra teachers in my school to ensure this is covered by qualified staff. We are no longer supposed to cover, but the arrangement works for us. Covering a class is difficult, but it's much harder to manage behaviour if you do not know the children. I've prepared reading activities, a whiteboard flip and planned a creative writing session. This is followed by singing assembly which is, fortunately, led by someone else.

3.15: speak to parents; home time for children.

3.30: staff training on the new science curriculum. Our training is usually good; we were a teaching school but gave it up this year. Too tired to enjoy today's though.

Homework

4.30-6.00: I usually stay in school until the caretaker throws me out. If I do that I don't have to carry books home to mark.

7.00-9.00: I spend on average two hours a night working at home, and all day Sunday. I know some teachers who spend much longer, mostly on data driven tasks. I've been teaching for twenty years so I know the shortcuts, and won't do tasks I think are irrelevant.

Total daily work: ten to 12 hours Monday to Friday; five hours Sunday.

Total weekly work: about 60 hours.

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A programme for decent education

Socialist Party demands include:

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age
- No to creeping privatisation: bring academies and 'free schools' back into public ownership
- Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant
- Full funding of vocational and artistic courses alongside traditional academic subjects
- Abolish Ofsted: for democratic accountability of schools to teachers, parents and communities - not political tools to undermine state education

Martin Powell-Davies, science teacher and Socialist Party member, sits on the national executive committee of the National Union of Teachers. In June 2014 he won over 10,000 votes as general secretary candidate of the union's grassroots Local Associations National Action Campaign. Martin stood for:

- A calendar of action, not isolated strike days
- A life outside school, real limits on workload
- End performance pay, win back our pensions
- Organise a strong union in every workplace
- Build unity in schools to take united action
- Sharpen our message, reach out to parents
- Reclaim education from damaging 'reforms'

HANDS

OFF

OUR



The deepening staffing and funding crisis in the National Health Service (NHS) is causing hospital Accident and Emergency departments (A&Es) to be stretched to breaking point. Yet, as **Bob Severn** shows in examples from London, hospital trusts in England are being bled dry by for-profit PFI privatisation schemes.

The A&E at Queen's hospital in Romford, east London, is struggling to cope with 120 ambulance calls a day - the highest in the capital. But the NHS trust has a long term solution... close its other hospital!

In 50 of the last 53 months, Queen's has failed to meet NHS treatment time targets. In one week alone, 935 patients waited longer than four hours. But the Barking, Havering and Redbridge (BHR) NHS Trust still plans, with the proviso that Queen's performance 'improves', to close the A&E at its sec-

ond hospital, King George in Ilford.

Maybe the east London trust should take a hint from west London. A&E delays have rocketed to the worst level in England at Northwick Park and Ealing hospitals following the closure of neighbouring A&Es at Hammersmith and Central Middlesex hospitals.

But the closure of King George, signed off by then-health minister Andrew Lansley in 2011, is still set to go ahead - though now delayed beyond 2015 due to the state of Queen's.

Why does King George A&E have

to close? Because of the trust's £38 million debt. And where does that debt come from? The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) construction of Queen's in 2004, resulting in the trust paying £20 million a year in interest alone.

PFI's are like taking a mortgage from Wonga. These high-interest schemes were first used under John Major's Tory government in the early 1990s then massively expanded under the Blair and Brown reigns of New Labour.

Total PFI deals in the NHS up to 2012 will, if paid in full, have a total cost of almost £80 billion - £68.4 billion of which is interest. The only people to benefit are the fat cat financiers and corporate bosses.

The BHR trust is also spending £100,000 a week on A&E agency staff. But the Con-Dems have cut NHS and social care staff by 132,000

since 2010, and reduced nurse training places by 7,400. All part of the Con-Dem's £20 billion NHS 'efficiency savings' since 2010. And cuts are set to continue.

East London Socialist Party has long campaigned against the closure of King George A&E - including against two proposals under the Labour government which were beaten by mass opposition and demonstrations. We say: axe PFI, cuts and privatisation, not King George!

We demand:

- No to hospital A&E closures
- Scrap PFI and reverse all NHS privatisation
- Bin the Health and Social Care Act (England) - the 'privatising charter'
- A decent living wage for all NHS workers
- Tax the super-rich and nationalise the giant banks and corporations to give the NHS the funding it needs

● Private health firms are expecting over £9 billion in NHS contracts if they continue to win 50% of the total value of tendered services, according to the NHS Support Federation. Profiteers with their hand on NHS money include Bupa, Virgin Care and Care UK.

● Charing Cross and Ealing hospitals A&Es will be axed and replaced by inferior 'treatment centres', with the possibility that Charing Cross's landmark 16-story tower block building being sold off to private property developers. Imperial College NHS Trust, which runs Charing Cross hospital, has already agreed to sell off more than half its Fulham Palace Road site and cut 336 of the hospital's 360 inpatient beds.

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 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!