



Osborne's savage cuts...

NO RETURN TO THE 1930s



- For a huge national anti-austerity demonstration
- Unions must prepare for mass coordinated industrial action

Steve Score

The Tories plan to send us back to the 1930s. The Office for Budget Responsibility said public spending levels will be thrown back 80 years if Osborne's Autumn Statement plans are implemented. Politicians say we must all take cuts in our living standards and downgrade what we expect from public services.

But austerity doesn't stretch to everyone. The House of Lords rejected a plan to save money by merging catering services with the Commons. Why? Because they "feared the quality of champagne would not be as good"! The House of Lords spends £1.3 million a year on catering. In four years it

bought 17,000 bottles of champagne costing £265,770.

So when you can't pay your bills because your real income has been cut year after year, or if Christmas makes your debts unmanageable, comfort yourself by knowing that the Lords will still have good champers to drink at your expense.

Last year the wealth of Britain's richest thousand people rose £68 billion. That's more than the amount the Tories plan to cut from public spending. 'Austerity' is a class war, pursued for the super-rich by their paid servants - the main political parties.

The chancellor's autumn statement cut tax on the oil companies' profits, costing us £470 million over the next parliament. Is it coincidence that the oil industry has given the

Tories £2.5 million in donations since 2010?

Despite its protestations, Labour would make the same cuts, but slightly slower. Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls said: "There will be cuts under Labour. I do not just want the current budget back into balance, I want it back into surplus... as soon as possible in the next parliament."

In recent years we have seen a massive squeeze on working class people's living standards. Benefits, wages, job security and guaranteed hours of work, as well as the NHS and other public services have been hammered.

But this is nothing compared with what is to come. 1930s levels of services would take us back to the days before the NHS, before the welfare state. We are now in the fight of

our lives to defend these gains.

We can't wait until the general election to start that fight. The union leaders should immediately meet to organise action - starting with a mass demonstration as soon as possible in the New Year to defend the NHS, the welfare state and all our public services. Plans for a one day general strike should be drawn up to show whatever government comes to power in May that we will not tolerate this devastation.

But we also need a mass political party of our own, one that will fight for the alternative to austerity. This is why we support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition standing in next year's elections to show that a socialist alternative is possible.

See pages 6&7 on fighting the cuts

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Europe: a new wave of workers' struggle has begun

Once again workers are in revolt against "elderly and haggard" European capitalism - as the Pope accurately described it. Six years into 'the Great Recession' austerity and mass unemployment has become permanent continent wide. Across the EU there are over eighteen million looking for work and unable to find it. Youth unemployment is a massive 23%, in Greece and Spain it is 50%. In the first years of the crisis the working class came onto the streets in country after country in heroic struggle, attempting to defend working and living conditions. These movements were defeated not due to lack of determination but because their leaders failed them. Workers lacked the democratic structures or mass working class organisations, both trade unions and mass workers' parties, to pressurise or remove and replace their existing leaders.

Aftermath

In the aftermath of this first round of the battle against austerity there was a pause in the struggle, as workers drew breath and assessed the situation. Inevitably, there was a feeling of demoralisation in some countries, even elements of despair, allowing reactionary and divisive ideas room to grow. However, that phase is now coming to an end. The hope that the crisis might be temporary is fading as Europe once again faces recession and - in several countries - workers have drawn the conclusion that the only way forward is to fight back. Of course features of reaction remain to some extent in all countries, and not everywhere has yet been touched by the new upsurge of struggle. However, the mighty struggles sweeping Ireland and Belgium, the electoral uprising that took place in Scotland's Independence referendum, and the important political developments in Spain, are a portent of what is coming continent wide. All of them are examples of how fast events will develop once the enormous anger and frustration that exists below the surface of society finds a viable outlet.

In Belgium the capitalist class had not, up until now, dared to launch austerity on the scale of most other European countries, for

fear of the response it would invoke from the working class. Now - belatedly - the new government is trying carry out Thatcherism on steroids. In response the trade union leaders began by calling a national demonstration - which was a huge 150,000 strong (in a country of 11 million) - the biggest demonstration since 1986. There have since been three regional 24 hour general strikes, which is culminating in a national 24-hour general strike on 15 December (see socialistworld.net for reports).

These have not been 'stay at home' general strikes. Mass workplace meetings to discuss the strike have been organised in many workplaces. Press reports said that in East Flanders alone there were 500 picket lines, involving 10,000 pickets. This is the first time in this historical era in Europe that general strike action has been called by the union leaders not just to 'let off steam' but with some intent to win, and even to bring down the government. The magnificent response of the Belgian working class shows what is possible if the union leaders lift their little fingers. The mood of the strikers is one of determination to take the struggle to its conclusion. The trade union leaders - frightened by the power of the movement they have unleashed - may try and retreat, but this would not be easy. The sister party of the Socialist Party - Linkse Socialistische Partij/Parti Socialiste de Lutte - is campaigning for a new round of action in the new year, culminating in a 48-hour general strike.

Warning

It is also sounding a warning that the fall of the government would not mean an end to austerity. The trade union leaders are hoping for a return to the tri-partite alliance government involving social democracy. Such a government, however, while it might cut more slowly, would carry out fundamentally the same policies as the current axe men and women. But they would be faced with an enormously emboldened and more confident working class that had seen off one government, and would not accept a diet of massive austerity from the next. The need for a new mass workers' party - to give political expres-



Striking firefighters in Belgium photo LSP/PSL

sion to the mighty movement of the Belgian working class, will be urgently posed.

Whereas in Belgium the trade union leaders have been forced to act, in Ireland - as in many countries - they have utterly failed to do so. But the magnificent movement against the water charges in Ireland shows the limits to how far the trade union leaders can act as a block on struggle. Faced with the iniquitous water charges Ireland has erupted in huge demonstrations. The capitalist media which previously sneered at the Irish people as 'sheeple' - as passive as sheep - are now decrying them as 'the mob' because they have dared to rise from their knees.

The Socialist Party - our sister organisation - including their three TDs (members of parliament), have made a clear call for mass non-payment of the tax. In opinion polls around 60% of the population have indicated they will not pay the tax. The government has already been shaken by the scale of the movement and has been forced to announce a reduction in the tax and a delay in its implementation.

Confidence

This, however, can give confidence to the movement, showing complete victory is possible. In Ireland, as in Belgium, the question of a political alternative to austerity is posed. The government could fall at any time. The Socialist Party and the Anti-Austerity Alliance are calling for candidates to stand from the anti-water charges movement - standing not only for the scrapping of the water charges, but for a government that breaks with austerity and capitalism.

New movements are also developing in other countries. A general strike is taking place in Italy against the attacks being carried out by the Renzi government. Huge demonstrations have swept Hungary. A public sector strike is on the cards in Northern Ireland. At the same time - in almost every country - the capitalist parties are losing their ability to govern effectively on behalf of their class; because to act in the interests of capitalism is to be increasingly hated by the majority. The old channels through which politics flowed are being smashed up. This is the case in Britain - where the next government looks likely to be a fragile coalition of the 'slightly less unpopular'. Even 'stable' Sweden has seen its government collapse within three months of being elected.

As the existing capitalist parties' base of

support crumbles there is a huge space for the development of new forces with an anti-austerity programme. In Greece, the left party Syriza is likely to win the next election, which could take place within weeks if the parliament fails to elect a new President. So desperate are the capitalist class to prevent this they have set up a fund to bribe Greek MPs to the tune of millions of euros in order to avoid a general election. This does not represent a fear of the leadership of Syriza, which has moved to the right and has attempted to promise Greek and global capitalism it is not a threat, but of the mighty movement it would invoke from the Greek working class as it attempted to take back what has been stolen from it over the last years.

In some other countries the absence of mass parties of the left has left a vacuum which far-right and right-wing populist forces have been able to partially fill in the electoral field. They have only been able to do so by - to one extent or another - adopting left 'anti-capitalist' rhetoric. It is not even completely ruled out in France that the leader of the far-right Marine Le Pen could win a future Presidential election. Were she to do so, or even appear poised to do so, this would lead to mass demonstrations and even strikes which would have some comparison to the huge movement of 1934 against fascism in France.

New movements

New movements of the left can also develop very quickly. Podemos in Spain did not exist a year ago and is now topping in opinion polls on 28%. We will see similar developments in other countries as the workers and young people fighting against austerity draw the conclusion that, if they are to win, they also need a political voice. A capitalist Europe's future is one of decline. The Euro crisis is not over, on the contrary, as national tensions increase it will explode again resulting, at a certain stage, in the fracturing of the Eurozone.

The working class of Europe entered the Great Recession unprepared for the all-out war that the ruling class waged on its living standards. Nonetheless, it fought back heroically. The lessons of those first battles are beginning to be digested, and is preparing the ground not only for the next round of struggle, but also for millions to begin to recognise that there is an alternative to capitalism - a democratic socialist federation of Europe.



Marching against water charges in Dublin

Season's greetings from the Socialist!

This is the Socialist's last issue of 2014. The next issue is out on Thursday 8 January 2015.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our readers and

supporters, new and old.

If you're reading this and haven't yet subscribed - or are still looking for gift ideas - please see the box on the right. Now's your chance!

From everyone at the Socialist newspaper and Socialist Party: here's a to a happy and restful winter's break, and a militant and victorious 2015!

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Housing crisis Tenants can resist Scrooge landlords

Claire-Laker Mansfield

Last month, evictions hit record-breaking levels. According to the homelessness charity Shelter, more than 1,300 people are put at risk of repossession or eviction every day. The result is that tens of thousands are facing the prospect of a 'festive season' spent in a bed and breakfast accommodation. Worse still, many will find themselves on the streets.

This is the bitter cold reality of British capitalism in 2014. The cause?... a perfect storm of skyrocketing rents and house prices, insecure work and paltry wages, welfare cuts, benefit sanctions and more.

Clearly the 'spirit of goodwill' we are encouraged to display at Christmas is not taken too seriously by fat-cat private landlords or profit hungry employers. These real-life Scrooges of the 21st century see throwing a family out of their home a simple matter of good business.



New Era Estate tenants taking on a corporate giant photo Paul Mattsson

Revenge evictions

And it's not just those whose circumstances mean they can't afford to pay the rent that face bailiffs. A growing number - estimated at 218,000 in the last year - are threatened with what have been termed 'revenge evictions.'

These refer to cases where tenants are booted out of their homes for having the temerity to draw attention to the need for repairs and improvements. The thousands of pounds landlords charge a month apparently doesn't entitle tenants to demand basic standards of safety and dignity.

But this year, the flurry of media stories highlighting the issue of

Christmas homelessness (in reality, a problem all year around), have had a somewhat different flavour to usual. The reason is that 2014 has seen a wave of housing campaigns led by working class people fighting for their right to a decent home.

From the heroic Focus E15 mums, whose determined campaign has forced Newham's Labour-run council to pledge to re-open some (perfectly good but disused) social housing, albeit on short-term leases; to the New Era estate campaigners defiantly taking on an American corporate giant and staying-put. It's clear that a mood to resist this nightmare is growing.

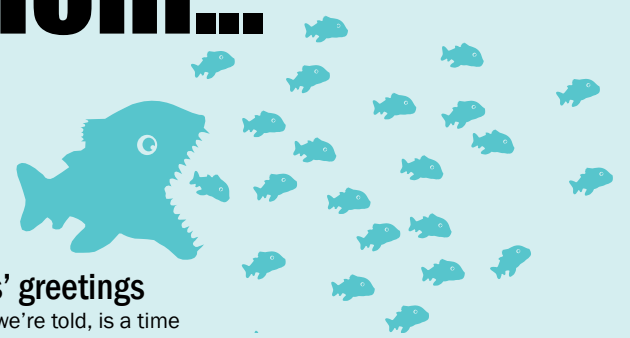
These campaigns have given the lie to the notion that the 'housing

crisis' is a simple and unchallengeable fact of life. Their example can act as a spur to others to get organised and fight for the right to genuinely affordable, good quality housing.

We live in a country 'boasting' over 100 billionaires, but in which hundreds of thousands find that most basic of human needs - housing - unmet. This is the sick logic of the capitalist system - where profit trumps all.

The Socialist Party says: cap rents not benefits; a mass programme of council house building; nationalise the banks and giant corporations and use their enormous profits to invest in housing, as part of a democratic plan of production to meet the needs of all.

Them...



Seasons' greetings

Christmas, we're told, is a time for giving and for families. And it appears to be Christmas all year for MPs' spouses and relatives who were paid a total £3.7 million from the public purse as office staff last year!

on same sex marriage legislation - hang on, they did!

Pay cut

It's not only low paid workers being hit by another year's pay freeze ie cut, spare a thought for the chief executive of Easy Jet, Carolyn McCall. She only pocketed £7.7 million in pay and bonuses this year, down from £7.8 million in 2013.

Wealth gap growing

Income inequality in the OECD countries (including Britain and the USA) is at its highest level for 50 years. The average income of the richest 10% of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10%, up from seven times 25 years ago. The widening wealth gap between rich and poor is not only a social blight but, as the OECD report concludes, is actually restricting economic development.

Ukip's hard shoulder

If readers believe that road congestion is due to poor public transport and the anarchy of capitalism, then think again. Ukip's leader Nigel Farage has excelled himself in spouting xenophobic nonsense by blaming M4 motorway traffic delays on uncontrolled migration. Next, a Ukip representative will be blaming the floods earlier this year

Don't breathe deep

With an estimated 29,000 deaths in the UK due to air pollution (mainly from motor vehicle emissions) and the government continuing to break air quality laws, the best solution establishment MPs can come up with is to suggest siting new hospitals and schools away from major roads. Capitalist politicians, slavishly obedient to vehicle manufacturers, seem to be missing the point ie reducing road traffic through an integrated, affordable public transport system and developing clean energy propulsion.

Cookery lesson

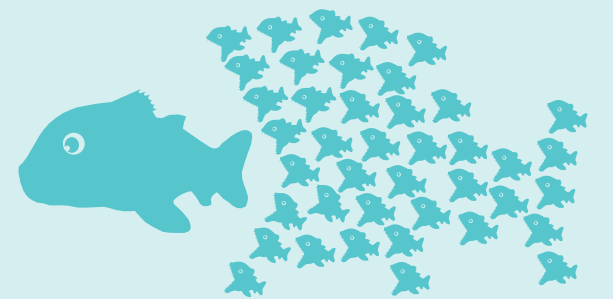
The launch of a Church of England-funded report into the rising use of food banks went off-message when panelist Tory Lady Jenkin blamed poor people for lacking cooking skills and poor food management. In fact, the report blamed benefit delays and government cuts, coupled with low wages and rising living costs for the majority of families going hungry.

Wigged out

Judges, out of touch?... bigoted?... In the case of £165,000 a year judge Terence Richard Peter Hollingworth, well yes!

His 'honour', referring to crime victim and law student Deepa Patel, said: "With a name like Patel, and her ethnic background, she won't be working anywhere important." Hollingworth resigned as deputy district judge when the Crown Prosecution made an official complaint. But incredibly he remains a top immigration judge.

...& Us



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Climate change: Sacrificing the future

Pete Mason

On the same day the Met Office announced that 2014 is likely to be the hottest year on record, Tory Chancellor George Osborne announced his budget in which he cut taxes for the fossil fuel industry. Yet the government maintains its pretence of being committed to seriously cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Also on the same day, 'Super Typhoon' Hagupit, super-heated by record ocean temperatures, hit the Philippines - as super typhoon Haiyan did in November 2013. One million people were forced to evacuate.

Haiyan killed over 7,000 people in the Philippines and thousands are still living in tents in the city of Tacloban.

Typhoon Hagupit is the vision of the future as the planet heats up. The World Meteorological Organi-

sation agrees with the Met Office: "The provisional information for 2014 means that 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have all occurred in the 21st century." Adding: "There is no standstill in global warming."

Yet Osborne is cutting oil taxes and introducing allowances to boost oil production in the North Sea and on the mainland through 'fracking.'

Big oil profits

It is the gas emissions from these fossil fuels, mainly from burning coal, oil and gas in power stations, but also from their use in industry and transport, which are heating up the planet.

Osborne's give-away is 'generous socialism' for the rich fossil fuel companies and cruel market capitalism for the poor.

While British workers have suffered the biggest fall in real wages of all major G20 countries since 2010, it is a fall in oil prices which

makes the Con-Dem government's collective hearts bleed.

The five biggest global oil corporations made a combined total of \$25.2 billion in profits just over the three summer months of 2014.

Instead of sacrificing the future to the oil companies, a socialist budget would nationalise the entire energy industry (with compensation only to those in proven need) and, together with the workers in the industry and consumers, immediately draw up a single unified plan to move directly to carbon-free energy production and transport.

This plan would employ many new workers to the industry, on union rates of pay, in order to carry the project out efficiently.

Such a project, funded by the mega-billions of the energy companies with plenty of cash to spare, would go a long way to solving the problem of unemployment and deliver significantly cheaper energy bills to the consumer.

What we saw

Another greetings card which Clintons won't be stocking this Christmas

(A response to Clinton Cards' odious 'Santa Claus council estate' card - see original on www.huffingtonpost.co.uk)

5 Reasons why Santa Claus must live in the House of Lords



1. He's old and white
2. He's never seen to be working
3. He has a large suit to stuff his £300 daily allowance into
4. His rosy cheeks and portly figure are due to drinking large quantities of expensive bubbly and eating subsidised grub in the restaurant
5. He wears a ridiculous costume

London bus drivers Same job - we want the same pay!

London bus drivers in the Unite union are now being balloted for strike action for equal pay rates across the capital following a 96% 'yes' vote in a consultative survey. **A London bus driver** gives the background.

Since 1994-95 when London buses were privatised, bus workers have seen attacks on their pay, terms and conditions by operating companies eager to increase profits at any cost.

The last seven years have been the most ruthless with minuscule pay 'rises' which in real terms (after inflation) are pay cuts. Many people arrive at work with the constant fear of abuse from management or supervisors, and of getting written warnings for just about anything.

There's disparity in pay, terms and conditions across 17 different bus operating companies, each having up to five different pay scales for drivers all doing the same job.

Hourly rates for bus drivers vary by as much as £6.00 per hour, from £9.75 to £15.26. New drivers may stay at the low rate for up to five years.

This is why the Unite union is calling for London's bus operating companies to come around the table to

establish a standard London bus driver wage.

In 2012, London bus drivers showed their potential power when they struck for an Olympic bonus. Most other public transport workers in London - from London Underground to Boris's Bikes - had been given a bonus for dealing with increased Olympics traffic. But not us!

However, one day of the disruption caused by strike action was enough for us to win the £500 bonus.

Sector wide

Many bus workers believed that the sector wide negotiation (SWN) campaign should have been launched following this victory. But this demand has since grown following even more attacks from operating companies on drivers' pay and conditions.

Unite has written to the operating companies demanding that they come around the table to discuss SWN. The initial response was that Unite was illegally trying to 'price-fix' the industry. This claim was totally false. As Unite has pointed out, these operating companies have SWN in place all over Europe!

On 11 September this year hundreds of London's bus workers took to the streets in a demonstration from Victoria to Parliament Square to protest their right to SWN in order to gain a fair system of pay, terms and conditions. Unite General Secretary. In his address Len McCluskey promised Unite's full backing



London bus drivers demonstrating on 11 September photo Paul Mattsson

through funding and resources to this campaign, to cheers from the crowd.

Following the success of the demonstration Unite decided to hold a consultative ballot across every London bus garage on 31 October, where 96% of bus workers were in favour of industrial action - an amazing response!

Now, Unite has started a full postal ballot. Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson has said: "London's bus drivers are the best in the world". But they need to be paid fairly and treated with respect by the companies they work for.

While bus drivers across Britain face low pay and passengers face high fares, the bus bosses won't be worrying about their Christmas shopping bills. Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths' pay packet this year will be £2.2 million, including a £600,000 bonus. Not far behind is First Group's Tim O'Toole receiving around £2 million. And Go-Ahead's chief executive David Brown's pay more than doubled last year to £1.96 million.

Rail franchise jobs: TUPE or not TUPE?

The "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)" or TUPE regulations are European Union regulations which offer limited protections to workers when they are transferred from one employer to another.

They basically mean that a new employer must take on the pay and terms and conditions of the workforce at the start of the new contract.

Employers in the rail industry are

now apparently able to circumvent these regulations. In the case of the government stake in Eurostar the deal is effectively a share transfer from the government to a private firm so TUPE will not apply. In the case of the Scotrail franchise, the franchise has gone to a company which does not employ train drivers in Scotland and will therefore subcontract the work to another firm, so TUPE will not apply either.

An Aslef member

1,000 firefighters march to defend Ricky Matthews and stop pension cuts

Neil Cafferky

Over 1,000 firefighters from across the UK gathered in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, for a national demonstration on 9 December, their latest day of strike action over pensions.

Banners could be seen from Northern Ireland, Devon, Hull and London, among many others.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) national executive rep Ricky Matthews was employed by Buckinghamshire Fire Authority. He was sacked for taking part in the last round of strikes.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "We are here because we are not giving up on the pensions strike. We are sending a very clear message that this union doesn't allow people to be victimised without standing up for them."

The strikers marched to the fire authority headquarters.

The government's attempt to cut firefighters' pensions includes changing the retirement age from 55 to 60, which is certain to result in the workers failing capability tests and being dismissed before they retire.



photo Neil Cafferky

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Students join Lambeth walkout

James Ivens

Lambeth Socialist Party

Striking teachers at Lambeth College were backed up by some of their students walking out on 9 December.

The two-day stoppage took place during an Ofsted inspection - an unprecedented move for staff at the south London college. Inspectors have reportedly asked managers why they failed to resolve the dispute before the assessment.

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) have been fighting severe attacks on pay and

conditions. Teachers announced a programme of escalating action at the end of November.

The latest strike follows a one-day walkout the week before, with three days planned from 15 December.

Around 15 students of English as a Second or Other Language (Esol) joined pickets at the Brixton site. Esol is one of the FE college's chief money-spinners, and strikers in the department have been particularly solid.

Please send messages of support to Mandy Brown, UCU branch secretary, at mandybrowncow@yahoo.com

Sharpak Yate packaging strike

Tom Baldwin

Unite members in Sharpak entered their second week of discontinuous strike action with the third day of action taking place on 9 December. Workers at the packaging firm in Yate near Bristol are striking against management attempts to impose a longer working week.

The union has been growing in the workplace. People are fed up of bul-

lying management forcing changes and are determined that they won't get away with it this time.

The well organised pickets and strong public support are beginning to have an effect. Management had previously refused to negotiate and insisted workers who did not sign up to the new terms would lose their jobs. The strike action is forcing them to rethink and they have now opened discussions with the union.



100 year anniversary The 1914 Christmas truce

Roger Shriver

“Here we were laughing and chatting to men who, only hours before, we were trying to kill!” These words from an astonished British soldier in World War One (WW1) sum up the incredible story of the 1914 Christmas truce. The ruling class called WW1 “the war to end war”. People said it would be over by Christmas but it was becoming clear this was an imperialist bloodbath. Soldiers from all the countries involved were fed poisonous nationalist propaganda before becoming cannon fodder in what was then the bloodiest war in history. Ten million died and another ten million were wounded.

The attitude of many soldiers to this nightmare was complicated: “We hated (the enemy’s) guts when they killed any of our friends... But otherwise we joked about them and I think they joked about us, and we thought ‘poor so-and-sos, they’re in the same kind of muck as we are.”

And 100 years ago the death

and drudgery, this horror without end, were forgotten for a while in the heroic Christmas truce. Singing between the trenches became commonplace, particularly as Christmas approached and soldiers started getting parcels from home.

Both sets of troops erected signs wishing the other side a merry Christmas. Then, seemingly from the German lines, soldiers started shouting out for a meeting between troops.

They met, exchanged gifts, and in the truce’s best-known image, played football in ‘no man’s land’. Truces were organised for a day, even for a week. Among other things, both sides needed to carry out the grim ritual of burying their dead.

More in common

The football matches were played with few rules. The players, despite being subjected to constant dehumanising propaganda, found they had more in common than separated them. Troops from France and Belgium joined with German and British troops.

This needed courage – over 300 British and Commonwealth soldiers were shot during WW1 for ‘cowardice’ and the irate top ranks of all the combatants’ armies were considering such a response after the truce.

‘Fraternisation’

A British military directive warned that fraternisation between soldiers “discourages initiative in commanders and destroys the offensive spirit in all ranks.” They warned of new enemy attacks to little effect. But eventually officers managed to break the truce.

A sergeant from Lancashire says the British generals started giving orders to fire revolvers at the German troops during the truce: “That started the war again. We were cursing the generals to hell, saying you should be up in this mud. Never mind you giving orders in your big chateaux and driving about in your big cars. We hated the sight of bloody generals, we always did. We never liked them after that.”

Despite this opposition from the military tops, some troops refused

to fire well into 1915. But a soldier described a military confrontation in January 1915: “The next morning the ground where we had been so chummy and where Germans had wished us a merry Christmas was now covered with their dead.”

The soldiers were dealing with officer classes and politicians whose consciousness began and ended with considerations of power, prestige, profit and territory.

They needed to attack not just the warmongers but their system. The soldiers came from the working class, and felt an instinctive internationalist understanding of workers from elsewhere who had experienced the same brutalities of capitalism as themselves.

The socialist movement worldwide adopted such an internationalist anti-war stance before 1914. But then the reformist leaderships of the powerful workers’ organisations jettisoned this position and backed ‘their own’ ruling class elites. Great Marxists such as Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Liebknecht and a handful more, kept the flame alive (see ‘100 years since the great slaughter’,

the Socialist 820).

But the horrors of war ensured that capitalism was severely weakened. It broke at its weakest link. The crucial event to hasten the end of the war was the Russian revolution of November 1917.

Change

The defeat of German, Austrian and Ottoman empires killed off kings and reactionary regimes throughout Europe as quickly as the soldiers led to their death in the war. It also led to the ultimately unsuccessful German revolution of 1918-1921. Revolutionary movements and mutinies threatened in the troops of Britain and France.

The strivings of rank and file soldiers over Christmas 1914 offered a beacon of light in the horrors of war. It needed the building of a revolutionary movement to reignite that beacon later that decade.



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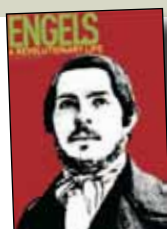
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B23 Bargain: Stalin’s Nemesis: The Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky by Bertrand M Patenaude (hardback) was £20.00 our price £9.00

B24 Russian Film Posters Introduction by Maria-Christina Boerner (hardback large format) was £20 our price £14.00

B25 Red Star Over Russia: Visual History of Soviet Union from 1917 to the Death of Stalin by David King (large format) £24.99



Bargain packs

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REJECT THE LIE THAT IS AUSTERITY

Trade unions must now act to resist Osborne offensive

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Socialist Party national organiser

On Wednesday 3 December the Tories declared all-out war on the working class and all our futures. For once the BBC told the truth when assistant political editor Norman Smith described the Autumn Budget Statement as "utterly terrifying". Smith drew comparisons with George Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier - ie the pre-welfare state Britain of the 1930s. Chancellor George Osborne's outrage showed he was rattled by the response.

Despite Osborne's remonstrations, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) have unearthed the full horror. The IFS says that the state will be "changed beyond all recognition", and that the scale of the cuts will mean a "re-imagining of the state".

But Osborne made a blunder - and now the cat is out of the bag. The Mirror headline reads, "Back to depression," but the figures can't hide the fact we are already in an enormous depression and Osborne promises to deepen it. We were told that if we all made a bit of sacrifice everything would work out for the best. That was a lie. For one thing we were told the cuts over the last four years would remove the deficit - but the OBR's forecasts suggest it will be over £91 billion in 2014-15.

But there is a force in society which is opposed to all cuts. The working class has shown, and continues to show in action that we do not accept the austerity lie. The tremendous TUC-led 750,000-strong 'March for an Alternative' demo in March 2011 proved that.

The students who marched on 19 November demanding free education reject the austerity myth. As do the millions of public sector workers who have coordinated their strikes in defence of pensions, jobs, pay and services since then. But the right-wing trade union leaders have failed to set out a strategy to use the enormous potential power of the working class to defeat austerity. That must end now.

Osborne has admitted endless austerity is his aim. Labour-run councils up to now have passed on the cold cruelty of Tory cuts with barely a handful of votes against.

'Normal'?

It might be considered not 'normal' to demand action of the TUC in the months before an election, when many people will be motivated primarily by a desire to get rid of the Tories. But these are not 'normal' times. Capitalism in crisis is seeking to place the burden entirely on the working class and the poor.

Given the extent of these threats the TUC general council meeting on 17 December must thrash out a strategy of action that will leave no party with any doubt that they will face a mass resistance if they try to implement austerity - or austerity-lite.

Across the world the working class is responding to austerity and capitalist crisis with actions that are not considered 'normal'. The Irish working class is rising in a magnificent movement of mass non-payment of the water charges despite having been written off as docile, pain-swallowing 'sheeple'. Black workers and youth have rejected their false self-appointed leaders and are building a movement

against racism and poverty. Workers in Belgium have organised powerful general strike action just before Christmas. So it would not be unusual in these circumstances for mass working class action to now be organised in Britain.

The Tories have both our welfare state and our ability to organise in their sights. It is no coincidence that they have also launched an attack on the most militant public sector union, PCS. Attacking the civil service union's finance through removing the check-off system of membership dues collection, cutting facility time for key union activists and promoting a scab union are all attempts to weaken the potential for workers to fight back against the cuts. The government knows that the organised working class is the biggest obstacle to their plans. If they get away with this attack on the PCS, other unions will be next.

The mass privatisation that is the largely unspoken aspect of these cuts represents a deterioration of working conditions, makes workers easier to sack, etc. In particular the huge cuts ear-marked for the civil service is a further threat to PCS.

The Socialist Party calls for the trade union leaders to urgently meet before Christmas to set the date for a massive demonstration of opposition to this multi-pronged offensive from Osborne as soon as possible before May's election. A million workers, young people, anti-cuts campaigners and members of the 99% opposed to austerity marching through London would tell the next government, no matter what party or parties form it, that they won't get away with this plan.

Plans for publicity including a speaking tour of trade union meetings, trades council meetings and workplace meetings to spread the message effectively are needed. The TUC must also set out a bold plan to defend the PCS.

Incomplete

Last October's TUC march for a pay rise was an incomplete expression of the mood to struggle that exists. Many, many more people would participate if they were convinced that a demonstration is the next step in a strategy to build effective mass resistance. Plans for a 24-hour general strike to stop any attempt by a new government to carry through these cuts must urgently be brought to the top of the agenda of all the trade unions.

There are a myriad local fightbacks, organised and energetically supported, as well as the ongoing struggle of the firefighters and NHS workers, which could be brought together. But to do that requires a national lead. Trade union members must demand their leaders give that lead (see model motion right).

After a mass demonstration against austerity working class people can't be asked to then vote for the parties that will make those cuts.

The Lib Dems' laughable attempts to distance themselves from government policy, with Nick Clegg staying away from parliament, and Labour's claim that they will "balance the books in a fair way" cannot hide the fact that they too have carried out and would carry out devastating cuts.

The press is making much of Labour's 'alternative' spending plans but there is no question - Labour is signed up to the same policy of cuts, even if they aim to take a year or so longer



before 'balancing the budget'.

The Socialist Party calls for the affiliated trade unions to break with Labour and, alongside other unions, socialists and anti-cuts campaigners, establish a new working class party. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is supported by the RMT union, the Socialist Party and others to assist the development of this process. TUSC's aim to stand 1,000 no-cuts candidates in May's local elections and 100 for parliamentary seats boldly shows what is needed and will involve thousands of working class people in political campaigning for an alternative.

The OBR says that in order to reach Osborne's cuts target, one million more public sector jobs will go in the next parliament to add to the more than half a million gone already. The public sector pay freeze will be extended even further.

Vicious

Further vicious welfare cuts are also threatened. Working age benefits, including in-work benefits, will remain frozen, ie a real terms cut. The proposed squeeze on the welfare cap will mean an estimated £160 a week loss for some families.

This slashing of spending will take public services back to the level of the 1930s as a proportion of national income. One statistic, that one in five young people has experienced homelessness, gives a taste of what the cuts so far have delivered. Double that and add half as much again. £60 billion more cuts would be needed to reach the government's aim.

The government claims that health and education are "ring-fenced", although that is a lie. £20 billion of "efficiency savings" have been made in the NHS and it is heading for a £30 billion "black hole" by 2020. But this is also likely to mean that other departments will have even more savage cuts averaging up to 50% across the board.

This will be accompanied with further outsourcing and privatisation. Councils are already encouraged to view themselves as 'commissioning bodies' with the consequent devastating impact on services and workers' terms and conditions. Zero-hour contracts and 15-minute care visits, already widespread, will be the norm while private contractors snatch ever mounting profits.

Aware that workers have contempt for the idea that "we are all in this together" that has been peddled by Cameron, Osborne claimed that 98% of home buyers would benefit from the stamp duty changes and implied that the richest 2% would be hit, in an attempt to overshadow Labour's 'mansion tax'. The 'Google tax' and slightly reduced ability for banks to fiddle the tax on their profits are also an attempt to divert from the widespread understanding that the government acts for

the richest 1%.

Only a limited number of workers will make tiny gains from these changes. By increasing the personal tax allowance level, the point at which people start paying income tax, by slightly more than previously announced, workers will gain a tax cut of a piffling extra £20 a year! These measures will do nothing to temper the anger working class people feel at the devastation of living standards.

In fact it is cuts in real pay that have added to Osborne's problems in trying to reduce the budget defi-

cit. The government has not had the tax returns they expected from increasing employment. Two thirds of those moving from unemployment into work get less than the living wage. The big rise in the numbers of self-employed has been accompanied by a 13% drop in their income over five years.

Instead that money has gone to boost the profits of big business, no doubt to be salted away in bank accounts and tax havens where at least £850 billion is already lying idle. Instead of a one-off tax on that to pay for the jobs and services we need, the Tories promise tax cuts for the rich.

Figures excavated by the OBR reveal that the plans for a balanced budget by 2020 are predicated on household debt as a share of household income rising by almost £1 trillion! By sleight of hand Osborne is attempting to shift the debt off the government books and onto the individual in the form of credit card debt, Wonga-type debt, store cards and mortgages. Meanwhile household incomes are set to rise by around a quarter of that figure.

Unsecured debt as a share of household income is set to rise to 55%. In the period that led to the economic crisis the rate was 44%. These figures offer proof, if it is still needed, of the bankruptcy of the capitalist system and its inability to offer any way forward for the 99%. For workers, the basis of the system is that you work and earn a living. Big business bosses, the capitalists, have abandoned their side of the deal.

Russell Brand's talk of revolution is grabbing the attention of big numbers of young people and workers. How refreshing it is to hear someone on TV reject the lies that are austerity, that there is no better way of organising the world, that poverty cannot be ended. How refreshing to hear bold support for resistance - the striking firefighters, the New Era tenants. No wonder Murdoch's status quo-defending Sun attacks him. This indicates the support that could be found for a bold call for socialist change.

Ideas

To change the world we need ideas and organisations. The working class is the majority in society, with enormous potential power, capable when organised not only of defending our pay and fighting austerity, but also of taking the power out of the hands of the 1%.

Capitalism, a short-sighted and crisis-ridden system, only offers us crumbs off the plates of the super-rich 1%. Socialists fight for a dignified life for all - and that means building a mass struggle for wages, jobs, public services, trade union rights, and socialist change.

Socialism would be completely different. Democratic planning of production would allow humanity to build a world without exploitation, inequality and hunger - while also protecting the environment.

Model motion

For trade union bodies

This (union organisation) notes that Osborne's autumn statement is an escalation of the Con-Dems' brutal austerity offensive. This (union organisation) notes that Labour has largely accepted Tory spending limits should it come to office. Therefore this (union organisation) believes that the trade union movement has a responsibility to lead the opposition to these cuts and at the same time send a clear message of defiance to all parties in the run-up to the general election.

We believe that it is no accident that at this time, PCS is facing a vicious attack by the Con-Dems with union facilities being withdrawn, check-off being stopped and a new rival scab union being threatened. This (union organisation) calls for the NEC to:

- Demand the TUC General Council prepares a strategy of action to fight austerity
- Give full backing to, and mobilise for, current disputes, including that of the NHS workers and the firefighters
- As a step to this and to support existing disputes, the TUC organise a national Saturday demonstration in London early in 2015 against the cuts and in defence of the NHS and in support of the NHS workers, the firefighters and PCS
- Solidarity be mobilised to defend the PCS from the current anti-union attack by the government
- That the idea of mass coordinated industrial action be moved at that meeting including preparing for a 24-hour general strike to stop any attempt by a new government to carry through these cuts

TUSC 2015 elections conference

Student Central (formerly ULJ), Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY
Saturday 24 January, 11am to 4.30pm
Conference registration fee: £10 waged and £2 unwaged/low waged
For a conference registration form go to <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/318.doc>



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



Trade unionists marching for higher pay on 18 October 2014 photo Paul Mattsson

Get ready for 2015 We have a world to win!



photo Paul Mattsson

When a BBC editor referenced George Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier in his analysis of the Con-Dems' Autumn Budget Statement he earned the wrath of Chancellor George Osborne. Wigan Pier contains a searing indictment of British capitalism in the 1930s. It was invoked to illustrate the colossal destruction of the welfare state threatened by the Con-Dem plans for austerity forever.

But Orwell doesn't just describe the situation - he draws conclusions: "everyone who uses his brain knows that socialism, as a world-system and wholeheartedly applied, is a way out."

In February 2010, even before the Con-Dem government was formed, Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe revisited the Road to Wigan Pier. Peter wrote that the "desperation of working class people, brutally charted by Orwell, is present today". How much more true is that now? "Hunger stalks this country" is the devastating finding of a new report.

The experience of a world in

crisis means increasing numbers are questioning capitalism as a viable way to run the world. If austerity, war, poverty and inequality are all that capitalism can offer for the 99%, then there must be a better way. Even in the US, the most powerful capitalist economy, a survey revealed that young people are more likely to favour socialism than capitalism.

Plenty of provisions

In Wigan Pier, Orwell described the world as "a raft sailing through space with, potentially, plenty of provisions for everybody; the idea that we must all cooperate and see to it that everyone does his fair share of the work and gets his fair share of the provisions seems so blatantly obvious that one would say that no one could possibly fail to accept it unless he had some corrupt motive for clinging to the present system."

The Socialist Party is not just an organisation that argues the case for socialism. The hallmark of our party

is our confidence in the enormous potential power of the working class when it's organised to fight back, to win against bosses, landlords, capitalist governments, and to change society. We struggle to help build powerful organisations of our class, and for socialist ideas to be discussed and debated within them.

2015 promises to be a year when the working class has no choice but to continue our struggles for a decent life - living wages, decent housing, no cuts, etc.

If you agree with what we say in this paper and our other literature, campaigns and meetings, then think about joining us. If you're already a member, think about helping to build the party among all those seeking an alternative. We have a world to win!

To find out about becoming a member: www.socialistparty.org.uk/join

To read the review of Wigan Pier: www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/8909/26-02-2010/visiting-the-road-to-wigan-pier

Campaigns news in brief

Tower Hamlets

Lutfur Rahman, mayor of Tower Hamlets in east London, proposed closing four local nurseries in September. Nearly half the borough's children live in poverty. These closures would have been a blatant attack on the local working class, especially mothers.

Members of trade union Unison, the Socialist Party and supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see pages 6 and 7) lobbied Rahman's cabinet meeting on 3 December. The earlier decision was reversed - a victory for the mothers of the "Save Our Nurseries" campaign.

Hannah Zucherman

North West England

Our quarterly fighting fund week of action, which involves extra campaign stalls, raised over £550. We sold dozens of papers and had numerous join cards filled in. At least two have joined already!

Hugh Caffrey

Newham

An eviction of a mum and her three children was stopped by housing campaigners in Newham, East London, on 4 December. The landlord, bailiff and locksmiths eventually turned away as 20 people had blocked the entrance to the property.

Housing association and court notices indicated that the eviction was over rent arrears. But on the day it emerged that the eviction was because the lease had come to an end! The rent arrears are a result of benefit cuts and low pay. The mum has a zero-hour contract job. She doesn't know if and when she will work or how much money she'll be paid, a nightmare when you have three children to look after. The landlord wants £300 a week - her employer pays around £300 a month!

The eviction has been postponed until January and the housing association agreed to meet with the mum and campaigners to look at rehousing the family.

Bob Severn

Waltham Forest

Residents of the threatened Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers (see the Socialist issue 834) attended a Waltham For-

est TUSC meeting on 3 December.

Nancy Taaffe, TUSC prospective parliamentary candidate, explained the importance of residents refusing to move and organising defence when faced with eviction. She called for the £10 million held hostage by the council to force agreement to sell-off plans to instead be used for renovations.

Louise Cuffaro, chair of the tenants' federation, appealed to those present to collect signatures on TUSC's rent control petition.

See full report www.walthamforesttusc.com



Wales

Over a hundred people, including Socialist Party members and TUSC supporters, protested outside Ukip's Welsh conference on 6 December. There was little sign of the so-called "people's army" as a trickle of Chelsea tractors and smart saloons ferried suited 'delegates' through police lines.

Swansea West's Labour MP explained that racism feeds off poverty and misery. This, I said, is why we need an alternative like TUSC - not Labour cutters.

Ronnie Job

Derby

Socialist Party members and TUSC supporters are fighting the closure of Moorways pool and leisure centre. It is part of the Labour council's recently announced £22 million budget cuts, which include slashing support for the elderly, disabled and mentally ill.

The pool's Derventio Excel swimming club, which trains elite swimmers, has said it has no "viable alternative" facility. We will be contacting trade unions and the community to build the campaign to save the pool. Rebel councillors in Southampton, now part of TUSC, prevented a similar closure.

Charlie Taylor

Election appeal: finding cash to fight the cuts

Ken Douglas

Socialist Party national treasurer

The Con-Dem government is tearing itself apart following the chancellor's autumn statement. Osborne promises further savage cuts as his strategy to reduce the deficit lies in tatters. Even treasury minister Danny Alexander has called it an "ideologically" driven plan to shrink the state. As elections get nearer, the coalition partners are turning on each other like rats in a sack.

A clarion call from trade union leaders to oppose austerity - including standing anti-cuts candidates in the coming elections - would get huge support. But the Trades Union Congress is backing Labour.

Miliband has made it plain he shares the same fantasy strategy to clear the deficit by 2020. This underlines the importance of the Socialist Party's commitment to putting up the biggest opposition possible in May - through the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see centre pages).

That is why we have launched our election appeal. We are ask-



Socialist Party members raising money in Bristol photo Bristol Socialist Party

ing members and supporters - the readers of the Socialist - to donate as much as a week's income to our appeal.

We need to raise £50,000 to help pay for the leaflets, posters and other material essential to our challenge. We are preparing to stand hundreds of anti-austerity candidates throughout England and Wales.

Please consider making a pledge. We recognise that finances are stretched, particularly as Christmas approaches. But we have no rich

backers; our resource is the dedication and sacrifice of our members and supporters. A tenner for an unemployed person might be the same sacrifice as hundreds for the best-paid workers. Every donation is critical.

Our deadline is 30 April to allow time for pledges to be redeemed. You can pay online at socialistparty.org.uk/donate, over the phone on 020 8988 8777, or send a cheque or postal order (payable to Socialist Party) to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.

Donate today!

socialistparty.org.uk / donate

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text 0776 1818 206

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ received	£ target	October-December 2014		Deadline 5 January 2015	
North West	2,177	1,200				
South East	1,293	750				
Northern	994	600				
West Midlands	3,226	2,100				
East Midlands	2,277	1,600				
Wales	2,925	2,300				
South West	1,568	1,400				
Yorkshire	3,037	2,900				
Southern	982	1,200				
London	4,562	6,100				
Eastern	844	1,200				
England & Wales	3,330	3,650				
TOTAL	27,215	25,000				

“I can’t breathe” Uprising against police violence in the US



Eljeer Hawkins

Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US)

Protests against police racism and violence are continuing across the US. After the explosions that took place following the announcement that police officer Darren Wilson wouldn’t face trial for the killing of 18 year old Michael Brown, came the case of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York.

On 17 July, Eric was approached by plain clothes police officers as he allegedly sold loose cigarettes. He had had previous encounters with police over the same issue. This time he declared he would not be harassed by the police anymore.

Officer Daniel Pantaleo applied a banned chokehold to Garner and continued to apply it after he took Garner to the ground. Garner called out “I can’t breathe”. He died at the

scene. On 3 December a Grand Jury decided not to indict Pantaleo.

The Ferguson and Garner verdicts highlight the inability and unwillingness of capitalism and its two parties to seriously address or even curtail the militarisation of the police and the systemic nature of police violence.

Control

In general the elite have seen the militarisation of the police, on top of the criminalisation of large sections of black youth and mass incarceration, as a key part of maintaining social control. Fear of crime is used to divide the working class on racial lines while poor black communities face a virtual police state.

The ruling class will not concede any weakening of overall police powers without a major social struggle by the working class, particularly by black workers and youth.

The labour movement must play

an active role in this struggle for racial and economic justice. Police repression which targets black youth today will be used against workers’ struggles tomorrow as it has been repeatedly in the past.

The movement on the streets against police violence can become the beginning of a new black freedom movement

It is clear that the racist capitalist system in this country has a total disregard for the lives of working people, poor people and particularly black youth. Police kill black Americans at nearly the same rate as the past lynching during the Jim

Crow (post-civil war racist laws) era and young black men are 21 times more likely to be shot dead by police than white men.

Escalate the action

The righteous indignation of working people and youth protesting the grand jury announcement is justified and must be escalated to end this daily misery.

The movement on the streets against police violence can become the beginning of a new black freedom movement. Such a movement must also take up the economic devastation which is being caused by capitalism.

The fight for a \$15 minimum wage which has caught fire around the US is a brilliant way to begin to build the broader working class fightback which is essential to a successful fight against all forms of oppression.

None of us can breathe in a system of economic, political and social terrorism; the only medicine

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

that can cure our ills is a system change. The struggle for democratic socialism and workers’ democracy must be placed on agenda.

See www.socialistalternative.org for a full version of this article and updates

On 6 January students from 25 universities and colleges around the country met in London for the Socialist Students national conference.

The meeting elected a new national steering committee and passed a number of motions (see www.socialiststudents.org.uk for details), including on the issues discussed below. Coming after a number of

protests and occupations and the national free education demonstration on 19 November, the conference discussed the urgent need to step up the action against cuts and fees.

It was agreed that in the spring term Socialist Students will organise a day of action and campaign for the National Union of students to call a national demonstration.

Warwick University: Cops off campus!

During a peaceful sit-in at Warwick University on 4 December calling for free education, students were attacked by police and security guards using CS spray and drawing a taser. Video footage clearly shows police brutality, with a female protester being dragged across the room by her hair, and another student being put in a headlock and slammed to the floor.

These actions were a disgrace, and the next day students rightly called a protest in response. This was attended by over 1,000 people. Sierra Leonean activist Mohammed Wurie spoke at the demo and brought solidarity from Coventry University student union and Coventry Socialist Students.

After the demonstration around 200 students began an occupation. Dan Crowter, a member of Coventry Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) local election candidate, read a solidarity statement from Dave Nellist, national chair of TUSC and former Coventry socialist councillor.

Dave said: “I support the right of Warwick students to protest, including peaceful sit-ins and occupations, to regain genuinely free edu-



Solidarity with Warwick students at the Socialist Students conference photo Helen Pattison

cation... The actions of the police on Wednesday may be an aberration – or it may be part of a pattern that believes kettling and heavy handed policing of student protest is ok. Either way a proper and genuine investigation is required. The police need to be democratically accountable to the communities they serve.”

We need to organise more mass

demonstrations and occupations as part of a wider movement to fight for free education and to change society.

Warwick and Coventry Socialist Students

See socialiststudents.org.uk for reports of other occupations and actions for free education

Leeds University: For affordable housing

Housing is a yearly stress for students in Leeds - from who they are going to live with to where they are going to live. The biggest issue is the cost - extortionate rates for sub-standard accommodation. For many, their student loan doesn’t even cover rent. They are then forced into part time jobs - mainly on zero-hour contracts.

It is not just private rented housing that is affected by these high costs. University halls in Leeds, on average, cost over £100 a week. Many student loans only cover £90 a week to live

on. Therefore if a student can’t get a larger loan or be supported by their family, living in halls becomes near impossible to afford.

Leeds University Socialist Students is fighting for a student union-run letting agency. This will mean students will be able to access affordable accommodation that is of a decent standard. York University Socialist Students have already won this demand and the group in Coventry is making great progress.

Maddy Steeds
Leeds Socialist Students

Yorkshire: £10 now! End zero-hour contracts!

On 15 November 30 young trade unionists and students met in Sheffield for a TUC young workers month event on the theme of ‘pay, politics and pressure.’

We spoke about building on the huge movement among fast food workers in the US and the stunning victory of the 15 Now campaign in Seattle earlier this year, when a \$15 an hour minimum wage was won. Afterwards a Fast Food Rights campaign protest and public meeting were organised which 50 people attended.

Speaking at both events were Ian Hodson, president of the bakers’ union BFAWU which initiated Fast Food Rights, and Ian Pattison from Youth Fight for Jobs who reported on his visit to Seattle.

At the meeting, plans were discussed to widen the campaign by visiting new areas in the region and aiming to get other unions to take



The Socialist Students conference voted to affiliate to the Fast Food Rights campaign photo S Wrack

up the issues of zero-hour contracts and a £10 an hour minimum wage.

We also planned to intensify the campaign by targeting particular employers.

Iain Dalton
Yorks and Humber TUC youth convener (personal capacity)

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.

**Weeding time**

In Fenland, employment agencies have grown like weeds in a garden. Most factories in Fenland now have a majority of their workforce supplied via these employment agencies. They are used by big business to lower factory workers' wages, usually to no more than the minimum wage of £6.50 an hour. Some workers supplied via these agencies are only guaranteed one day's work a week. Others are on zero-hour contracts. Agency workers are difficult to organise into trade unions. However, unions such as Unite, the GMB, and



the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union are recruiting them.

Workers should be directly employed by the factories that they work in. Trade unions should be given control over hiring and firing. It is time to put all employment agencies out of business.

John Smithee, Cambridgeshire

Tory chicanery

I am writing as a fiercely left Independent town councillor and resident who attended a recent Wyre council full meeting. I was supposed to be asking questions on the closure of Blackpool International Airport, and how it affects transport, employment and commercial interests. Instead, I was treated to a rare example of municipal melodrama, and perhaps, political suicide, by the ruling Tory group. Ruling for now that is.

After challenging the New Labour mayor, Tory councillor Vincent gave the cue for the entire group to walk out of the meeting; in full knowledge that it would be left two short of a quorum, and so unable to conduct further council business - ie our business.

Clearly, their walkout was planned in advance. In another time and place the remaining Labour group and others might have shut the doors, then continued with the business they were elected for - had every New Labour member been present.

We must now ask: are Wyre council placed to issue guidelines, advisories



and codes of conduct, on how to conduct our business after such a public abdication of their responsibilities? Again, it's the public's business for which its members are elected. I do not belong to, or support, any political party currently on town or Wyre council. My orders and whip comes directly from the voters.

Cllr Jack D Harrison

How much longer?

£300 million was injected into the NHS this winter but not a penny went to the dedicated NHS professionals, many of whom haven't had a pay rise for five years. Old and vulnerable people are going to die as a result of the cold and austerity this winter. But politicians still take an 11% pay rise while bankers continue to raid our coffers at will. How much longer are we going to put up with this bullying of our people? There are more of us, so we possess all the power. Wake up before it's too late.

Eric Thorpe, Salford

Goodsell's poor deal

This letter was printed in the *Folkestone Herald* on 4 December.

As President of South East Kent Trade Union Council, I fully support the National "£10 Now" campaign that is organising locally with street stalls, leafleting and holding of public meetings. The £10 Now campaigners, local activists, are calling for a better minimum wage, an end to zero/short-hour contracts and the recognition of unions in the workplace.

We have concentrated on Saga as they are one of our community's biggest employers and with possible pre-tax profits of £149 million you have to



Andrew Goodsell

ask; wouldn't a decent wage for those that earn the company such profits be a small price to pay? Would free childcare be too much to provide for their workers?

Saga boss Andrew Goodsell, who could see a reward of £1,595,380 for his services this year, probably doesn't worry about finding enough money for this month's rent, or the cost of a week's shopping, childcare, fares or petrol.

However, as chief executive, he could reward rather than exploit his workers with an immediate increase in the minimum wage instead of unachievable targets. He could offer free childcare rather than charge for the service and begin discussions with trade unions immediately towards recognition and collective bargaining.

What better way to reward the hard working community that lifted this small local company to its now multi-million pound status?

Seth Cruise

Film review

Mockingjay: Part One

Injured revolutionaries salute Katniss Everdeen, the movie's central character

Leeds University Socialist Students member **Mary Finch** reviews the latest in the Hunger Games trilogy.

It's not often that mainstream cinema shows revolution - but that's exactly what the Hunger Games trilogy is all about. When we enter District 13 in Suzanne Collins' book series that inspired the films, all the districts (the poor, working class areas) are already in full rebellion against the Capitol (where the super-rich and the brutal politicians live on the fruits of the districts' labour).

Mockingjay shows the role of the masses in a revolution - the districts are depicted taking strike action, refusing to provide the Capitol with its essential goods.

This film is mainly about the leaders of the revolution trying to convince main character Katniss to take up her place as its figurehead ('the Mockingjay') and help them spread the message about the rebellion.

Oppressed groups

It's positive that Mockingjay represents groups that are oppressed in real life, and further marginalised on the big screen. Katniss, the lead character, is a working class woman. Another character, Finnick, speaks up about being 'sold by the Capitol', and being a male survivor of sexual violence, when many people believe it's not even possible for men to be raped.

Effie is made fun of in the film for her inability to adapt from the glamorous lifestyle in the Capitol to life in the districts. But her obsession with fashion and physical appearance later becomes of paramount importance. Society looks down on men

and women for being interested in traditionally feminine things - while Effie's interest in them is recognised as essential when it comes to turning Katniss into the Mockingjay.

Older women with high-level careers, or any degree of power, are often demonised and attacked for it - President Coin, the leader of the rebels, receives nothing but respect.

But Mockingjay falls down at significant points. All the main characters are white; and the film's politics are confused. While showing that the masses are in action, the film's emphasis is on the role of individuals. The assumption seems to be that if Katniss plays her part as the Mock-

Mockingjay shows the role of the masses in a revolution

ingjay, and the propaganda can be distributed to all of the districts, everyone will automatically join the struggle.

Mass movements and revolutions need leadership, but they also need socialist politics. Socialists know that ordinary people create the wealth, so ordinary people hold the power to change society. Historically, revolutions have seen strike action, mass protests and mutinies - all these things are depicted in the film.

But President Coin runs District 13 on the basis of her prerogative. A socialist revolution would empower

■ The Hunger Games trilogy depicts an unimaginably wealthy Capitol. At parties, guests make themselves throw up so they can keep eating and taste all the food. In the districts, people are lucky to survive day to day.

Osborne's autumn statement seems to be sending us in the same direction. While the House of Lords spends a fortune on vintage champagne for peers, millions of families are suffering from pay freezes, zero-hour contracts, and the housing crisis. Many have either to steal or go to food banks, else they wouldn't be able to eat. We could be headed for the revolutionary conclusions of the districts as well!

ordinary people to decide how the struggle is organised and how society is run.

Fundamentally, nothing has changed in the new society in District 13. They have to change if a revolution is going to succeed. If the rebels succeed in implementing capitalist democracy, the repression of the Capitol might change or disappear but inequality would remain, and with it, all the prejudices that capitalism creates and uses.

Nonetheless many people will be inspired by the Hunger Games trilogy. If you consider yourself a socialist, or think we need a revolution - join Socialist Students and help us build one!

Mary has also reviewed the first two Hunger Games films, which can be found at www.socialistparty.org.uk (from issues 714 and 791 of the Socialist).

Broadband giants' expensive battle

Paul Callanan's article on football financing (issue 834) was illuminating. The almost complete dominance of big business (often from very shady business people) is only part of the problem. There is currently a battle between Sky TV and BT Sport for live broadcasting rights which has led to a hyper-inflationary spiral in the cost of broadcasting rights. This flows through to the cost of tickets for matches.

British Telecom (BT) didn't enter the TV market to provide sport for the public; it was a means of stemming loss of broadband customers to Sky who could offer both TV and

broadband. Although BT Sport is free to their broadband customers some City opinion doubts whether this is sustainable permanently.

The test may come soon, when they start paying for the Champions League rights. BT has just increased line rentals by 6% so it looks like they are trying to partially recoup the cost from their general customer base.

Chaotic

The Pay TV market is becoming chaotic. A choice of providers offers broadly similar packages and there are regular complaints to regulator Ofcom

about anti-competitive behaviour. Most customers couldn't care who provides their TV as long as they get what they want to watch. But the competitive element pitches BT workers against Sky workers against Virgin Media workers.

Chaos in the modern telecoms market and the drive for profitable revenue stream partly reflects the ever-increasing cost of investing in the latest technology. Capital is spread among too many companies.

This is driving a new wave of consolidation as witnessed by BT being in talks with both O2 and EE regarding a possible purchase. Both TV and telecoms industries are crying out for public ownership and planning, not on a national but an international scale.

A British Telecom worker



It's the Socialist big quiz of 2014. As a bit of fun, the editors invite readers to test their knowledge from the past 12 months' coverage in the Socialist of political events and workers' struggles. Good luck and a happy New Year!

Questions

The green benches

- 1) Who announced he was quitting parliament because his wages and expenses don't provide him the life he aspires to?
- 2) Name the two Tory MPs who defected to Ukip and were re-elected in subsequent byelection
- 3) What percentage of Tory MPs are private landlords?
- 4) Why won't there be an investigation of MPs' expenses claims prior to 2010?
- 5) How long was Tory Cabinet minister Maria Miller's apology to the Commons after fiddling thousands of pounds in housing expenses?
- 6) Which organisation's report calling for the abolition of the Bedroom Tax was described by government housing minister Kris Hopkins as a "misleading Marxist diatribe"?
- 7) Which former spin doctor to David Cameron was found guilty of phone hacking charges?

Domestic news

- 1) What TV programme did former Education Secretary Michael Gove complain had been used by 'leftie teachers' to show war as a "series of catastrophic mistakes perpetuated by an out-of-touch elite"?
- 2) Who argued that the devastating floods in the UK earlier this year were caused by the government legalising same sex marriage?



Scottish referendum

- 3) Name the Channel 4 'documentary' which demonised low income families.
- 4) What was the percentage yes/no vote in the Scottish Independence referendum on 18 September?
- 5) What happened when two clergyman went to hand in a campaign letter on food poverty to the Witney constituency office of Tory Prime

- Minister and avowed Christian, David Cameron?
- 6) The most affluent family in the UK - Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor and family - has more wealth than what percentage of the population?
- 7) What was deemed to be no more effective than paracetamol at treating influenza?
- 8) According to the Sunday Times Rich List, what is the total wealth owned by the richest 1,000 people in the UK? a) £346 billion b) £478 billion c) £520 billion
- 9) Who, according to the Financial Times, gave Britain "a £10 billion boost"?
- 10) What happened after the right-wing Mail on Sunday claimed fraudsters abuse food banks?
- 11) Who was evicted for a second time by Newham's Blairite mayor, Sir Robin Wales?
- 12) Who had to fork out £2.6 million to 45,000 customers after sending them threatening letters from non-existent legal firms?

Workers' struggles

- 1) What event happened 30 years ago on 1 March provoking arguably the biggest industrial action in Britain?
- 2) What event also took place on 1 March effectively ending trade union influence in the Labour Party.
- 3) Who was re-elected unopposed assistant general secretary of the PCS trade union in March?
- 4) Why did solicitors and barristers go on strike?
- 5) In October, who struck for first time in its 133 year history?
- 6) Name (and shame) the Labour MP who crossed a UCU union picket line at Queen Mary University to deliver a lecture.
- 7) Which organisation launched the Fast Food Rights campaign?
- 8) Where was the government's unjust Bedroom Tax defeated?
- 9) Whose 90 days of strike action result in a partial pay victory?
- 10) Whose protest action against their rogue landlord outraged the Sun?

The world stage

- 1) Where were 529 people sentenced to death, after a 24-hour trial, for killing a policeman?
- 2) Which notorious prison was closed in April?
- 3) Which terrorist group abducted 280 schoolgirls in northeast Nigeria on 5 May?
- 4) Name the billionaire businessman who won Ukraine's presidential election on 25 May.
- 5) On 13 October, who voted by 274



Name the above who died in 2014. Answers below

- A) Gerry Conlon - one of the Guildford Four who was falsely accused of an IRA pub bombing and imprisoned for 14 years
 B) Ian Paisley - the demagogue Protestant politician who stoked the fires of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland
 C) Pete Seeger - the US folk artist and left-wing political activist
 D) Tony Benn - veteran Labour left-trade unionists and Millwall fans
 E) Former Israeli PM Ariel Sharon - aka the 'butcher of Sabra and Shatila' Palestinian refugee camps. He had been in a coma since 2006
 F) RMT general secretary Bob Crow - dubbed by the right-wing media as the 'most hated man in Britain', his departure was mourned by socialists.



New Era Estate protester photo Paul Mattsson

- 1) The closure of Cortonwood pit in Yorkshire, leading to the great 1984-85 miners' strike
- 2) Labour's special conference on the Collins Review - held in the east London constituency where Keir Hardie was elected the first independent Labour MP in 1892. It only took two hours to vote through the change.
- 3) PCS Left Unity and Socialist Party member, Chris Baugh
- 4) To protest over the Con-Dem government's swingeing cuts to legal aid funding
- 5) The Royal College of Midwives, over pay cuts
- 6) Shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt whose lecture was ironically titled: "Marx, Engels and the making of Marxism"
- 7) The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), to fight for a living minimum wage, and for union and workplace rights
- 8) Scotland. Following a successful campaign by the Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation
- 9) Doncaster Care UK workers on the tabloid's front page after supporting a demonstration of tenants from the New Era housing estate in Hackney, east London
- 10) Celebrity Russell Brand was vilified on the tabloid's front page after the Metro workers, teachers and the homeless workers movement, Germany 89% of the vote
- 6) Syria's despot Bashar al-Assad, with tinians and 66 israelis resulted in the deaths of 2,143 Pales-
- 13) Michael Brown. The unarmed black teenager was shot dead by a white policeman who will not face criminal charges
- 14) Demanding independence for Catalonia from the Spanish state
- 15) Hong Kong, Pro-democracy protesters used them as protection against police tear gas attacks
- 16) Immediate action to halt destructive man-made climate change
- 17) The Berlin Wall
- 18) The foreign exchange market, known as Forex
- 19) Qatar and Russia. England and Qatar and Russia. England and who created four after losing the 2022 world cup bid was, however, accused of impropriety
- 20) Assassin's Creed Unity - which portrays French revolutionary Robespierre as a psychopathic mass murderer



\$15 Now victory in Seattle

- 9) Where in the USA was a doubling of the federal minimum wage won this year?
- 10) Name the Anti Austerity Alliance candidate elected to the Dáil (Irish parliament) in October on the tide of a massive anti-water charges movement?
- 11) After a five-week election in India who became prime minister of India?
- 12) What was the name given to the Israeli government's war on Gaza?
- 13) Whose shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, in August produced angry protests across the USA?
- 14) What were 1.8 million people doing on the streets of Barcelona on 11 September?
- 15) Where did the 'umbrella revolution' take place?
- 16) In September, what did 300,000-400,000 protesters in New York City demand?
- 17) The removal of which notorious barrier 25 years ago was celebrated in November?
- 18) What was illegally manipulated by rogue traders resulting in multi-billion dollar fines against major banks?
- 19) Which nations were cleared by FIFA of corruption?
- 20) What video game has caused uproar among sections of the left in France?

Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine

The December/January issue includes:

● **World economy**

The world is stuck in the great stagnation, writes Peter Taaffe

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Answers

The green benches

- 1) Tory MP Mark Simmonds can't live on £67,000 salary, plus £28,000 accommodation expenses, plus the £173,000 general expenses he claimed last year
- 2) The upper-class reactionaries: Douglas Carswell, Clacton, and Mark Reckless, Rochester and Strood
- 3) 25%. That compares to 12.5% of Labour and 15% of Lib Dem MPs. This is in addition to MPs enjoying publicly funded second homes
- 4) Because the records have been shredded
- 5) 30 seconds
- 6) The United Nations
- 7) Ex-News of the World editor Andy Coulson was given an 18 month sentence

Domestic news

- 1) The comedy series Blackadder
- 2) Henley-on-Thames (ex-Ukip councillor David Silverster
- 3) Benefits Street
- 4) 45% yes to 55% no. A Times poll in December showed 52% yes and 48% no
- 5) Staff called the police.
- 6) 10%. The Grosvenors' assets are £7.9 billion, while the 10% is £7 billion
- 7) Tamiflu - after the government had forked out £473 million in five years to 'big pharma' for the drug
- 8) c) £520 billion - up 15% on 2013
- 9) Post Offices and drug dealers, whose trade was included in the UK's economic growth figures
- 10) Financial donations to the Trussell Trust charity surged by over £50,000
- 11) Unemployed single mothers, known as the Focus £15 mums
- 12) Rip-off pay day loan provider, Wonga

Workers' struggles

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The world stage

- 1) Egypt. The defendants were arrested during protests against the coup which ousted Muslim Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi in 2013.
- 2) Abu Ghaid, Iraq. Where inmates were tortured under the US-led occupation of the country in 2003
- 3) Boko Haram
- 4) Petro Poroshenko
- 5) UK MPs
- 6) Syria's despot Bashar al-Assad, with tinians and 66 israelis resulted in the deaths of 2,143 Pales-
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Defend universal healthcare access

SAVE OUR NHS

Luke Pilling

Medical researcher, Exeter hospital

In response to the rising deficit of North, East and West (New) Devon NHS, smokers and obese individuals will be denied surgery unless they quit smoking, or lose 5% of their body weight. There's also talk of this policy being rolled out nationally.

Of course healthier lifestyles should be encouraged, but so-called health managers should not implement such presumptuous policies which undermine the principles of the NHS: to provide free (at the point of use), non-discriminatory healthcare.

Not only does this policy assume that all obese people could lose weight if they wanted to (they can't), but that denial of surgery will somehow decrease costs. But if the surgery is just deferred to a later date, the patient's condition - and treatment cost - may get worse.

And what about the responsibilities of cigarette and food companies? Their profits won't be hit by this policy.

New Devon NHS's £14.5 million deficit speaks of a much wider problem in NHS funding caused by cuts - to pay for the banking crisis of 2008 -

and even before that Private Finance Initiative schemes implemented under Labour and the Tories.

Limiting NHS access will not address this, and may open the floodgates to other restrictions and the introduction of additional up-front charges.

No risks?

Plenty of people enjoy activities with risks associated with them, from climbing and cycling, to drinking and dancing. Should the NHS limit access to surgery for anyone with a lifestyle perceived to increase risk? Of course not - we should have a universal healthcare system.

Yet the NHS is currently being privatised, with services tendered out. Who gets certain NHS treatments could be decided by board members and shareholders with no public accountability.

Already in the UK private healthcare providers preferentially treat "acute" (short-term) illnesses, but leave expensive "chronic" (long-term) conditions to the NHS.

To care for everyone effectively, particularly with the average age of the population continuing to increase, we need a socialist National Health Service, owned and operated collectively and democratically.



Marching against NHS cuts and privatisation photo Bob Severn

The Socialist Party says:

- Scrap and reverse all NHS privatisation
- Kick out Private Finance Initiative deals
- Bin the Health and Social Care Act
- Scrap the £20 billion 'efficiency' savings
- For a fully funded, accountable, socialist NHS

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!