

Osborne's 20p insult to low paid



FIGHT FOR £10/hr NOW!



A 20p an hour payrise - so much then for the government's "giveaway" pre-election budget!

What an insult to the lowest paid - a paltry rise in the minimum wage from £6.50 to £6.70 an hour, by next October. And 18-20 year olds will only be entitled to an unbelievably low minimum of £5.30 an hour.

As the BBC's journalist Robert Peston dryly pointed out, the rise "would allow the recipient of that wage to rent a one-bedroom place in a dowdier part of London, so long as he or she didn't eat, use power, pay council tax or wear clothes."

Tory Chancellor George Osborne claims the economy and our living standards are on track for a sustainable recovery. Yes, the super-rich have grown wealthier under this government. But the reality facing most workers, and in particular young people, could not be further from Osborne's claim.

A recent report by the Resolution Foundation found that during the capitalist 'great recession' of 2009 to 2014 young workers experienced the highest drop in average wages - 12.5%. The situation facing many today is one of low pay and casualised jobs, with zero-hour contracts. So where exactly is our recovery Mr Osborne?

On top of this, young people leaving university are weighed down by a mountain of debt most will never pay off.

An inaccessible housing market means we're stuck in accommodation rented from

rip-off private landlords or stuck living with parents. When housing costs are factored in, living standards for young workers are 18% lower than their equivalents five years ago.

Osborne's budget will do nothing to alleviate any of these problems. On the contrary, the Tories intend to make things worse by introducing 'slave labour' workfare jobs and axing housing benefit for young people.

But the 'official opposition' to the Tory-Lib Dem government is no better.

The Labour Party says it will match the Tories' austerity plans for further spending cuts on jobs and public services (see pages 6 and 7). It refuses to condemn the use of zero-hour contracts outright. It has pledged to raise the minimum wage, but to £8 an hour and only then by 2020. An increase of just 30p a year!

Most people across all ages are worse off

since the start of the economic crisis. When Osborne talks about 'liberating' pensioners savings he is only talking about a wealthy minority - some 1.6 million pensioners are in poverty in the UK.

With the Tories, Lib Dems, Labour and Ukip signed up to continue a programme of austerity, attacks on the living standards of young people will only continue.

That's why we need to get organised and fight back. In the workplace, we need to fight for a minimum wage of £10 an hour now and for decent working conditions.

But we also need to build a socialist political alternative to capitalism in order to deliver the living standards and public services we need and to end poverty and inequality. Join us in that fight!

Mark Best

the Socialist

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Revealed: Tesco's 2012 plotting against Doncaster drivers

Alistair Tice

In August 2012, 183 Tesco drivers in Doncaster were transferred over to Eddie Stobart Logistics (ESL), yet within one month were all given notice of redundancy. The drivers, all Unite union members, took 15 days of strike action to try to save their jobs.

We now have evidence that appears to back up what all the drivers thought at the time: that Tesco and Stobart colluded in sacking them, to be replaced by non-union drivers on worse terms and conditions. An email trail of Tesco and ESL memos reveals the employers' cold-hearted calculations to force through their cost-cutting project at the drivers' expense.

After a 91% vote for industrial action, they mass picketed for 50 hours, blockading up to 120 lorries and even drove a tank to the distribution centre gates. This bold action did not stop the redundancies, but did force a 50% better redundancy package.

Unite and the drivers pursued

an Employment Tribunal (ET) case for lack of consultation and unfair dismissal. In January this year, the drivers accepted an out of court settlement of £15,000 each in compensation, five times what the companies originally offered.

But the witness statements and disclosure documents submitted for the ET reveal the companies' plotting.

Advance planning

The emails show that Tesco and Stobart's clearly discussed redundancies and savings from April 2012 - months before the transfer and sackings.

In an internal memo, Phil Atkins, a senior Tesco manager, was told: "If you don't make the drivers redundant then you won't get the T & Cs [terms and conditions] saving..." This indicated that the plan was to sack the Doncaster drivers and their work be taken up by Stobart drivers from nearby Goole on much lower pay.

But this plan was seemingly disguised behind ESL conducting a

four-week audit of running the Doncaster site after the transfer to it in August. On 5 September, ESL gave all 183 drivers 90 days' notice of redundancy.

As Sheila Woodbridge, ESL Human Resources, made clear: "Tupe (legislation on transfer of employment) does not confer any rights to protection against redundancies if there are factors which mean changes are needed." In other words, in this case, Tupe wasn't worth the paper it's written on!

Tesco aimed to get rid of a strongly unionised section of its workforce. In its comments on ESL's proposal, it said: "Benefits - Tesco Unite membership reduced due to the Tupe (transfer) out."

The companies made plans to break any strike. Tesco wanted to make sure industrial action caused minimal disruption, including delaying the transfer until after the Euro 2012 football tournament and the Olympics.

Phil Atkins was especially worried about the possibility of the Doncaster Distribution Centre warehouse



A Doncaster Tesco driver with family photo Yorkshire SP

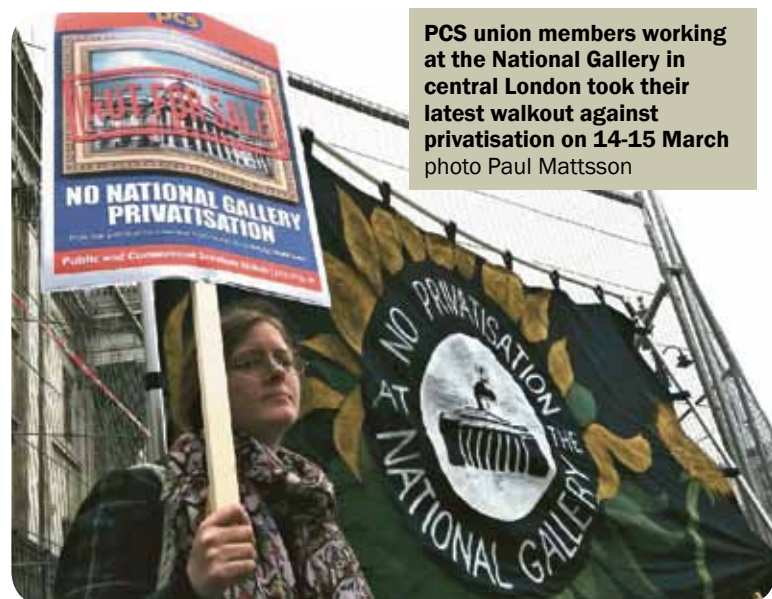
workers (also Unite members) being drawn into the dispute. Unfortunately the warehouse workers did not come out in support of the drivers but the drivers' strikes and picket blockades "hurt" Stobart, which as an anti-union firm had never faced industrial action before.

We all know what bosses can be like but when you see it written down in black and white it is still shocking

to see how heartless, calculating and ruthless as these were in pursuit of maximising their profits.

But they are frightened of trade unions and the power that they have if workers are prepared to fight. The Tesco drivers did, inspiring, forcing massive concessions.

Read more about the dispute at www.socialistparty.org.uk



PCS union members working at the National Gallery in central London took their latest walkout against privatisation on 14-15 March photo Paul Mattsson

Essex: nine day fire control strike

Dave Murray

Fire control operators in Essex were on strike on 7-16 March in protest against the imposition of a 12-hour shift pattern in January.

The strike kicked off with a spiteful lockout by management, but in response the control staff escalated their action from the planned seven days to nine.

The changes have already forced some people out of the job, or into job share and part time work. As Riccardo la Torre, Essex Fire Brigades Union chair told me, it is a funny kind of 'modernisation' that forces women out of the workplace.

This is a now a long running dispute in which the union has made every effort to come up with a cost neutral compromise - none have been accepted by a dogmatic and inflexible strategic management team.

It is clear that if the shift changes are rammed down the throats of the control operators, then they will come for the fire stations next.

The most recent action is the first in which the control staff have been out on strike on their own. Their determination and high morale have shocked the brigade's management, who have driven past the picket line at the swish new Kelvedon control centre with narrowed eyes and gritted teeth. Senior managers who

covered strikers duties did so in four hour shifts rather than the 12 they have unilaterally imposed on the workers.

This dispute is far from over. Alongside the headline issue of the shift patterns, a new and unreliable IT system has been introduced, and there is the unspoken hostility of the management towards the union, which underlies everything. Just as importantly, the control operators have had a taste of the power of their industrial action and the overwhelming support from fellow trade unionists and the public at large.

Donate to the Essex FBU Hardship Fund: sort code 08-60-01, account number 20292568

Midlands NSSF: Building the rank and file fightback

Dave Gorton

Unite LE/372 branch (personal capacity)

"It ain't getting any easier for the working class," said Kev Greenway in closing the 2015 National Shop Stewards Network (NSSF) Midlands conference.

Kev, a former PCS civil service union national executive member, detailed the government's union busting attempts to smash the PCS, and was defiant they wouldn't succeed.

National Union of Teachers national executive member Jane Nellist opened the conference reminding delegates of the incredible impact the NSSF has made in argu-

ing for united coordinated action across unions. As many speakers echoed, the tasks ahead remained - to build a new layer of fighting shop stewards.

Fire Brigades Union member Dave Pitt welcomed such conferences as an opportunity for activists to bounce ideas off each other. Dave's call for a political direction for the unions was another recurring theme.

Billy Hayes, Communication Workers Union (CWU) general secretary, was warmly welcomed. He condemned Labour's austerity-lite as "not sufficient". Billy congratulated the work of the NSSF to which the CWU is affiliated.

Billy answered a delegate's ques-

tion about whether the CWU would ever break with Labour with "never say never" but the electoral system in the UK was a complicating factor. "In Ireland, it would be a completely different situation."

Helen Pattison from Youth Fight for Jobs highlighted the campaigning work for a £10-an-hour minimum wage alongside the BFAWU bakers' union. Young people are not prepared to stomach another decade of austerity and no hope; they will fight back and the unions need to be involved.

There were delegates from eight unions present and they also heard NSSF chair, Rob Williams, predicting a period of incredible volatility opening up after the elections.

Socialist elected to Unite executive council

Socialist Party member Suzanne Muna, secretary of the Housing Workers branch, and a United Left candidate, has been elected unopposed to represent the London and Eastern region on Unite's executive council.

"I was selected on the basis of our strong branch record, fighting and winning successive disputes in the last couple of years," said Suzanne. "I am committed to representing all Unite members in the region, but women and young people have played prominent roles in those battles, being among the worst victims of austerity measures. I will be

emphasising the need to draw new fighters in the struggle against austerity from these groups of workers." This is an important year for Unite with the general election in May, which will influence our ongoing debate about Unite's relationship with the Labour Party, and the union's political strategy.

The Unite Rules Conference in July and the election of all workplace reps, branch officers and constitutional committees will also help shape the union for the future. Unite needs more members like Suzanne in positions of authority this year.

Socialist Party members in Unite

Bus drivers ballot against pay robbery

Abellio London bus workers were told their 2015 pay award - 2% plus other benefits - due in January had been "suspended". This, the second half of a two-year deal negotiated last year, would be used to recover company losses from the all London

bus drivers' strikes. In a ballot last week across all five depots - Battersea, Beddington, Hayes, Twickenham and Walworth - Unite members voted overwhelmingly by 528 to 12 for strike action. The next step is a formal postal ballot.



Get the **National Shop Stewards Network** bulletin - sign up at: bit.ly/16sZJxm

Come to the NSSF national conference: Saturday 4 July, Conway Hall, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL. Put the date in your diary now! Speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka www.shopstewards.net

Northern Ireland: Workers strike back against austerity cuts

Kevin Henry

Friday 13 March saw tens of thousands of workers in education, health, civil services and, importantly, public transport, take part in coordinated strike action against a Stormont austerity agenda.

The action involved Nipsa, the largest union in the North, the teachers' union Into, Unite, Unison and the GMB, against a backdrop of anti-union propaganda in the local press. Union busting tactics were used against ambulance workers on the day - management declaring a 'state of emergency' in order to stop workers striking!

However, the strike was overwhelming supported by the population. An opinion poll on the Belfast telegraph website put support for the strike at 82%!

U-turn

The political effect of the strike was seen on the Monday before, when Sinn Féin did a U-turn on welfare reform. They accused their government colleagues, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), of acting in bad faith and not implementing measures necessary to protect the vulnerable.

The real reason was summed up by a Belfast Telegraph commentator: "Maybe it has dawned on the party [Sinn Féin] that in slashing services and triggering massive strike action later this week it is now the target of the unions and the workers."

Sinn Féin, who are not in principle opposed to 'welfare reform', ie cuts, fears being exposed for implementing vicious austerity in the North, thereby damaging their image as an 'anti-austerity' party in the South.

This all serves to underline the weak nature of the Northern Ireland assembly. It has not just been Sinn Féin but also the DUP which has been forced back from austerity measures when faced with a determined protest movement.

Socialist Party members were



Trade unionists turned out in force for the stoppage photo Mary Cahillane

out on force on the day, joining the marches and visiting picket lines, not just in Belfast but in Derry, Newry, Enniskillen, Craigavon, Magherfelt, Cookstown and Dungannon. Our members distributed 10,000 leaflets to build for the strike action.

We also distributed almost 10,000 leaflets on the day and sold over 250 copies of our strike paper.

Where next?

In several key unions, Socialist Party members played an important role putting pressure on trade union leaders and officials to ensure strike ballots were won and the strike was enthusiastically built for.

Socialist Youth members were to the forefront in campaigning to get young people to join the strike - including mobilising college students to join the marches, and in Queens University organising a referendum where 87% of students voted to take strike action.

On the picket lines, the key question on people's minds was, where next? Unfortunately, the answer

largely received from the speakers' platform in Belfast would have left them disappointed. Shockingly, the trade union official chairing the rally said: "People always ask, where next? To that I say to the cafes and pubs!"

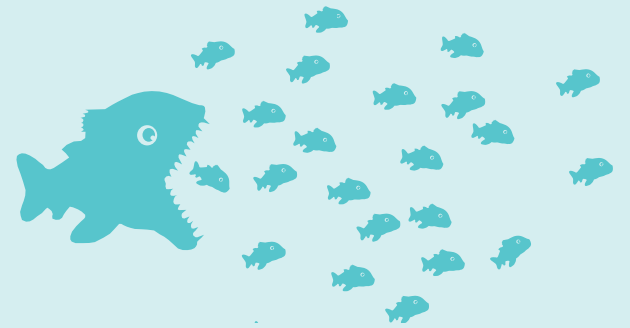
This lack of serious intent was a million miles removed from the Socialist Party, whose material on the day declared: "Name the next strike date."

The key issue now is to ensure that 13 March isn't a one-off event but the opening shot in a campaign that can stop Stormont implementing its austerity agenda.

Socialist Party members in the unions are campaigning for a second day of strike action in the run-up to the general election. If the current trade union leaders are not prepared to do this, then union activists must organise to make them do it.

Linked to this is the urgent task of building a new party of protestant and catholic workers that can challenge the establishment parties in Stormont that have nothing to offer but division and poverty.

Them...



Callous tax

Low paid worker Carol Hall, whose disabled son died after being attacked by thugs, now faces being evicted from her family home because of the government's hated 'bedroom tax'.

The tax refers to the withdrawal of housing benefit payments for social housing tenants if they are deemed to have 'spare' bedrooms. Having lost a £61.35 weekly carer's allowance, Carol is unable to meet the £25 a week rent rise on her housing association home since her son's death.

decade, from 722,000 in 2003-04 to 1.7 million in 2013-14 - according to the Future of Private Renting report.

Austerity means ill health

In direct contradiction to government claims, a study by University of Newcastle academics and local public health officials has concluded that the bedroom tax has "increased poverty and had broad-ranging adverse effects on health, wellbeing and social relationships".

Along with other cuts, such as the removal of council tax benefit and tax credits, the tax is likely to result in increased demand for GP and mental health services.

Cost of living

40% of private tenants' incomes are typically taken up by rent

Housing crisis

With a dearth of affordable social housing, (currently 1.8 million people are on council waiting lists), rents charged by private landlords have spiralled out of control. The number of affordable homes built in 2013-14 was the lowest in a decade - despite the UK's population rising by five million over the past 12 years.

This chronic housing shortage, escalating rents and workers' wage cuts, have resulted in a more than a doubling of private sector tenants claiming housing benefit in the past

Landlords' subsidy

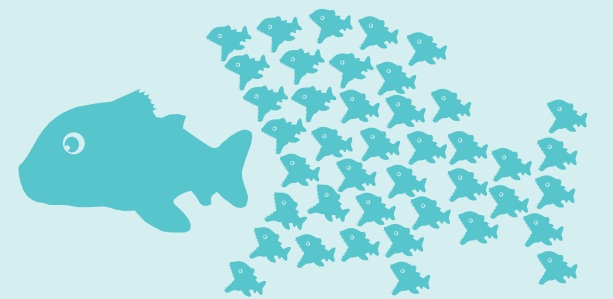
The amount of housing benefit rent subsidies going to private landlords has also more than doubled in real terms over the last ten years, from £3.9 billion in 2003-04 to £9.5 billion in 2013-14, and is set to top £10 billion in 2018-19.

Retailers' subsidy

All the big - and very profitable - high street retail shops have refused to sign up to the 'living wage' ie paying their workers £7.85 an hour (£9.15 an hour in London).

It means that these shops' low paid workers have to claim in-work tax benefits to survive. Effectively, the profits of these companies are being subsidised from public funds.

...& Us



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

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!
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 text 0776 1818 206 @Socialist_party /CWISocialistParty

PM supports wealthy bigot

Tory Prime Minister David Cameron is a big fan of the allegedly violent and notoriously bigoted presenter of BBC's Top Gear, Jeremy Clarkson.

Cameron - who along with Clarkson and other VIPs form the elitist 'Chipping Norton set' - used parliament to defend his "friend", describing him as a "huge talent".

Cameron's defence made no reference to Clarkson's documented racism nor to his rant against public sector workers back in November 2011, when trade unionists were forced to take a one-day strike to

defend their inadequate pensions from government attacks.

Ageing petrolhead Clarkson, who currently gets £1 million a year from TV licence fee payers to air his prejudices, railed against strikers "with their gilt-edged pensions... while we have to work for a living". This bilious attack was immediately followed with: "I'd take them outside and execute them in front of their families." Clarkson later attempted to dismiss this chilling remark as a 'joke'.

By your friends shall you be known Mr Cameron.



Attacked by Clarkson

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Review: India's daughter

Fight gender, caste and class oppression!

Isai Priya, a Tamil activist and Socialist Party member, reviews BBC documentary India's Daughter

This powerful programme looked at the infamous rape case in 2012 where 23 year old student Jyoti Singh was gang-raped on a bus in India's capital, Delhi. The case sparked huge protests in India and internationally.

Students, women and men, came out in numbers demanding justice and received big support. They chanted 'long live women's freedom - give justice!' This forced the Indian government to set up a special team to investigate and file the case within 17 days (usually it would take 90).

92

rapes take place every day in India

From day one of the protest it stopped being about Jyoti's individual case and took up the oppression of women generally. The documentary shows some of the brutal methods used by the state against peaceful protesters. Freedom of speech and the right to protest were seriously attacked.

There are more than 92 rapes every day in India. So why was it this particular case that initiated this reaction? There has been a grow-

ing anger towards the crimes that take place against women. The fact that an ordinary woman coming home from a movie with a friend at 8pm was attacked in such a way, hit home the message that it could happen to anyone.

The Indian state banned India's Daughter from being shown, arguing that excerpts "appear to encourage and incite violence against women."

One of the convicted rapists was interviewed in the programme. Some of the things he says are sickening and he expresses no guilt. But in reality, it was banned because the government feared the potential reaction.

Victim blaming

Many rapes are not reported by the victims. This can be because of fear of the police, pressure from family and fear of being blamed. Victims are likely to be asked 'what were you wearing,' 'what did you say,' etc. Justification of rape because of the clothes a woman was wearing or the time she was out on the street is absolutely disgraceful. There is also a strong culture of shame and the need to protect the 'dignity' of the family.

Women are treated as property and objects. Marital rape is legal in India. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, states: "Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape."

India boasts the fourth largest economy in the world. At least 30% of the population live in dire poverty but the country is also home to five (dollar) billionaires who were ranked among the 100 richest people in the world - such is the huge

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

www.socialistworld.net

divide between the super-rich and super-poor.

Impoverished social conditions and a backward cultural system in general maintain the male hierarchy and acute oppression against women. The Delhi rapist came from the most deprived background - he had no education, he had seen beatings and sexual abuse within the family and was familiar with prostitution.

This doesn't justify the behaviour but shows that the issues can't be discussed without questioning the state's failure to its people. There is enormous wealth in India that could create a better society if it were planned to serve the masses instead of letting a few billionaires plunder it.

In the current society it would be unrealistic to argue that women and men are equal. A history of patriarchy, propaganda and so-called cultural values are embedded into the minds of men and women. Social change is not going to take

place overnight.

The Delhi incident was a storm that came and went but unless the state is able to provide the needs of the masses it will not be the only storm. This type of attack takes place on a regular basis.

Safety?

Women are forced to work in terrible conditions, for long hours and low pay. Economic constraints force them to put their safety at risk. Equal opportunities, equal rights and equal wages, as well as better working conditions, will improve some aspects of women's lives. However these will not just be given, they have to be demanded.

In south Asia women are oppressed in numerous ways - religion, culture, caste and gender. All of these make it harder to raise their voices. They are forced to find safety in family from the attacks they face in the workplace and on the streets. They are in a way forced to find safety in prison.

Those of us living elsewhere want to help these women find their voice. To do that they need the con-

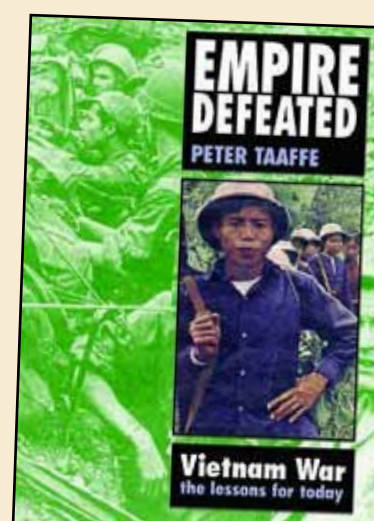
fidence that they can fight back. For us, the best way to work towards this is to fight back ourselves - by breaking our chains, we will be able to give hope to the women back home.

Women are forced to find safety in family from the attacks they face in the workplace and on the streets

Young Tamil women living in Britain and elsewhere are faced with oppression which is often ignored. In order to preserve their identity and to preserve their culture, families are keeping these girls from doing what they want to do. In the name of keeping them safe, girls are shut off from the rest of the world.

We have to remember the words of Rosa Luxemburg: "those that do not move; do not know they are chained."

50 years ago US imperialism invaded Vietnam at Da Nang



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Scotland and the fight for socialism

A parting of the ways with Solidarity

Extracts of a statement from Socialist Party Scotland executive committee

Socialist Party Scotland has left Solidarity - a party we co-founded in 2006 - following long-running political differences with its party leader, Tommy Sheridan.

Tommy has been calling for a vote for the Scottish National Party (SNP) at the Westminster elections since the days following the independence referendum in September last year. This has been done at the same time as the SNP-run Scottish government and local councils have been carrying out brutal Tory austerity.

The recent Solidarity conference voted in favour of urging "YES supporters across Scotland to consider lending their vote to SNP candidates on the basis of continued support for independence, nuclear disarmament and in opposition to unacceptable and unnecessary austerity cuts to public services and jobs."

As the most prominent socialist in Scotland, Tommy Sheridan's voice, and now that of a majority of Solidarity members, will be increasingly associated with support for the SNP, a pro-business party that is carrying out cuts.

Tommy Sheridan and Solidarity's decision marks a significant move away from a principled socialist position and is a step to the right.

As we approach the Westminster elections we now have the ridiculous situation of Tommy Sheridan and Solidarity calling for a vote for SNP candidates, even where genuine anti-austerity, trade union and socialist candidates are standing

under the banner of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Alternative

Socialist Party Scotland put forward a resolution to the conference calling for continued support by Solidarity for the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and its candidates. Scottish TUSC stands for public ownership, opposition to all cuts, taxing the rich and big business and a living wage of £10 an hour.

In contrast, the SNP leadership has been demanding tax cuts for the oil corporations, are imposing below inflation pay caps for public sector workers and support austerity policies that will do nothing to ease the burden of savage cuts.

In addition, the SNP leaders also oppose public ownership of even the privatised gas and electricity companies and are hostile to demands for tax increases on the rich and big business.

Socialist Party Scotland will be playing a key role in building the election campaign of Scottish TUSC - a coalition involving the RMT transport trade union, socialist organisations, leading trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners.

We see TUSC as an important interim step towards the building of a new mass working class party in Scotland that can offer a real alternative to the parties of cuts and big business.



Solidarity's decision to call for a SNP vote is a significant move away from a principled socialist position

A different approach would have been possible

Last year's independence referendum saw 1.6 million people vote Yes in what was a working class revolt against austerity and the political establishment.

Scottish Labour, in particular, will pay a devastating political price for their betrayal of the interests of working class communities in Scotland.

The huge success of the Hope Over Fear tour, which Socialist Party Scotland helped initiate, saw tens of thousands attend meetings to hear a radical, left and socialist case for voting Yes.

Tommy Sheridan became a big pole of attraction for many looking for a radical alternative to the

pro-business policies of the SNP leaders.

Socialist Party Scotland urged Tommy to help launch a new party/movement following the referendum that could have attracted many who were mobilised by the Hope Over Fear tour.

Such a party could have reached out to the thousands who were moving to join political parties following the referendum. It would have grown rapidly with a clear uncompromising anti-austerity and socialist approach at its core.

Instead, Tommy, without any consultation with leading members of Solidarity, announced his support in September for the SNP

at the Westminster elections and has continued to do so. This was a major mistake that resulted in a lost opportunity to strengthen the forces of socialism and genuine anti-austerity politics in Scotland. It has also meant that Solidarity has been unable to make the gains it could have.

While Scottish Labour will rightly be hammered in the general election, the SNP does not offer any alternative in the battle against cuts and austerity policies.

See the Socialist Party Scotland's response to Tommy Sheridan's call to vote SNP at socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Socialist Party fortnight of action 21 March - 4 April

A guide to fundraising and sales of the Socialist

Val O'Flynn
Socialist Party Grimsby

Selling the Socialist and raising Fighting Fund is always at the forefront of our party branch activities.

Where possible every member gets their paper and at least one extra by direct debit and Phil, our sales organiser, makes sure that everyone has all the papers they need on the day it arrives, rather than waiting until the evening branch meeting.

The Socialist gives us the arguments for those casual conversations at the bus stop or workplace. It not only helps us spread our message but could lead to an extra sale, so we always try to have a spare paper with us.

We've started putting a sticker on all our spare papers with details of our branch meetings and contact details and any old papers are left at public places.

Some of us have paper rounds and that's also an easy way for the branch to stay in touch with potential new members, and invite them to public meetings.

Selling the paper on stalls, or canvassing at protests, etc, can be daunting but the more members

we have running the stall, the more confidence it seems to give us and the more fun we have.

There's no doubt that a busy stall attracts people. Using a petition that can be tied in to the cover of the Socialist makes it easier to steer the conversation towards a sale.

Star seller

A little competitiveness between members also helps. We do learn from each other but also develop our own style.

Paul, our star seller, used to be in sales and it shows. He is "luckily able to let you have a copy of the Socialist for only a pound or two pound solidarity price"; while Andy likes to condemn the bias of the mainstream press and then offer "a real newspaper that tells the truth".

The hardest part is just to get over the fear of the word "no". But "no" this time, maybe a "yes" next week.

Public meetings are a great way of boosting our fighting fund. We are proud to explain during the financial appeal that we have no big backers, unlike the establishment parties, and need donations to continue our work before passing the collecting tin around.



Readers will enjoy a redesigned Socialist in our next issue. The new tabloid size weekly newspaper will be 16 pages up to the general election and available at the same cover price of just £1.

Socialist Party branches should use this re-launch to plan extra sales of the Socialist. Set aside some time at this week's meeting to identify workplaces, colleges and estates where the Socialist can be sold and make sure all potential new members are approached to take out a regular subscription.

Subscription forms can be obtained from the circulation office - 020 8988 8795.

May Day - a celebration of workers struggles internationally

We send May Day greetings from our Trades Union Council to support workers in struggle and commemorate International Workers' Day - which was originally called by the Second International (of socialist parties) in 1890 to fight for the eight-hour working day. Most people have only been taught that May Day is a pagan festival linked to spring, but it's the fight for workers' rights that has been the significant reason it has been celebrated. Workers around the world took part in strikes and demonstrations in their millions. May Day became an international 24-hour general strike, being recognised as a public holiday in many countries. However, in the USA, the government understood the threat to capitalism from international work-

ers' solidarity and in 1896 invented Labour Day, held in September - an attempt to split American workers off from the rest of the world.

It is ironic therefore that the recent campaigns for \$15 an hour in the USA, successfully won by socialists in Seattle, is being echoed on the May Day London march this year with the call for an equivalent £10 an hour minimum wage.

It didn't take long for workers' newspapers to carry May Day Greetings as an indication of the support they had from the movement and to raise much needed funds.

The same applies today. And why your union branch or campaign should put May Day greetings in the Socialist.

Steve Glennon, Stevenage



MAY DAY
greetings with
the **Socialist**

Get a 25% discount by paying by Wednesday 8 April. Final deadline Wednesday 15 April 2015. Greeting price guide: £500 for a whole page (£375 before 8 April); £300 for a half-page (£225); £170 quarter-page (£127.50); £90 one-eighth (£67.50); £50 one-sixteenth (£37.50); £30 1/32 (£22.50); £20 small box (£15). Other rates are available. For enquires please contact us at the details below. Phone **020 8988 8781** Email jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk Give your greeting online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday

USE YOUR VOTE TO HIT THE 1%

Build the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party deputy general secretary

The general election is taking place in less than eight weeks' time, yet half of voters do not yet know who they are going to vote for. Old political loyalties have been eroded over decades, and are now heading towards a qualitative breakdown.

In particular workers' traditional loyalty to Labour has steeply declined. From 1997 until they were defeated in 2010, Labour lost five million votes. Despite widespread hatred of the current government, Labour leader Ed Miliband has not been able to win the majority of these lost voters back. In Scotland 'traditional' Labour voters are abandoning the party in vast numbers. As a result this is the hardest election to predict in many decades.

At root this is because Labour today is a capitalist party. Unlike in the past when 'old' Labour, though it had a capitalist leadership, was nonetheless a workers' party at its base. It could, via its democratic structures, be pressured by the working class.

In the past when Labour had been defeated, particularly after 1979, a strong leftward move developed in the ranks of the Labour Party. Following 2010 this has been completely absent. Labour's pro-austerity programme has been accepted by the party with barely any protest.

Trade union leaders

What should be the response of socialists and those opposed to austerity to this situation? For the majority of trade union leaders the answer has been to do everything possible to maximise the Labour vote despite its woeful policies. This has included giving vast amounts of their members' money to Labour - £7 million in the last quarter of 2014 alone.

Contrary to the baying of the right-wing press, this money has not given the unions any influence over Labour. Labour's democratic structures have long since been destroyed and the final remnants were torn down with the passage of the Collins Review last year.

When rumours circulated recently that Unite the Union would withdraw a £1.5 million donation if they didn't get their chosen candidate on the shortlist for Halifax constituency (denied by the un-

ion's general secretary Len McCluskey) it was revealed to what lengths the Labour leadership would go in order to prevent even the tiniest whiff of union 'influence'. Tony Blair immediately stepped in to round up a big-business backer of Labour to pledge to replace the money in order to prevent Unite having any say over the shortlist, never mind over any more significant decisions!

Contrary to the baying of the right-wing press, donations to Labour have not given the unions influence over the party

No doubt millions of workers will vote Labour on 7 May, desperate to get rid of the Tories and hoping against hope that a Labour government will at least take its foot off the austerity accelerator. These faint hopes are being fanned by the leaders of the Labour-affiliated trade unions, even those who have previously been correctly critical of the right-wing character of the Labour leadership. At last year's Unite conference, for example, Len McCluskey declared: "Unite stands fully behind Labour and Ed Miliband in the increasingly radical agenda he has outlined. It is a people's agenda and this union will be proud to fight alongside Labour to secure it."

In reality, however, Labour's agenda is not radical or in the interests of 'the people'. Over the last five years the majority in Britain have suffered a severe drop in living standards - the greatest since the Victorian era - and Labour is not putting forward any significant measures to reverse the situation other than a small increase in the minimum wage - by 2020 Reaching £8 an hour by then is an increase of about 30p a year! Public sector workers meanwhile will face a continuation of the current 1% pay limit.

Over £35 billion has been cut from public services, more than at any time since World War Two. Already many services have ceased to exist, and yet more cuts are piling up. The local authority budgets agreed in recent weeks will



TUSC supporters protest in Leicester photo Leicester TUSC

mean an average further cut in spending of 8.8%. Labour has said it will not reverse any of these cuts but, on the contrary, will make far more.

It has taken time for the full horror of these cuts to be felt. Millions of people have done all they can to survive despite the safety net being cut under them. More and more, however, are now facing destitution. The number using food banks has tripled in the last year, reaching over a million.

Housing crisis

Homelessness has rocketed - mainly as a result of private landlords evicting tenants. At night time the centre of London - amid the luxury dwellings of the super-rich - is filled with huddled figures sleeping in doorways. Yet Labour has ruled out building significant numbers of council homes, and will not reverse the cuts to public services or benefits (other than the bedroom tax) that have led to this misery. On the contrary Rachel Reeves, the shadow welfare minister, has declared Labour will be tougher on benefits than the Tories!

Of course on some issues Labour would be less vicious than the Tories. Labour has promised to repeal the hated Health and Social Care Act, although not to reverse the NHS privatisation which underpins it. It has also promised to repeal the bedroom tax. This is welcome, but as every local authority - including those led by Labour - has implemented the tax up until now, enormous damage has been done that this would be too late to reverse. There are now 1,500 council and housing associations homes stand-

ing empty because the original tenants were forced to leave as a result of the bedroom tax.

It is clear that after 7 May Britain will have a weak and unstable coalition or minority government which - whether Tory or Labour-led - will continue to implement austerity. Far from being 'better' than the governments of Blair or Brown, a Miliband-led government will be compelled by the crisis of the capitalist system - the logic of which Labour fully accepts - to carry out far more brutal attacks on the working class. To foster illusions that Labour offers a real alternative is to leave the working class woefully unprepared for the huge struggles we are going to face to defend our living standards.

The hopes of some on the left that it would be possible to convince workers to join the Labour Party en masse and to fight to 'reclaim' it have largely fallen at the first hurdle

What is the best way to prepare those struggles? Not to call for a vote for 'austerity-lite', which entails taking some responsibility for the actions of a future Labour government, but to begin to build a new party of the working class. If a significant section of the trade union movement had taken this path during the last

five years we could face a very different political terrain today.

In 2011 the trade union movement was able to mobilise millions - on demonstrations and in strike action - against austerity. The only political alternative put forward from the platforms, however, was to vote Labour. Given Labour's record in power, and when Labour councils are loyally implementing the cuts carnage demanded by the Con-Dems, is it any wonder that this strategy has not met with an enthusiastic response?

The hopes of some on the left that it would be possible to convince workers to join the Labour Party en masse and to fight to 'reclaim' it have largely fallen at the first hurdle; most trade unionists cannot be convinced to join a party they no longer see as 'theirs'. Last year the leadership of Unite only affiliated 400,000 of their 1.42 million members to the Labour Party, recognising that the majority of their members no longer identify with the party.

The same process has taken place in every union. Only 32% of Unison members, for example, pay into the Labour-affiliated political fund. The percentage doing so fell to this level under the last Labour government, but have not recovered at all while Labour has been in opposition.

Europe

No amount of pleas by union leaders will prevent the fracturing of support for Labour among workers. It is a process that has been taking place over decades and is now accelerating. Nor is it specific to Britain.

Across Europe social democratic par-

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



ties - the equivalents of Labour - have, when in government, acted virtually identically to the 'traditional' capitalist parties. They have implemented brutal austerity and become profoundly unpopular as a result. The virtual destruction of Pasok in Greece is the ultimate example of this, but the same process has taken place in Spain, France and even in Sweden - the traditional 'home' of social democracy.

As no new mass party has been launched by a significant section of the trade union movement, protest votes have gone to the Greens to some extent, but above all to the divisive and right wing UKIP.

Some in the trade unions argue a new party cannot be built because of the electoral system - 'if only we had proportional representation - everything would be possible'. This is an argument for endless passivity, leaving the working class with a choice between austerity and austerity-lite for an eternity.

Why I'm standing for TUSC 'I can be a voice for youth and the Somali community'

Tessa Warrington from Leicester Socialist Party interviews Mohamed Ahmed, 21, who is standing for TUSC in Wycliffe Ward in Leicester.

How did you become interested in politics?

My family are originally from Somalia, but we moved around a lot when I was growing up, living in various countries. When I was about 13 years old we lived in Pakistan for eight months, during which time Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. Later we lived in Egypt. There was much blatant political corruption in those countries, which deeply affected me. I felt things needed to change and that the voices of the people were being lost. When I moved to Leicester I got involved with the local youth council, then joined the Labour Party after the 2010 general election. At the time I thought their outlook seemed aligned with the views of youth and the communities.



Why have you decided to stand for TUSC?

I want to fight against cuts, to show people that there is real opposition, a real alternative. St Matthews is one of the poorest areas in Leicester, with a large young Somali population. The cuts to the library and youth services have hit particularly hard, but standard, cramped housing is also a critical issue. They're going to be the focus of my campaign. The growing youth and Somali communities are currently going unrepresented. I think I can be a voice for them at a time when the Labour city council has abandoned the interests of the people.

What prompted you to leave the Labour Party?

I couldn't agree with their position on

The capitalist class is never going to make it easy to build a new party that opposes its interests. Socialists should campaign for proportional representation but - precisely because it would give opportunities for a new workers' party - the capitalist class will resist it for as long as they can. Only by taking action and building a significant workers' party that includes a change in the electoral system in its programme will it be possible to build an irresistible momentum on this issue.

History

Alongside this it is argued that a new party would split the 'left' vote and let the Tories in. This does not hold water as the history of the Labour Party itself confirms. In the early days of Labour and its precursors its founders were constantly told that they had to support the capitalist Liberal Party, otherwise they would let the Tories in.

Yet the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), forerunner to the Labour Party, made a qualitative breakthrough under a Tory, not a Liberal government. From 1900 to 1903 its affiliated membership grew from 375,000 to 861,000. In the 1906 general election the Liberals evicted the Tories on a landslide, but the LRC also had 29 MPs elected.

This was not only under first-past-the-post, but before the introduction of universal suffrage! And it was the leftward pressure created by the LRC's success which forced the incoming Liberal government to repeal the vicious Taff Vale anti-trade union laws. In the following decades the Labour Party became a mass party, eclipsing the Liberals.

Imagine today how a new party with

a similar base of support to the LRC - based on a fighting, socialist programme - would have a huge impact on the political situation. It would severely undermine UKIP - winning to its banner those many workers who are voting for UKIP mainly to show their anger with the establishment parties. And it would do more to put leftward pressure on Labour than any amount of trying to influence Labour from within, just as the LRC pressured the Liberals 110 years ago, or as UKIP is acting to push capitalist politics to the right. The existence of such a party would put the working class in a much stronger position to fight against the continued misery it will face under the next government.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was co-founded by the late Bob Crow, then general secretary of the transport workers' union the RMT, in 2010 "to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand against the pro-austerity establishment parties." It is supported by the RMT, alongside the Socialist Party, other socialists, and a wide range of leading trade unionists.

It is a beginning - a step towards the kind of party that is needed. It is not yet a strong enough force to contest every seat in the general election, but it will contest over 135 parliamentary seats and up to 1,000 council seats. It will offer - at least for the minority of workers its voice can reach - a determined socialist alternative to austerity.

The support it gets can act to hasten the development of a new mass workers' party beyond the general election. Joining the fight to build TUSC means playing an important role in the historic fight we face against austerity and austerity-lite.



A TUSC protest against the housing crisis photo Paul Mattsson

School students inspired by struggle

Young people are constantly derided by establishment politicians as lazy or apathetic. But what's the real story? **Helen Pattison** interviews Luke, a sixth former fighting privately run 'academies' in Lewisham, south London (below right), and reports from an angry school hustings in Enfield, north London (box far right).



Luke (right, with megaphone) on a recent demonstration against academies. Read the background to this story and catch the latest updates at socialistparty.org.uk.

Why don't you want to be an academy?

It's back-door privatisation. This is a 125-year contract with a private company and that has implications for students far into the future.

How did the campaign get so big?

Since the parents and students came together with the teachers' trade unions and the local community, the campaign is on a whole new level. Students are in regular contact with parents and put forward the same demands, such as calling for a parents' ballot.

Social media, press, word of mouth and leaflets were useful. We also have badges, and on non-uniform day people made t-shirts that said 'no academies'.

What's your advice to other schools which don't want to become academies?

Organisation! Call student meetings to back up the work of parents and teachers. Everyone was against academies, but we needed to meet and discuss.

Now we have student spokespeople for the campaign. This helped people who at first weren't confident to protest.

What's next in the campaign?

We want to keep the protests going and get better organised as a student body. Students are getting inspired and engaged in politics, that's what keeps us going.

When people say we can't change this because there is money involved, I say: watch this space. We will make a difference.

■ **Stop Academies in Lewisham demonstration. Saturday 21 March at 12pm, Lewisham Clock Tower. Marching to Hilly Fields, Ladywell.**

Email stopacademiesinlewisham@gmail.com to get involved.

Oasis Academy Healey held a 'democracy day' on 13 March. All sixth formers had a chance to meet representatives of parties standing for election.

The first question students asked was about the Lib-Dem u-turn on tuition fees. Five years of austerity, rising costs and falling living standards haven't passed these young people by. They know they can look forward to university debt, minimum-wage jobs and zero-hour contracts.

Of the six representatives, the best response was for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see page 5). TUSC highlighted that students are not responsible for the economic crisis, but through austerity are made to pay for it.

Students rejected the idea that Labour should get their vote simply to oust the Tories. This was the Labour representative's main argument, but it angered them. "If you want our votes then you should put forward what TUSC

says" one responded.

The final question was about opposing austerity. TUSC called for collecting the unpaid taxes of big business and capping rents to make housing affordable. The representative also called for nationalising rip-off energy and

"If you want our votes then you should put forward what TUSC says" said one student

transport companies, to be run for need, not profit.

But the students' favourite part of TUSC's response was on capitalism. The sixth richest country in the world can't afford a decent standard of living for the majority. Clearly something is wrong with the system.

Campaigns news in brief

NHS bullying

Worcestershire campaign Betrayed By Their Trust (BBTT) aims to make NHS managers accountable for abusive behaviour which is wrecking the lives and careers of workers. Socialist Party members play a leading role in the group.

There is a climate of fear and intimidation in the NHS. It is now functioning only by overstressing frontline staff who work under great stress. They know that if anything goes wrong, they will carry the can.

Some of us have been campaigning for nearly three years against Worcestershire NHS management. They used bogus allegations to ruin the career of a psychiatric nurse, who as a union steward had been resisting attempts to pile extra duties on overworked nurses. And this only one of many victims.

Since being formed a few weeks ago, BBTT has revealed details of bullying at Redditch A&E department. A government-backed inquiry has already been proposed. We await the details.

Nigel Gilbert

■ **BBTT would like to establish links with campaigns elsewhere. Contact Nigel on 01562 829 398 or nigel.gilbert@hotmail.com.**

Derbyshire lollipops

Thirty-five school crossing patrols face losing their jobs due to Derbyshire's Labour council austerity measures. All

189 workers are under threat.

A young campaigner in Chesterfield, Lisa, has launched a countywide campaign to save the patrols. She came to Chesterfield TUSC's launch meeting. Lisa has the full support of prospective parliamentary candidate Matt Whale, and council candidates.

Brian Loader

EDL countered

Manchester anti-racist protesters outnumbered supporters of the far-right English Defence League (EDL) by around two to one on 7 March.

Around 20 member of Socialist Students joined the peaceful protest. Even local police officers outnumbered the EDL marchers from across the country. There were only four arrests, all apparently EDL members.

The EDL tagline for the demonstration was "There Can Be No Surrender". Manchester begs to differ.

Emma Clark

Manchester NHS

Greater Manchester campaign group Keep Our NHS Public has joined the groundswell against the 'devolution' proposals agreed by the Tory-led government and Labour local authorities.

A precondition of the agreement is the discredited 'Healthier Together' scheme for swingeing cuts to hospitals across Greater Manchester. It means a centralisation of social care away from local authorities to a less accountable Greater Manchester authority.

Hugh Caffrey

■ **March against "Devo Manc" NHS cuts: Sunday 29 March at 10.30am, Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester.**



photo Jon Candy / Creative Commons

Going to Hull in a handbasket

Eric Kelly and Phil Culshaw

Assem Allam, multi-millionaire owner of Hull City AFC, has issued eviction notices to community sporting organisations which use City's facilities. In the same week, he promised Labour £1 million to undermine unions.

Allam, Labour's biggest business donor, made the offer after dinner with Tony Blair. He told the Sunday Times: "As I have always said to our friends in the Labour Party, Tony Blair and Ed Miliband, I would increase my political donations to gradually reduce the Labour Party's financial reliance on the trade unions."

In a radio interview last year, Allam said: "No one on earth is allowed to question how I do my business. No one on earth. Let's kill this point." This referred to his attempt to change Hull City's name to Hull Tigers.

Fans suffered 30% increases in season ticket costs and threats of financial withdrawal during Allam's campaign. But supporters' group City Till

We Die organised concerted protests against the change, at matches and to the Football Association (FA).

Allam's response to the huge anger of working class fans at this attack on their community identity? He told one journalist they can "die when they want"! After enormous pressure from supporters, the FA said no to the name change.

Community out

Allam leases Hull's KC Stadium, together with the Airco Arena community sports ground, from Hull City Council. He wants community sports clubs out so he can turn the arena into an indoor football pitch for the almost exclusive use of Hull City. They have been given four weeks' notice.

Campaign group Airco for All has been set up to fight this attack, like City Till We Die did before them.

Labour seems happy to side with a super-rich bully who doesn't understand the word no. After all, he's the man with the money. The Social-

ist sides with the ordinary people of Hull.

■ **Protest against the evictions! Sunday 22 March at 2pm, Airco Arena, Hull.**

Messages of support to the Airco for All Facebook page, Twitter #AircoForAll.



photo Yorkshire Rifles / Creative Commons

Socialist Party general election appeal 2015

"I have recently retired and am donating a part of my pension lump sum. I can't think of a better cause to donate to, and wish all socialist candidates as much success as possible in the forthcoming elections." Moira O'Driscoll, Birmingham, who has donated £500 to the Socialist Party election appeal.

Cormac Kelly from Huddersfield

sent £50 with the message: "Build a grand coalition of the working class to secure our future!"

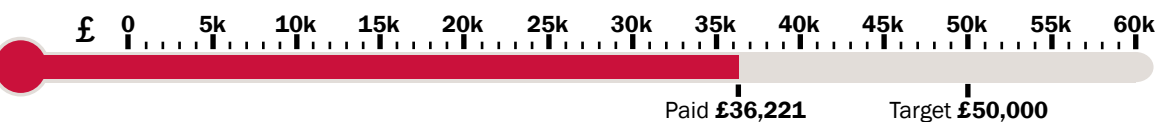
And a pensioner in Milton Keynes donated £100, saying: "I've never voted in my life, but I wanted to give this money to support an election challenge by TUSC."

Thanks to all who have donated and pledged. The more donations we

receive, the better the campaign we can have.

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate, phone 020 8988 8777 with your card, or post a cheque payable to "Socialist Party" to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Please mark all donations "Election Appeal 2015".

**Naomi Byron
Socialist Party finance team**



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ received	£ target	January to March 2015	Deadline 6 April 2015
North West	1,800	1,200	[Progress bar]	150%
Northern	580	600	[Progress bar]	97%
South West	1,177	1,400	[Progress bar]	84%
Yorkshire	2,351	2,900	[Progress bar]	81%
West Midlands	1,506	2,100	[Progress bar]	72%
Eastern	849	1,200	[Progress bar]	71%
East Midlands	1,096	1,600	[Progress bar]	68%
Wales	1,423	2,300	[Progress bar]	62%
London	3,441	6,100	[Progress bar]	56%
Southern	677	1,200	[Progress bar]	56%
South East	299	750	[Progress bar]	40%
England and Wales	5,286	3,650	[Progress bar]	145%
TOTAL	20,484	25,000	[Progress bar]	82%

Councillors do have a choice over cuts

Nick Chaffey

Secretary, Southern region Socialist Party

Just weeks from the elections in May, as councillors and MPs prepare their smiles for the cameras, council budget cuts are hammering away at communities and council workers, leaving them struggling under the impact of austerity.

Amongst the wreckage of the Con-Dem austerity budgets, council budgets have borne the biggest cuts. Unite the Union estimates a 43% real terms cut in funding in the five years to 2015, over £6 billion. Urban areas across the country have been hardest hit. Liverpool city council, for example, faces a 62% cut in funding between 2010 and 2017.

Food banks riddle our communities, cuts and closures to Sure Start, youth and day centres have left wastelands.

Tory Prime Minister David Cameron talks about his commitment to the elderly, yet 40% of council cuts made between 2013 and 2015 were to adult social care.

But what of Labour's opposition? As we fight the latest round of cuts in Southampton, Labour councillors are evicting the elderly from their homes and day centres like Woodside Lodge and Kentish Road Day Centre into the hands of the greedy profiteers in the private sector.

Let's be blunt, these cuts are killing our elderly. They are dying of the cold, lack of food and care.

In the face of government attacks, the task fell to Labour to mount effective opposition. But, with the help of their right-wing allies in local government trade unions, far from opposing the cuts, Labour councils have shamefully swung the Con-Dem axe.

Worse still Labour has attacked, suspended and expelled the handful of courageous councillors such as in Hull, Leicester, Warrington and Southampton who have dared to stand up, speak out and vote against the cuts.

Budget proposals to defend jobs and services have been denounced as 'illegal' and fear has been spread that government commissioners will simply take over the running of councils and carry out the cuts.

Despite this, there is a growing army of resistance to these cuts across the country, communities defending their libraries and Sure Start centres. Trade unionists have joined protests outside council budget meetings.

Money there

The Socialist Party stands in opposition to all cuts and demands the restoration of government funding to local authorities. The money is there.

Austerity has been of enormous benefit to the 1% and the friends of Cameron. The richest 1,000 people in Britain have seen their wealth doubled with tax cuts for the rich and big corporations.

UK corporations are sitting on huge cash piles in excess of £600 billion, uninvested as the stagnant economy leaves them no profitable



Southampton anti-cuts councillors (with banner, second and third from right) during the successful Oaklands Pool campaign photo Southampton SP

outlet for investment. What a scandalous waste!

A socialist government would carry through a 50% wealth tax on these resources to fund a public works programme, channelled through local councils that could transform communities.

But across the country communities have battled to save libraries, Sure Start and youth centres, care homes and day services with groups of council workers taking industrial action.

There has been wide scale opposition to cuts in the communities. What has been missing is a determined fighting leadership in the trade unions to carry that struggle

The richest 1,000 people in Britain have seen their wealth doubled

forward and link up with the community.

In reality, many small but important victories are being fought for and won as libraries, youth clubs, swimming pools are saved from immediate closure - such as the Moorways sport complex and pools in Derby, or play centres and libraries in Cardiff.

It is a glimpse of what could be possible if one council set a no-cuts budget, or the council trade unions nationally linked the local cuts into a single battle and organised a united fightback.

Any attempt to use commissioners under these conditions would be fatal for a government. Had Labour

and the unions taken such a step in 2011, the cuts could have been halted and the coalition bought to its knees.

In Southampton, the basis for a fightback was laid in the mass council strikes of 2011, in opposition to the Tory council cuts. The Tory council was thrown out in the elections of 2012 but Labour took up their axe and continued the cuts.

Rebellion

Following the victory of the council strikes, then-Labour councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, defied the cuts, voted against the budget and proposals to close their local swimming pool, Oaklands Pool.

Closed due to a lack of £40,000 to repair the pool, the leader of the council said: "It's closed, get used to it!" Led by the rebel councillors, a campaign with the community and the council trade unions, Unite and Unison - who donated £1,000 to the campaign - the council was forced to find £1.5 million to refurbish and re-open the pool.

Building on their success, to a packed public gallery, Keith and Don then proposed a no-cuts budget to the council. They outlined how the use of reserves and borrowing powers could immediately stop cuts while support could be mobilised to fight the government for the return of funding stolen from the city since 2010.

Denounced as an "illegal budget" by councillors - which it wasn't - and shamefully as a "fantasy budget" by 'left' council trade union leaders, these representatives bent their knee to the advice of the Chief Financial Officer that it was an 'imprudent' budget and gave their support to cuts.

The Southampton Chief Financial Officer sought a counsel's opinion to scrutinise the no-cuts budget proposals. They rightly feared that it provided a model for councils to follow in defiance of government cuts. However, they had to recognise that a no-cuts budget did not break any laws.

But nothing can be won in the council chamber that hasn't been fought for in the struggle of council workers and the community. This is precisely the lesson of the victories, where money was found by councils, in the face of mass opposition. In Southampton, Labour reversed

Reserves and borrowing powers could stop cuts while support could be mobilised to fight the government for the return of funding

some of the proposed wage cuts because of the strikes that put them into office.

This was the same with the Oaklands Pool victory. It is the balance of class forces that ultimately determines the possibility of victories.

The mobilisation of our communities and council trade unions could deal a knockout blow to the austerity agenda of the Westminster parties.

What remains of council services are the bricks and mortar of past gains fought for and won by the working class, past generations of socialists and trade unionists, not handed down by benevolent governments.

Such advances were built out of struggles like the Poplar council in 1921 for fairness in rates (a predecessor to council tax) and fair funding, which went hand in hand with the election campaigns of the emerging labour movement.

Equally, Liverpool council in the 1980s - with mass support from the working class of Liverpool - refused to make cuts and won millions of pounds of extra funding out of Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. This also saw rapid growth in support for Militant, the predecessors of the Socialist Party, which led the council.

It's on these traditions that we stand and fight for our future.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. All TUSC council candidates pledge to:

- Oppose all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions.
- Scrap the Bedroom Tax now.
- Support all workers' struggles against cuts and privatisation.
- Reject increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts.
- Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, including the transfer of council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations.
- Vote for councils to refuse to implement the cuts. We will support councils that use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts. But the best way to mobilise the mass campaign necessary to defeat the dismantling of council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demands that government funding makes up the shortfall.



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How can civil liberties be protected?

Paul Heron reviews 'On Liberty' by Shami Chakrabati (Allen Lane)

Shami Chakrabati joined Liberty on 10 September 2001, the day before the 9/11 attack changed world relations. 'On Liberty' is her account of authoritarian anti-terrorism measures introduced by Blair's Labour government, and other governments worldwide.

She also criticises proposals for ID cards, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), cuts to legal aid, and the creeping acceptance of torture. These, she explains, were introduced without fully considering human rights norms, democracy or the rule of law.

Liberty's work, and Chakrabati's role within it after 9/11 and 7/7, showed her taking on the war-mongers. On Question Time she was often a clear, reasoned voice for human rights while some people, whipped up into a war frenzy, shouted her down.

The book comes to life when Chakrabati addresses a group of working class mums who supported anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) on estates. She explains that the anti-social behaviour in question is in fact serious criminal activity, and that ASBOs are often aimed at young people who have nothing to do because services have been decimated.

Sadly, this is one of few instances where Chakrabati shows how civil liberties and human rights touch working class peoples' lives, and she fails to link the breakdown of 'social order' to the wider effects of austerity.

Dealing with the potential effects of more security and less civil liberty she quotes Lord Hoffman on the Blair government's proposals

after 9/11: "The real threat to the life of the nation... comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these. That is the true measure of what ter-

Use of 'the law' can only be part of the struggle... Socialist lawyers must use the law to fight for the interests of the working class and democratic rights

rorism may achieve. It is for parliament to decide whether to give the terrorists such a victory".

These words were particularly principled given that the state forces were preying on people's fears to drive through counter-reforms. However, Chakrabati puts too much faith in the judges' role.

Socialists

Use of 'the law' can only be part of the struggle. Belief in the inherent fairness in the legal system is delusional. Socialist lawyers must use the law to fight for the interests of the working class and democratic rights. But even where judges - such as Lord Hoffman - uphold civil liberties we cannot simply rely on legal judgements as the sole saviour.

There is a class basis of law, and



Chakrabati does not put the 'war on terror' and legal aid reforms in their social and political context
photo Molly Cooper

judges do not act in the working class' interest. Yes, we can secure victories in the courts, but this can often rely on the strength of class struggle at any given time.

The book ascribes a passive role to the working class, and relies on the great and the good to save us through legal processes.

Chakrabati does not put the 'war

on terror' and legal aid reforms in their social and political context. Neoliberalism demands both a free market and a strong authoritarian state, and attacks on human rights and civil liberties are linked to the pursuit of those aims.

The capitalist class understands that in order to smash the post-war consensus, it needs to deal with any

backlash from the working class. That is the drive behind attacks on civil liberties.

A real passion comes across in 'On Liberty' and Chakrabati makes effective arguments against the 'war on terror', ASBOs and the cuts in legal aid. But at £17.99 for 146 pages it's hardly a bargain. My advice: wait for the paperback.

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.

Fairy tale

Once upon a time a worker was sent by his kindly employer to work in a faraway town called West Bromwich. While there he had to post a letter. After a long walk around the town centre in search of a pillar box, he returned to his workplace forlorn because he could not find one. He then had to post the letter in the town he lived in which had such facilities.

The next time the worker needed to post a letter he went to the Post Office to buy a stamp and asked the cheerful woman behind the counter if there were any pillar boxes nearby. She replied "No. The mean people that now run Royal Mail say it costs too much money to provide one."

The shocked worker replied: "Is this place not full of people who want to post letters?" "Yes," replied the woman. "You may leave the letter with me and I will put it in the big bin where we put parcels awaiting collection by the postal workers."

Weeks later the worker visited the Post Office again and was delighted to see a photocopy of a press cutting in the window proudly proclaiming that 400 of West Bromwich's best citizens had petitioned the meanies that run Royal Mail and they finally agreed to provide a pillar box.

This fairy story had a happy ending. It also has a moral: that privatised industries prioritise profit over service and that the real happy ending will only come about when Royal Mail is renationalised by a workers' government.

Clive Walder, Birmingham

Catt among the pigeons

John Catt is a 90-year-old political campaigner against war. The cops have squandered a fortune pursuing him through the courts for their right to keep surveillance records on someone who has committed no crime.

The Supreme Court ruled that the police are within their rights to use anti-terror legislation against a political opponent with no link to terrorism.

This is the final nail in the coffin of the pretence that anti-terror laws are not used against the government's domestic opponents who are pursuing peaceful lawful protest.

The anti-terror legislation's main purpose is to terrorise anyone who criticises the government's international policy which could charitably be described as brute force and ignorance.

Long live John Catt. Don't let the bastards grind you down.

Derek McMillan

Manchester

Labour cuts hit rough sleepers

Bridget Russell

Manchester city centre is now second only to London for its number of rough sleepers. When a report came out with this damning statistic, Manchester's Labour council announced even more cuts targeted at the city's homeless population.

Statistics on Manchester's homeless population are significantly underestimated, based on a single night when researchers walked the streets counting how many people they saw sleeping rough!

Booth House, a provider of services for homeless people and a homeless prevention project will now see its funding cut by a third. In last year's round of cuts, an estimated 150 beds were cut from projects across Manchester.

Labour councillor Daniel Gillard, who led the inquiry, admitted that Manchester's homeless population is three times the estimate. Massive job losses, benefit sanctions, lack of social housing, and cuts to homeless prevention all contributed to the rapid increase in homelessness.

The number of evictions in greater Manchester is the highest since records began with 2,032 evictions last year alone. All this from a council entirely made up of Labour councillors! Manchester city council shows Labour's dedication to austerity and its anti-working class, pro-big business, neoliberal agenda.



photo Steve Score

But don't worry! Nick Clegg recently told Manchester it would receive £22 million out of the £115 million national pot, set aside to invest into making the city more 'cycle friendly'. So we can all cycle from our homes we've been evicted from, to the jobs we've lost, stopping off at

the food bank on the way!

Labour Party careerists are unopposed in the city council, carrying out cuts with little regard for the people they claim to represent. That's why TUSC will be standing 27 candidates in Manchester in this May's elections.

Ukip: a party of the bosses, for the bosses

Becci Heagney

Channel 4 TV recently raised the prospect of a general election victory for Ukip in its 'mockumentary' - Ukip: The First 100 Days. An unlikely outcome this May, however, Ukip could win up to 16 MPs as the support for the traditional parties begins to crumble.

The majority of people do not trust the mainstream parties. Is that any wonder? The Con-Dem coalition has dealt a brutal blow to our living standards while the 'opposition' Labour Party has jumped at every opportunity to promise they will do the same.

All the mainstream parties are involved in scandals, with accusations ranging from covering up child sex abuse to MPs accepting 'cash for access'. The establishment is rotten and it stinks.

Despite numerous examples of its representatives spouting outrageous racist, sexist and homophobic comments, Ukip has been offered up as an alternative - something to hit back against these corrupt, millionaire politicians who are 'all the same'.

Rich backers

But Ukip leader Nigel Farage is far from being a 'man of the people'. As a child he attended elite private school Dulwich College. His dad was a stockbroker and Nigel himself was a trader in the City.

This is not an anti-establishment party. In 2013, Ukip's income was £2.5 million. Half of this was donations from hedge fund managers, ex-Tory donors and media moguls like Richard Desmond, owner of Express Newspapers. It shares the same interests as the other big business parties.

Ukip is a right-wing populist party. Its 2010 manifesto, which called for a flat-rate of income tax and privatisation of the NHS, was quickly dropped as Ukip gained more support from working class people.

The new manifesto is a mash up of radical-sounding demands such as free education (for some students), scrapping the bedroom tax,

and right-wing crazed demands of abolishing the Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Human Rights Act.

In between there is the promise of more austerity with support for a harmful benefit cap and an exploitative 'workfare' labour scheme.

The dropping of some anti-working class demands from their manifesto reflects the fact that most Ukip voters actually support left-wing policies. For example, last year, a YouGov opinion poll indicated that over 70% supported renationalisation of the energy companies and railways. Neither of these policies are supported by Labour.

Ukip is not necessarily seen as part of the solution. A Daily Mirror poll in January showed that only 29% of Ukip voters trust the party on the NHS. Just 54% of its own sup-

Farage seeks to legalise work discrimination

Ukip leader Nigel Farage has again stirred the racist pot. This time he suggested scrapping workplace laws against racial discrimination, ludicrously arguing that they are no longer needed.

Such a policy would give a green light for employers to ethnically veto job applicants, deepening divisions within the working class along racial lines.

Meanwhile, House of Commons library figures reveal a 50% increase in black, Asian and minority ethnic young people unemployed for a year since the Tory/Lib Dem coalition came to power. This increase has happened despite an officially recorded fall in the number of long-term unemployed 16 to 24 year olds.

porters think Farage would make a good prime minister.

When in power, they act in the same way as the Tories. Douglas Carswell, since defecting to Ukip from the Tories, has voted in favour of Tory Chancellor Osborne's Autumn Spending Review with its extra £30 billion of cuts in public services. Mark Reckless, the other Ukip MP, has been absent for most of his opportunities to vote in Parliament.

Some Ukip councillors have voted against cuts, but this has not been out of concern for workers' living standards. Instead, it's a cynical and opportunist attempt to attack the main political parties.

But this is not the norm for Ukip representatives in local government - even in opposition. In Gloucestershire, they joined with the Tories to vote in support of an environmentally unfriendly incinerator being built, despite big community protests.

In Basildon, Ukip supported a rise in rents for council tenants. In Portsmouth, - where they won six seats in the last election and call themselves 'the real opposition' - they have supported a cuts budget without so much as a murmur against it.

Ukip were the official opposition in 2013 on Lincolnshire County Council. They voted for the Tory/Lib Dem/Independent coalition cuts budget and refused to sign a declaration that people in Lincolnshire would be treated equally regardless of race.

After allegations of racism and personal feuds between councillors,



Ukip's Nigel Farage - laughing cavalier of the British establishment photo Karl Lang

some split and formed 'An Independence from Europe' group. Ukip councillors in Lincolnshire recently argued against an increase in their allowances but then 'reluctantly' voted for it.

Why are Ukip gaining votes, then? The YouGov website allows people to comment on why they support a particular party. The most popular answer is that Ukip is either "in touch with" or "stands up for" ordinary people. They are perceived, at least, as being separate to the Westminster clique with its snout in the trough.

Propaganda

Ukip also plays on some workers' fears over immigration, falsely trying to blame immigrants for the problems workers face. It shouldn't be a surprise this gets an echo given how much attention is given to the issue of immigration by the right-wing media and all of the political parties.

Ukip's hysteria around thousands of Romanians and Bulgarians coming to the UK last year was clearly unfounded. However, the Tories and Labour both responded by promising to be even tougher on immigration. This helped elevate immigration as a major cause for concern among voters.

Government and councils' underfunding and disastrous cut-backs have led many services to breaking point. Ukip offers no solution to these pressing issues. A massive increase in funding, an end to all privatisation and cuts, and a massive house-building programme,

'Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel'

Despite his party's anti-immigrant rhetoric, Wales Ukip MEP and care company boss Nathan Gill is, it seems, quite happy to exploit migrant workers to benefit his business.

Gill is cited as charging workers from Poland and the Philippines £50 a week out of £200-£300 weekly wages for "bunkhouse" accommodation. He lamely defends this rip-off saying: "I wish I had that proportion of spending money left after paying my mortgage." As an afterthought Gill said: "I can see how this could look bad!"



TUSC supporting strike action by low-paid London University cleaners

are needed - not anti-immigrant propaganda.

In some areas, migrant workers are being paid less than the minimum wage in sweatshop workplaces. All workers deserve to be paid enough to live financially stress free and enjoy dignity at work.

However, Ukip is a party that represents businesses who are seeking to maximise their profits by paying poverty wages. The solution is to unite all workers in a common struggle for a £10 an hour minimum wage, proper contracts and guaranteed hours - not further attacks on workers' rights.

Out of desperation - because this united fightback is not being

organised by the Labour Party and some right-wing trade union leaders - some workers are being drawn towards Ukip.

This doesn't mean that Ukip-leaning workers have an unthinking belief that Ukip will solve their problems either but instead is seen as sending a clear message to the mainstream parties who think they are untouchable. That is why Farage is seen as a 'fox among the chickens' in Parliament.

We need a genuine shake up of politics. Working class people need to build their own mass political party that will fight on the issues that they are most concerned about - the NHS, welfare, jobs and housing. Imagine up to 16 left-wing MPs who stood for socialist policies rather than the dead-end and reactionary policies of Ukip - that would really scare the chickens!

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is a major step towards this. We must take the positive messages of TUSC to those who are frustrated with the same old parties and are tempted to support Ukip and instead fight for real change.



A Ukip-organised pro-cuts, pro-austerity demonstration in 2011 photo Paul Mattsson

Unison recall conference

We need a fighting, democratic union

Mark Evans

Unison local government service group executive (personal capacity)

For only the second time in its history, the Unison union has convened a special delegate recall conference.

Over 25% of local government branches called for this conference due to members' anger over a very poor 1.1% pay increase proposal following the calling off of strike action.

The conference takes place just eleven days after our members were part of a public sector general strike that took place in Northern Ireland (see page 3), showing the potential for mass joint strike action in Britain.

The calling of the conference reflects the huge anger at the way the union's national elected leadership and unelected officers 'led' our pay campaign. Having called on members to reject the 1% and for them to strike, they then delayed and delayed before incredibly calling off further action for little more than we were called on strike for. Once again they played the grand old Duke of York trick on the members.

Time and time again we are told that we are a member-led union. In reality it is unelected full time national officers living on wages way beyond the average member who



Unison members striking on 10 July 2014 photo Paul Mattsson

are calling the shots.

What was more worrying was that just hours before the planned second strike Unison general secretary Dave Prentis (who is not part of the negotiating team) received a letter from the Labour Party leader in local government calling on him to call off the action and make sure that the union didn't call for a rejection of the offer.

He then did exactly as the Labour Party asked him to. Given that members elect him and pay his massive salary, we have a right to demand he does our bidding - not that of the Labour Party.

The right wing union leaders state that, in calling off the 14 October strike, they were in tune with the mood of members. But what they omit to mention is that they had no

strategy for victory.

After the successful coordinated strike action with other unions on 10 July, we had to wait three months for the next strike before it was cancelled at the last minute. This campaign could not have been organised better to frustrate and demoralise members.

The vote to accept another rubbish pay offer was more a vote of

no confidence in Unison leaders' ability to organise effective coordinated strike action. Where branches campaigned for rejection, members voted for rejection.

This conference is an opportunity for members to further the task of reclaiming Unison. Unelected national officers should no longer be calling the shots behind the scenes.

Socialist Party members in Unison urge delegates to support motions that give lay members control over pay negotiations and argue that suspending the October walkout was wrong. We also support calls for any strike suspension decision to involve an extensive, clear and transparent consultation of branches and regions.

We support motions calling for the reopening of pay negotiations and the submission of a pay claim for 2015-16 with immediate effect. If Unison does not draw the necessary conclusions from the pay debacle it will end up repeating them.

We need to reclaim Unison:

- For the regular election of all full time officers who should be on the average wage of Unison members
- No deals behind members backs - lay members to be involved in all negotiations including over pay
- Elect a fighting leadership that will give Unison members confidence to fight

What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW 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 mass new 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!