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the Socialist

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NHS FEES WAR WARNING

VOTE TUSC

The next government could bring in charges for NHS services. This was the warning made by Mark Porter, head of doctors' organisation the BMA, because of the NHS's £30 billion deficit.

Despite party denials, a £10 charge for a GP appointment has been suggested. What next, charging for A&E visits?

Working class people fought for and won the NHS. Getting health treatment when you need it, without worrying about paying huge medi-

cal bills, is seen as a mark of a civilised society. In a recent survey 85% agreed that the government should back a tax-funded NHS, free at the point of use, that provides comprehensive care to all citizens.

Porter says governments should resist NHS charges. Even if they could balance the government's books they would totally unbalance the books for workers and their families and deter many from getting treatment. High dental charges have already led to people attempting 'DIY fillings'.

There is no economic case for any cuts or charges. The NHS 'black hole' is largely caused by the chaos of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which is a licence for big business to make money out of building hospitals at our expense.

All the mainstream parties in May's general election say the NHS is safe in their hands but their top priority is to save the capitalist system and its profits. In 1979 prescription charges were only 20 pence, now they have reached £8.60 an item. Any charge will later be increased.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), standing in the elections, says a socialist government would refuse to pay the £60 billion bill for PFI. Hospitals are already allowed to use up to 49% of all beds for private patients. This only benefits the growing private health lobby. Kick these parasites out of the NHS!

Austerity policies followed by the major parties make the NHS's difficulties even worse. This includes cuts in local council services that help people coming out of hospital. TUSC is

against all cuts in public services.

- No to NHS charges - keep the NHS public and free at the point of use
- Full funding for health care - no closures or cuts
- Scrap PFI - don't pay the debt
- Ease the NHS crisis by reversing council cuts to social care
- Private companies out of the NHS
- Bring the profit-hungry drugs companies into public ownership



Read more
about TUSC

> Pages 10 and 11

Leaders' debate

No end to austerity from 'The Magnificent Seven'



Nancy Taaffe

TUSC parliamentary candidate, Walthamstow

They called the leaders' debate last Thursday the meeting of "The Magnificent Seven", but Disney's 'Seven Dwarfs' could have done better - with Dopey surpassing Farage any day!

From the Tories/Liberals/Labour it was austerity as usual and that some cuts are necessary. Even though there were many references to ending austerity by the smaller parties, there was no mention of how this could be done. The debate reflected the seven degrees of cuts that the working class can expect from these 'not-so magnificent' seven.

Nick Clegg attempted to distance himself from David Cameron, but no matter how much he tried he

sounded like a babbling man on his way to the political gallows.

Ed Miliband's habit of staring lovingly into the camera at the end of every sentence, apart from making him look like Alan Partridge, oozed insincerity.

Cameron's controlled silence did not shield him from exposure to his government's failures.

To one extent or another, the old established parties looked tired, repetitive and unconvincing. For a change the debate framed Farage as he really is, a right wing establishment figure, devoid of any real policies.

Alternatives?

For many around the country, who have no experience of the smaller parties, the chance to see and hear the Greens, Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party (SNP) was somewhat of a novelty. The fact that

the leaders of these three parties are all women was seen by many as a welcome alternative to 'the men in suits'.

But here too, you had to listen carefully to understand that a strategy to defeat austerity wasn't being offered.

Nicola Sturgeon mentioned on more than two occasions that the government deficit would be brought down, "at a much slower pace" if people voted SNP. Leanne Wood in a reply to a question on tuition fees stated: "Plaid [Cymru] would love to cut tuition fees but we can't because of austerity imposed on us by central government."

Natalie Bennett of the Greens outlined some progressive policies but did not outline how austerity would be ended, just that it had to be.

All three leaders of the smaller parties failed to mention that where they are in power they too are

implementing cuts!

The fact is that the SNP, Plaid and the Greens could all vote against cuts at regional and local levels where they have elected representatives, but they don't. These small parties claim to be opposed to austerity and yet do not see their positions as platforms to build a movement amongst the working class to end it.

If the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) had one rep in the debate they would have clearly stated that they would vote against cuts and privatisations and combine with an anti-cuts movement to hasten austerity's demise.

If TUSC had been there we would have outlined the record of socialists in Liverpool in the 1980s who built such a fightback. Then, we won extra money for the city and beat Thatcher when the Labour Party leaders couldn't defeat her.

We would have given recent examples of socialist representatives like Paul Murphy in Ireland. Paul has been at the forefront of the battle to end the Labour/Fine Gael government's hated water charges. He didn't get elected and do what the Greens previously did in Ireland, ie vote through an austerity budget because 'the International Monetary Fund said so'.

Or we would point to Seattle, USA, where Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant used her position to strengthen a movement to win a doubling of the federal minimum wage in that city.

The Leaders' debate was a lot of words. Without a clear strategy of how austerity will be defeated, it became an endurance test no matter what the proclamations of the new kids on the block.

TUSC interviews and campaign reports, see pages 10&11



Nicola Sturgeon

According to media commentators the SNP's leader Nicola Sturgeon emerged as the 'victor' in the Leaders' debate. She also enjoys a higher opinion poll rating as a party leader than Cameron, Miliband and Clegg.

The SNP, despite implementing austerity cuts and promoting a capitalist agenda, is likely to emerge as the largest party in Scotland, and possible 'king makers' of the next government.

Could this scenario be behind the leaked email from the Scottish Office that dubiously claimed Sturgeon had dismissed Miliband as 'weak' and would prefer a Cameron-led Tory government?

Subsequently, Sturgeon has denied preferring Cameron as Prime Minister and has made coalition overtures to 'austerity-lite' Labour.

Will the Scottish National Party deliver on its "anti-austerity" promises?

As Socialist Party Scotland has consistently pointed out, the SNP's pro-capitalist policies have led them into accepting the logic of austerity - even if it is the diet version, rather than the full-fat brand being brutally carried out by the Con-Dems.

As Douglas Fraser, BBC Scotland's economy editor, pointed out: "Neither Nicola Sturgeon nor her deputy are saying austerity can be avoided. Instead, it's being re-badged and re-profiled, or spread out longer". Fraser added: "The defiant refusal to accept more austerity, which won power for Syriza in Greece last month, is not being offered here".

In practice, the gap between Miliband's economic plan and that of the SNP is not wide. Depending on the parliamentary arithmetic, therefore, a deal between Labour and the SNP is possible after the election. This could see SNP MPs vote in favour of yet more cuts and austerity on the pretext that these are less bad than would have been the case had the Tories been re-elected.

The SNP leadership is sending out a message that it is prepared to work in the interests of British capitalism, which means carrying through cuts.

Read the full article on www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

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Looking after the millionaires, not the millions

Mark Best

On 1 April the Tory-supporting Daily Telegraph splashed its front page with the names of 103 senior business leaders, issuing a dire warning that deviating from the Tories' economic plan would spell an end to Britain's 'recovery' and threaten thousands of jobs.

The policy which has these businessmen up in arms is Labour's commitment to undo the government's most recent cut in Corporation Tax. The difference between the supposedly anti-business Labour Party and the Conservatives is that Labour would



The bosses' favourite

- 27 of the 103 signatories are Tory party donors.
- 18 of the signatories were given MBEs, OBEs, CBEs and knighthoods David Cameron.
- The list includes a number of tax avoiding companies - Associated British Foods, Greene King, The Hut Group, and Samantha Cameron's employer, Smythson.

on their working conditions, and people whose essential local services are being axed, etc.

Whichever party forms a government after the election, they will be representing the interests of the capitalist class. All the main parties are committed to continuing austerity, attacking the living standards of the majority of people while those at the top get richer.

'He who pays the piper calls the tune', and both Tories and Labour are more than happy to accept large donations from fat cats and bankers.

We need a party that represents ordinary people. One that fights against all cuts, for a wealth tax on the super-rich, for nationalisation of the big corporations and a £10 an hour minimum wage as a start! A party for the millions not the millionaires!

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), in which the Socialist Party plays a leading role, is standing in over 130 parliamentary seats and over 600 council seats. TUSC represents a step towards building this mass party.

set it at 21% as opposed to 20%!

It's clear that while the Con-Dem's austerity policies have hit ordinary workers and young people's living standards, they're working out alright for those at the top!

Labour

But the response by Labour, the party which under Blair was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich," has shown who they represent. The shadow business secretary Chuka Umunna attacked the letter because it only represented a small fraction of business - never mind the millions of workers being paid the minimum wage, facing attacks

■ Amongst the signatories is Tidjane Thiam, CEO of the financial services company Prudential. His salary has more than doubled since 2010, reaching £11.8 million in 2014.

■ BP executive Bob Dudley saw his pay jump to £9.4 million last year during which oil prices have fallen. He rewarded hundreds of BP North Sea oil workers by putting them on the dole.

■ Also signing the letter was George Weston, chief executive of Primark. Weston earns about 500 times the average employee at Primark, which has been targeted by campaigners from Youth Fight for Jobs in the past because of their poor treatment of workers and poverty wages.

NHS: Anti-union blacklisting threat

Just before Parliament closed for the general election campaign, a select committee revealed that the infamous, and now defunct, Consulting Association (which provided names of thousands of trade unionists to construction industry bosses, who then blacklisted them) had been in discussion with companies working in the National Health Service (NHS).

Trade union rep **Steve Bell** spoke to the Socialist about his experience of private companies engaged in the NHS

report highlighted what we already knew - that they are also anti-union.

Trade union stewards working for companies, such as Carillion and ISS, look to dismiss stewards on the slightest pretence. In Oxfordshire, local stewards have recently been re-instated by one such company following spurious dismissal reasons.

In the Scottish Affairs parliamentary select committee report a confidential letter from the Consulting Association highlighted that they were going to contact human resources officers in facilities companies working in the NHS.

Whether they did contact these firms or not, those of us who work in the NHS with these companies know that they don't wish to see unions involved - as they would have to pay their staff NHS terms and conditions, such as sick pay.

Where unions are active and give a positive lead to workers then these companies have been beaten at a local level. But this requires a deter-

mined union leadership, one that is prepared to fight on every issue at a national level and is prepared to work with other unions organising among staff in this area."

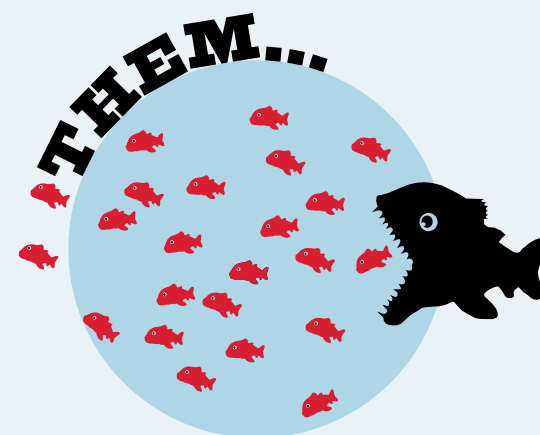
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"We know that facilities companies operating in the NHS are not only content with paying their workforce lower wages than those working directly for the NHS, but a recent



Easy money

Should Tony Blair's "education, education, education" mantra be replaced by "money, money, money"?

Academies (introduced by the former Labour PM), and their Michael Gove-initiated Tory hybrid, 'free schools', have become cash cows according to the ATL teaching union. Its general secretary recently highlighted the huge amount of dosh being trousered by academy bosses.

For instance, the executive headteacher of the Durand Academy Trust in West Sussex, Sir Greg Martin, earned over £200,000 last year and £160,000 from a company that runs the trust's sports and fitness centre. The trust's director, Kevin Craig, is also quids-in after being paid £580,000 for media and lobbying work.

Breadline Britain

Children are going to school hungry, tired and sometimes sick, according to the NASUWT teaching union. Its survey also found that 25% of teachers questioned had brought in food themselves to give to hungry pupils.

Back to 1948

The UK economy is back to the level of output last seen in 2008. This figure (which now includes the estimated contribution from the illicit drugs trade and prostitution) has been hailed as an achievement by millionaire posh boy Tory chancellor, George Osborne. And adding to his cheer, the Office for National Statistics has revised 2014's last quarter of economic growth upwards, from 0.5% to 0.6%. But apart from being the slow-

est recovery in living memory, what George omitted from his crowing was that output per head of population is still 1.2% below its pre-recession level. Moreover, net national disposable income for UK residents remained 5.1% below the 2008 level. Adding to the gloom, the country's trade deficit last year was the largest since records began in 1948.

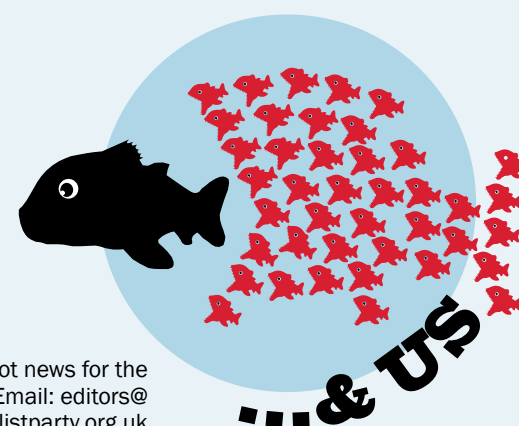
Bleak future

Before rushing to buy that Lamborghini with their liberated pension pot, it's worth noting only a small minority of asset-rich retirees can benefit from the government's private pension changes.

According to the insurance industry, millions of over-55s have no pension, no savings and large debts. Relying on credit and loans to survive, 20% exist on less than £750 a month, around £25 a day. 15% haven't a penny of savings or investments, and a further 29% have less than £2,000. Under the Con-Dems people will have to work longer, pay more in pension contributions and then retire on less.

Pension cuts

Hundreds of thousands of women now turning 60 will no longer get inflation-linked increases on a part of their employer's pension. Those affected were in an employer's defined-benefit pension scheme that was 'contracted out' of the state system between 1978 and 1997. Inflation increases would be paid for by the state after they reached state pension age, but now the government has reneged on the deal.



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

End Sodexo's abusive relationship with probation service: stop the jobs cull!

Chas Berry
 Napo national vice chair
 (personal capacity)

With the ink barely dry on the probation privatisation contracts, the giant security firm Sodexo has announced sweeping redundancies amounting to one third of the staff it took on when work was outsourced to them at the end of February.

This is a huge kick in the teeth for staff who endured two years disruption during the so-called Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) programme and now face an uncertain future whichever government is in power after 7 May.

Sodexo owns six of the 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) now responsible for managing low and medium risk offenders. It also runs five prisons in the UK, three in Chile and provides a host of security services worldwide.

Conflict of interest

Some might suggest a conflict of interest between an organisation paid to reduce reoffending in the community while at the same time given large wads of cash for keeping offenders locked up.

Such a conflict was brought into



sharp relief in February when probation chief inspector Paul McDowell was forced to resign over his marriage to one of Sodexo's senior

managers. This didn't stop the 'marriage' of the CRCs going through however, and it's now becoming clear that those in a partnership

with Sodexo find themselves in an abusive relationship.

Sodexo's plan for the supervision of offenders is a travesty of justice.

In place of personal and meaningful engagement with individuals it intends to slash its face-to-face services and introduce call-centres and 'biometric' reporting.

Automated machines

Rather than being able to work with a trained professional on the often complex reasons why they offend, an individual will instead have to deal with their problems at a distance and in some cases with a machine designed to ask a standard set of questions. This is no way to reduce reoffending or protect the public.

Napo probation union reps in Sodexo have convened an urgent meeting to discuss the union's response to the redundancies.

If the security giant gets away with this the owners of the other fifteen CRCs will surely follow. Napo fought a long but ultimately unsuccessful battle to stop the break-up and privatisation of probation.

Members are now having to deal with the consequences of that loss. A new and angry mood is developing, however, and a determination to ensure that whoever replaces Chris Grayling as justice secretary is forced to reverse his disastrous slash and burn policies.

Whipps Cross hospital trade union activist reinstated

Socialist Party members at Whipps Cross hospital

Workers at Whipps Cross hospital and campaigners in east London are celebrating the victory of Unison health activist Charlotte Monro at an employment tribunal hearing last week. This will see her reinstated in her job following her sacking for trade union activity in October 2013.

This decision vindicates the campaigning that has taken place, reflected in the regional and national profile the case has attracted.

The offer by Barts health trust to reinstate Charlotte came following a damning report by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) into care standards at the hospital and the culture of bullying towards staff. Four senior trust managers resigned, including the chief executive and chairman.

In the summer and autumn of 2013, hundreds of workers at Whipps Cross waged an energetic battle against pay down bandings and job cuts across the trust, in large part linked to the colossal costs associated with Barts Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme. Socialist Party member and then Unison branch secretary Len Hockey played a crucial leading role in this struggle.

The union branch's campaign

drew in the wider trade unions and community behind its leadership and achieved a 99% indicative 'yes' vote for strike action from members. Mass workers' meetings, public meetings and demonstrations took place. But in an attempt to intimidate workers from resisting these attacks Charlotte, the then Unison branch chair, was suspended on trumped up charges from the staff partnership forum, where Barts' plans were being discussed. She was subsequently sacked for trade union activities.

Strike blocked

Workers' determined attempts at defending pay and conditions, however, were systematically blocked and frustrated by the regional bureaucracy of Unison including denying members a strike ballot. This was despite the attack that was simultaneously taking place on union organisation with Charlotte's suspension and sacking.

Activists at the hospital are no strangers to victimisation. Len Hockey - now branch secretary for Unite the Union at Barts - has himself faced disciplinary action and threat of dismissal on more than one occasion. This most recently occurred in February 2012 when Len's then employer, Initial Facilities, launched investigation procedures

linked to his union activities. Following mass meetings of his members, gate demonstrations, petitioning and email lobbying of both Len's employer and trust, together with a vote for a strike ballot should the disciplinary action be carried out, the employer backed off.

Charlotte's victory should now be built upon by health unions at Whipps and across Barts health trust. The confidence it can bring in rebuilding workers' combativity will be essential in defeating the next round of cuts and particularly any threat to downsize and relegate the status of Whipps Cross from a general hospital to a hollowed out limited facility.



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NUT CONFERENCE SHOWS TEACHERS WANT ACTION ON CUTS AND WORKLOAD

Neil Cafferky

Delegates at the National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference in Harrogate over the Easter weekend have voted to ballot for strike action over 12% school funding cuts and workload if the next government doesn't tackle them.

The austerity plans of both Labour and the Tories would mean state schools in England losing over £1 billion a year - the equivalent of 20,000 teachers.

The conference followed a year of mixed results for the union. On the one hand delegates were rightly pleased their union had played a

£1 billion a year is due to be cut from English schools - the equivalent of 20,000 teachers

part in seeing off Michael Gove last year from his fiefdom in the Department of Education.

On the other hand the industrial action programme of the last two years had produced few tangible results, with Gove's successor Nicky Morgan making it clear the government's education policies would continue unaltered under her tenure.

Competing strategies

On the key industrial debates a number of competing strategies between the leadership group on the executive and the rank and file group Local Associations National Action Campaign (Lanac) were hotly contested, often leading to close votes.

The issue of workload is becoming increasingly unbearable for many practising teachers. This is backed up by the recent shocking statistic that 40% of newly qualified teachers are leaving the profession every year!

The leadership grouping presented a strategy to conference that was long on aspiration but short of concrete strategy to combat increasing workloads and cuts.

An amendment from Lanac supporters sought to insert a clear timetable for industrial action if no movement was forthcoming from the next government over workload.

Moving the amendment, Socialist Party and NUT executive member Martin Powell-Davies from Lewisham Association warned that the union's industrial strategy had to change from one-day strikes with long intervals in between. He called for: "A clear plan of action. We must stick to it until we win."



photo Paul Mattsson

Seconding the motion, NUT executive member Phil Clarke from Lewes warned: "Our members cannot go on like this. We are putting this amendment so our members have clarity [about how we intend to win]. The government will have clarity on what they need to concede if they want to avoid [industrial] action."

In previous arguments with Lanac, the right and 'left' wings of the leadership group have tended to share speaking time. Not so this time as 'left' members aligned to the Socialist Teachers Alliance, Alex Kenny and Andrew Baisley, lined up to oppose the amendment.

Card vote

On a show of hands the vote was extremely close. A card vote was called with 41% of conference floor backing the amendment. This is a narrowing of the results of a card vote on a controversial industrial question at last year's conference.

This gap narrowed further when a Lanac amendment on fighting cuts to education funding, moved by Jane Nellist received the backing of 47% of conference delegates. But the vote means the leadership will



The leadership will delay a ballot until after the new government's autumn statement - despite the main parties' agreement on education cuts

delay the ballot until after the new government's autumn statement - despite the main parties' agreement over education cuts.

A Socialist Party fringe meeting on the anti-austerity movements in Greece, Spain and Ireland and their potential impact on Britain saw 25 people attend with £320 raised by the financial appeal.

A Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition meeting on the Monday night saw over 60 attend, with 15 teacher delegates standing as TUSC candidates.



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Come to the NSSN 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



[News in brief]

Smurfit Kappa

Unite the Union members working for Smurfit Kappa packaging in Northampton, took 48 hours of strike action from 1 April in support of two sacked senior shop stewards who have stood up to the company over 'race to the bottom' contracts.

The 108 Unite members voted by 60% for strike action. Around 50 workers were out on their vibrant picket line.

Reporting on the successful strike action, Unite rep Paul Metcalfe said: "The majority of people supporting this week's strike were not activists or militants, just ordinary working people who were prepared to give their time and support to what they believed to be unfair and unjustified actions by the company management. Most of them had never been on strike before and behaved with courage and dignity throughout the action and have sent a message to the company that surely cannot be ignored."

Earlier this year, Smurfit Kappa announced €378 million global annual profits.

Michael Barker

Hackney drivers



Unite members working as drivers in passenger services for Hackney council took strike action on 2 April against pay cuts of 50%. Local TUSC parliamentary candidate Brian Debus visited the picket line to show support and solidarity - the only candidate to support the strikers.

Bromley council

Unite members working for Bromley local government took strike action on 7 and 8 April in opposition to the council's privatisation plans and attack on the workforce pay and trade union rights.

The council is proposing to privatise the majority of its services, including libraries, parks, planners and social services, leaving the local authority with a limited "commissioning role".

A public campaign led by Unite has led to nearly 1,000 residents demanding the council drops plans to privatise the library service and replace professional staff with volunteers.

The local union branches are looking to escalate the action with Unison branch having requested a ballot for its 1,000 members.

IMMIGRATION: WORKERS' UNITY TO DEFEND PAY, JOBS AND SERVICES



In the 'Weakest Link' TV debate Ukip's leader Nigel Farage relentlessly repeated two messages in order to try and maximise his party's vote. The first, and for many the most important, was his dismissal of the other six politicians on the platform as being 'all the same' and 'not listening'. Posing as a party of protest Farage is winning the votes of some of those who are angriest at the anti-working class policies of the capitalist parties. The other constant theme to Farage's answers was to blame increased immigration for the problems working class people face. In doing so Farage is attempting to play on many workers' fears over the consequences of increased immigration.

In election hustings Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates will be asked what their attitude is to immigration. How should Socialist Party members respond when asked questions like those below?

Why are workers from other countries able to come here and get jobs while young people who were born here are unemployed?

Many bosses choose to employ workers from other countries because they believe they can pay them less and force them to work harder. Occasionally a horror story gets media headlines, like the migrant agricultural workers in East Anglia being paid £20 a week and living ten to a room, but most of this super-exploitation goes unreported. EU rules are designed to help big business get away with using migrant workers as a catalyst to lower wages for all in a 'race to the bottom'. We are opposed to the bosses' EU, which acts in the interests of the bankers and billionaires. At the same time we stand in solidarity with working class people across Europe who face the same austerity as us.

Employers, not exploited workers, gain from 'the race to the bottom'. And it is not only migrant workers who have been used in this way, agency workers and young people are also used by the bosses as a means to drive down wages.

What is the solution? TUSC demands everyone gets the rate for the job. We fight for a £10-an-hour minimum wage now, for all workers without exemptions, and for trade union agreed rates of pay above the minimum. A guaranteed decent wage for all would take away the incentive for employers to choose one group of workers over another.

But to achieve this will require getting organised. In the 1950s and 60s, when workers moved to Britain from the Caribbean and South Asia, employers tried to use them in just the same way. This was only cut across when the trade unions started to recruit these newly arrived workers and together they fought for all to get the rate for the job. More recently, in 2009, workers in Lindsey Oil Refinery took strike action to prevent their employer using workers from Italy to undercut their wages and conditions. They succeeded in winning the rate and conditions for the job for all the workers, from Italy as well as Britain.



London bus drivers striking to win one rate for the job photos Paul Mattsson

But aren't migrants coming to Britain to claim our generous benefits?

What generous benefits? Jobseeker's Allowance is £73.10 for over-25 year olds. That is equal to about 10% of average earnings, compared to 17% when Thatcher was in power! Many people - themselves struggling on low incomes - are angry at the people who are 'getting something for nothing'. Capitalist politicians' 'anti-scrounger' propaganda tells us that migrants and benefit claimants get such handouts. Meanwhile they say not a word about the real scroungers - the super-rich. In 15 years, the number of people in Britain whose net worth is at least \$50m (£31m) has almost quadrupled to 4,660, and many of them don't even pay their taxes.

Rather than barely existing on poverty-level benefits, immigrants to Britain want to work, or study, or join families, etc. Capitalist politicians aim to dismantle the benefit system while distracting us with propaganda about scroungers. Working class people fought for the right to unemployment and other benefits to protect us from starvation when we were unable to work. Now they are being systematically undermined. The brutal benefit cuts that have taken place under this government have led to hunger and despair for some of the most vulnerable in our society. There have been several suicides as a result of the vicious bedroom tax.

We fight to defend benefits. This includes benefits for those that have come here from other countries. Workers from Eastern Europe are statistically less likely to claim benefits than those

who were born here (6.6% compared to 16%) but if those workers don't have that right when they need to it will make it easier for big business to force them to work for lower wages, strengthening the 'race to the bottom' for us all.

But aren't our public services too overstretched to cope with any more people?

Our public services are already overstretched due to underfunding, unable to cope even without more people. There are five million people on waiting lists for social housing! The sell-off of council housing and complete failure of successive governments to build new stock has resulted in a halving of the supply of social housing over the last 20 years. TUSC stands for a mass building programme of high-quality, affordable council homes that could solve the housing problem for all.

At the same time the Socialist Party recognises that given the current lack of supply and the lack of an open, democratic and accountable system of allocations, which would be accepted by most workers, there can be anger and suspicion that housing is being allocated unfairly. We call for democratic control of the allocation system. Decisions should be taken on the basis of need, including the right to be housed near relatives and friends - not by council officials, however, but by elected representatives of local community organisations, including tenants associations, trade unions, elected councillors and other community campaigns.

It is not only on housing that immigration is be-

ing used by the establishment politicians to distract us from the consequences of their policies. They are doing the same on the NHS and other public services. Nigel Farage, when asked a question about the NHS, answered by attacking people from other countries getting treatment for HIV on the NHS. What Farage didn't say is that he is opposed to the NHS and has declared he would be "more comfortable" if it was privatised!

Ukip is no different on this to other big business parties. They want to see our NHS handed over to the profiteers, but dare not say so openly because it would be unpopular. Instead they support privatisation by the back door and try and distract us by raising scare stories about 'health tourism'.

Statistics actually show that 62% of people who started HIV treatment in 2012 were born in the UK. Of those born abroad most had been living and working in Britain several years before seeking treatment, so had not moved to Britain in order to get it. We need a united struggle - of all working class people - to stop the destruction of our NHS and to maintain a health service which is free at the point of use.

Do you support the right to asylum?

Yes. We fight for a genuine right to asylum which does not exist for many people who are fleeing war and dictatorship under our current racist immigration laws. Those laws are there to act in the interests of big business not the working class and poor, either in Britain or internationally. Look at the nightmare that exists in the Middle East after the imperialist occupation of Iraq. Yet Iraqi asylum seekers are frequently deported. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have become refugees as they flee the horror of the Islamic State, but the government in Britain has only allowed 750 of them to come here to claim asylum.

We call for the right to asylum and oppose the splitting up of families and the detention centres - no different than prisons - in which vulnerable asylum seekers are kept for months on end. On the basis of capitalism there will always be people being forced to flee their country as a result of war, environmental catastrophe and poverty.

We are fighting for a democratic socialist world, where the wealth, science and technique created by capitalism could be harnessed in order to meet the needs of the majority worldwide. Only on that basis would it be possible to have a world where people were free to move if they wished to, but were not forced to do so by the nightmare they faced at home.



Workers in Lindsey Oil Refinery succeeded in winning the rate and conditions for the job for all workers, migrants as well as those from Britain



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk 020 8988 8777

@socialist_party /CWISocialistParty

text 0776 1818 206 socialistparty.org.uk/join

Election fundraising

Alistair Tice
Yorkshire Socialist Party

So far, 119 members in Yorkshire have pledged £12,414 to the Socialist Party's election appeal, of which £8,570 has been paid. On top of this, Yorkshire TUSC has received donations from branches of transport union RMT and members of the Fire Brigades Union after hearing Socialist Party speakers. Fundraising includes gigs, raffles and TUSC t-shirts.

Ready to explore new ways of funding socialist ideas, Sheffield Socialist Party member Terry Murphy has set up a Crowdfunder appeal. He says: "We hope this will be the first of many such TUSC campaigns nationwide. Successful crowdfunding can help show that everyone can make a contribution to politics, not just millionaires and vested interests."

There is no direct financial return for anyone donating to crowdfund a political party. However, we do offer

rewards including merchandise and subscriptions.

TUSC will be standing 19 parliamentary candidates across Yorkshire and almost 150 local election candidates, including every seat in Sheffield. This is part of our nationwide challenge of almost 150 parliamentary candidates and almost 700 council candidates.

TUSC has no big business sponsorship. It is a coalition for the millions not the millionaires. Every donation strengthens our fight for a better future.

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/
tusc-yorkshire-campaign-
fundraiser-1

You can donate on socialistparty.org.uk/donate, phone 020 8988 8777 with a card, or post a cheque made out to "Socialist Party" to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Please mark all donations "Election Appeal 2015" and send them by 30 April.

Fighting fund success!

Ken Douglas
Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members raised £29,255 in the first three months of 2015 - 117% of the target.

This was a magnificent effort. Particularly as over £40,000 has also been donated by members and supporters in the same period, to help finance the Socialist Party's participation in the TUSC election campaign.

The Socialist Party doesn't have any rich backers. Our funds don't come from tax-dodging millionaires and billionaires, but from ordinary, working class people.

That's why the fighting fund is so important. Branches were determined to reach the target, trying all sorts of different ways with great success!

There were regular Saturday and weekday stalls. Salford members raised over £100 on one day, campaigning against cuts at Whipps Cross Hospital. And Southampton raised £52 at their regular stall outside the local hospital.

Parties and fundraisers played

an important part. Waltham Forest raised £150 with a pizza night - all you can eat for £5! Carlisle held their annual Burns Night celebration, raising £132. And East London raised £50 with a 'clothes party': everyone brings clothes they don't want, and they are auctioned off for 20 or 30 pence each.

Car boot sales are another potential source of income - Swansea raised over £145 at one they do regularly. Loose change jars can also raise a surprising amount: one member raised £14, and another £30.

Planning

Now branches will be planning how to reach their targets in the April to June quarter.

This election campaign is a fantastic opportunity to promote the idea of a real alternative to the capitalist parties which promise only more and deeper cuts to our living standards. Finance is a vital part of that.

Throughout the campaign, Socialist Party branches will be aiming to raise fighting fund. We must ensure we have the resources needed to build a socialist alternative to the corruption and greed of the bankers, the super-rich and their capitalist politicians.

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	January to March 2015	End-of-quarter totals
North West	1,200	2,677		223%
East Midlands	1,600	2,073		130%
Northern	600	704		117%
London	6,100	6,913		113%
West Midlands	2,100	2,358		112%
Wales	2,300	2,335		102%
South West	1,400	1,414		101%
Yorkshire	2,900	2,888		100%
Eastern	1,200	946		79%
Southern	1,200	869		72%
South East	750	373		50%
England and Wales	3,650	5,706		156%
TOTAL	25,000	29,255		117%



JOIN A UNION TO FIGHT THE CULTURE OF DESPAIR

Scott Jones, Usdaw shop steward (personal capacity)

Employers around the country - large and small, including the public sector - have created a culture of despair.

Poverty pay means millions cannot afford the basics they need for a decent life. For many working class people, the only chance at living normally lasts for a week after payday - and then the overdraft is their best mate. Or even worse, they become far too familiar with local foodbanks and rip-off payday loan companies.

We hear many worrying stories instigated by this current government and peddled by the right-wing media. 'Working people pay tax, so others can stay out of work and live off benefits!' This is just totally untrue; a myth.

It's a myth because the vast majority of those who claim benefits are actually in work. The reason they claim is because wages are too low and getting lower as they fail to keep pace with inflation. The minority who aren't working can hardly be blamed for there not being enough jobs to go round.

'Scroungers'

The government talks about "scroungers" earning more from benefits than workers. But on the rare occasions this is true, it isn't because benefits are too high - in fact, they are mostly set at starvation rates. Instead, it is because the pay rates on offer in the world of work are pitiful. Work needs to pay, and pay properly.

The real scroungers are private firms that don't pay a living wage. They are essentially taxpayer-subsidised by benefits so their workers can live.

This is at a time when most companies are sitting out the economic storm by piling up cash. They are paying staff peanuts while bosses hand themselves bigger and bigger pay packets and perks.

In addition, it is estimated big business is sitting on around £800 billion in the bank, unspent. Bosses see no profitable outlet for it in an uncertain economy. This could all be used to invest in more jobs and better pay, but instead is widening the gap between rich and poor.

Living

Friends of mine, despite working, have spoken of having to sleep in their hoodies as they can't afford the heating. Or they have had to move back in with their parents because their wages are so low. Pay rises, even below-inflation 'rises' that are real-terms pay cuts, are non-existent for most.

A fellow workplace representative for shop workers' union Usdaw got active after wondering why they never had any cash. They worked out that during a standard month they earn £500.36 - and they stress the 36p really counts!

They travel over an hour from home to Cardiff city centre just to get to work. This alone sets them back £360 per month in fuel and parking costs. There isn't any work closer to home.

This means that, after travel costs, they're left with a pitiful £140.36 to last the month. This is the reality for many working class people of all ages right across the country.

The so-called 'recovery' hasn't penetrated past the boardroom. Workers everywhere are still having wages frozen or cut.

This comes after six years of devastating recession and austerity. But even before that, during the 'good times' under New Labour, workers' wages actually fell in proportion to bosses' pay.

The response to the crisis of low pay from the political establishment has been woeful.

Prime Minister David Cameron has cynically called for workers to get a pay rise as we approach the general election. This is a "sick joke" according Mark Serwotka, general secretary of public sector union PCS. His members, employed by the government Cameron heads, haven't seen a pay rise in years.

Meanwhile, the 'opposition' - in the form of Labour and the growing Green Party - has made pledges well short of what workers need. The Greens have pledged to implement a £10 an hour minimum wage - but not till 2020. By that time Labour is pledging only £8 - a measly 30p a year, which could well be cancelled out by inflation.

£10 now
 Bills, rent and mortgage payments won't wait until 2020, and neither can we. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is committed to campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage now, not in five years. This follows a resolution last year moved by bakers' union BFAWU.

BFAWU is fighting to organise downtrodden catering and retail workers to fight for a living wage and fair treatment at work. Working with campaign groups, including Youth Fight for Jobs, it has launched "Fast

Food Rights" - inspired by events across the Atlantic.

In the United States, fast food workers took strike action across the United States against bullying bosses and poverty pay.

Imagine this power, harnessed and organised by the unions into escalating, coordinated national strikes. The demand for £10 an hour would be just the start of what we could potentially win: an end to austerity, and maybe more.

Even action limited to single workplaces can win big. Young workers at the Ritz cinema in London got a massive 26% pay increase out of their bosses after they organised strikes.

Political voice

But just like in Seattle, political representation is essential. This is why the Socialist Party helped found the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). TUSC is standing over 130 candidates in May's general election and several hundred in England's council elections.

Whoever forms the government after May will be committed to austerity. None of the capitalist parties is committed to lifting workers out of poverty.

This means the struggle for a living wage will continue.

We must fight to organise unorganised workplaces, expanding the trade unions that can help us all win a better life at work. We must also campaign within those unions for a fighting strategy, and pressure the TUC for effective, coordinated action.

And finally, we must build the working class alternative to the bosses' parties. TUSC is taking huge steps towards this.

The culture of despair must go. So until the bosses and government pay us a living wage, let's make their lives a living hell!

seen in the 150,000-strong TUC demo in London last October demanding a living wage. Recent industrial action taken by NHS workers over their pitiful pay offer is another.

Official figures for pay rises are starting to show 'increases'. But real pay is several years behind pre-crisis levels. And official figures don't take into account nearly five million 'self-employed' workers - 15% of the workforce

In Seattle, low-paid workers have won one of the highest minimum wages in the world: \$15 an hour. They did this, in part, by organising collective action in their workplaces to put pressure on bosses - including walking out on strike so the company couldn't make any money. This is why it's vital to join a trade union if you want a better life at work.

Decisive in this battle was Socialist Alternative, US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party. In a historic election campaign in November 2013, Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant was elected to Seattle city council. She was able to use pressure from low-paid workers and activists to extract concessions from bosses and their politicians.

The "15 Now" campaign is rapidly spreading to other US cities. There is no reason why a similar campaign can't be successful here.

A glimpse of what's possible was

Two jobs and still broke

Young worker
 Wales



"I could work seven days a week and still not have enough"

Being on the minimum wage is boring as well as stressful.

There is only so far you can stretch £6.50 an hour, and being on a 'flexible' contract means not even knowing how many £6.50s I'm going to get per week. Going out and enjoying myself, learning to drive and many other things become very difficult. There is rent to pay as well as rising prices for essentials such as food and utilities which I help my parents pay.

From 2008 to April last year, real wages fell by a whopping 10%

You would think getting two jobs would make life easier. It would mean having more work and so more money. So I did!

I worked in Morrison's and KFC. Morrison's was a unionised job, with better conditions, more solid hours - you knew when you were working. KFC is a casual contract: not zero hours, but they can give you less than your contracted hours. It's not unionised.

When you're working them both you see the differences. You see a contrast in the way the workers are treated.

But because I had two jobs, the tax was much higher. You can't just get a second job and earn more money because you pay "emergency tax".

You can claim it back, but that's no good at the time. You end up working two jobs for around the same amount of money.

My social life was impacted big time. I'd find myself doing an early morning in Morrisons, 5 till 2. Then 4 till 12 in KFC, then another 5 till 2 in Morrisons the next morning. You don't want to refuse in case you get punished in next week's rota.

It's not just about not having a social life, it's about not getting a lot of sleep. It affected my health: I was tired the whole time.

I could work up to seven days a week some weeks and still not get enough to live on overall. I wasn't getting any money for stuff like drinks or going away for a few days. If I did spend even a little on myself, I'd end up using my overdraft, then having to pay it off, and not having any money the next month.

For me as a young worker, £10 an hour would make a huge difference. It would mean having my independence by being able to afford my own place and driving lessons. It would mean having a social life. It would mean a lot less worry over rent, bills and food.

Overall it would mean a better life - and not just for me, but for all working class people.

Labour's 'ban' on zero-hours not good enough

'Join a union' day of action 15 April

Helen Pattison
 Youth Fight for Jobs

Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour Party, has announced he wants a "12-week limit" on the use of zero-hours contracts. Unfortunately one of his named employer party donors had used unpaid interns! Labour won't win young workers' votes like this.



Labour leader, Ed Miliband

While the official 'CPI' rate of inflation is at 0%, the more realistic 'RPI' rate is still showing rising prices. Many household costs continue to grow, including utilities, transport and interest paid on debts

three-month period, adding to insecurity. Workers deserve guaranteed hours, trade union representation and full employment rights from day one.

It would be good to see Labour actually backing trade unions putting up a fight over zero-hour contracts. And campaigning for £10 an hour now, not £8 in 2020! That's why I'll be joining protests on 15 April.

This day of action is part of global protests taking place against low-pay and casual work. In Britain, Youth Fight for Jobs is working alongside bakers' union BFAWU as part of the Fast Food Rights campaign.

Clearly, Labour is feeling the pressure of campaigns like Youth Fight for Jobs and the huge anger that exists at the scandal of zero-hour contracts. But Miliband's promise goes nowhere near far enough.

This pledge does not "ban" zero-hour contracts as he claims. It could even lead to employers systematically firing and rehiring workers before a

On 15 April actions will take place across the country as part of a "join a union day". We want to help unorganised workers get organised and fight for a better deal.

Read more about the day of action on our back page



Thousands of workers in Seattle have had a raise this month after a mass campaign, including action from Socialist Alternative city councillor Kshama Sawant (pictured, left), secured a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Fast food workers across the US are fighting for \$15, including a big strike this week photo: Alex Garland

What is a trade union?

Trade unions are there to work for you in your workplace. They help you organise with colleagues to get a better deal out of your boss.

Trade unions can help you get more pay and better treatment at work. Join and help organise your colleagues to work together.

Without working people doing things collectively to pressure their

bosses and governments, we wouldn't even have weekends! Every right you have at work has been won by people just like you organising with their fellow workers through trade unions.

Today, unions like BFAWU are fighting for improvements like a £10-an-hour minimum wage for all. **Join a union today! Visit bfawu.org/join or tuc.org.uk/join-union.**

MANCHESTER SAYS: END CUTS - TAX THE RICH

Manchester TUSC

The Manchester Evening News's front page on Tues 31 March read "End cuts and tax the rich", two of the demands of the newspaper's own "Manchester Manifesto".

According to a poll of 5,000 Manchester residents, an end to the cuts, progressive taxation and preservation of the NHS are the issues that will decide this election. Only one party standing in the May elections gives its full support to these demands: TUSC.

Here is Manchester TUSC supporters' response to the Manchester Manifesto's demands:

- Hire more GPs and guarantee an appointment within 48 hours
- TUSC would refuse to pay the Private Finance Initiative bill, where private companies build public buildings like hospitals and lease them back to the public. This would free up £60 billion nationally, more than enough to plug the funding gap and employ more doctors to handle demand.
- Scrap the bedroom tax - it is unfair and wrong in principle
- TUSC has always stood against the bedroom tax, as it targets the most vulnerable. We would abolish bedroom tax from day one.
- Introduce a wealth tax on the richest one per cent
- TUSC would implement a progressive tax on rich corporations and individuals, and end tax avoidance.
- Stop the council cuts - they have gone too far

TUSC stands against all cuts to public services, be that in the form of meagre budgets or sell-



A one-off levy of 20% on the £519 billion held by the richest 1,000 individuals would raise over £100 billion

offs to private companies. On local councils we would resist Westminster budgets and instead implement a budget that meets the needs of the people of Manchester.

- Raise cash for the NHS with a one-off tax on wealthy individuals or businesses
- A one-off levy of 20% on the £519 billion held by the richest 1,000 individuals would raise over £100 billion, enough to plug the funding gap many times over.
- Cut train fares and improve rail services

The privatisation of the rail network has soundly failed. The temporarily renationalised East

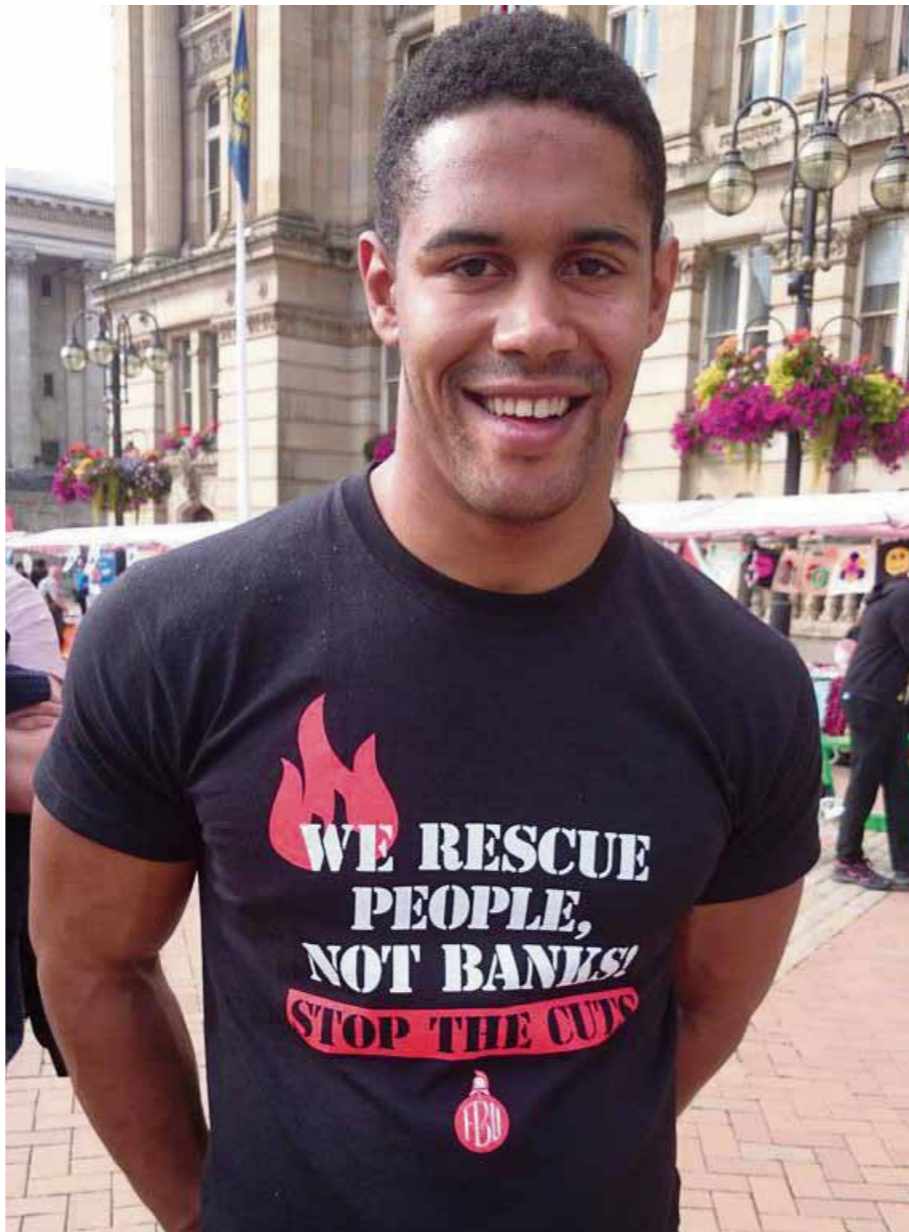
Coast Main Line made a profit of £1 billion for the public purse in the six years up to its privatisation this year. TUSC would renationalise the rail network in its entirety, while making it efficient and affordable.

Labour, Conservatives, Lib Dems, Ukip and Greens all favour continued austerity over progressive action that will deliver on these demands. Only TUSC will carry out the policies necessary to meet the needs of the people of Manchester.

TUSC is standing three parliamentary candidates in Manchester and over 30 Manchester council candidates.

According to a poll of 5,000 Manchester residents, an end to the cuts, progressive taxation and preservation of the NHS are the issues that will decide this election

As a firefighter I can see that the service is already very lean. Any more cuts will result in job losses. So I'm standing for TUSC



Why I'm standing SPEAKING UP FOR PUBLIC SERVICES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

West Midlands Fire Brigades Union member and TUSC Dudley North parliamentary candidate Dave Pitt spoke to the Socialist.

Why are you standing for TUSC?

All the establishment parties, Labour, Tories, Lib Dems, share a huge austerity agenda. As a firefighter, I can see that the service in the West Midlands is already very lean. It's been almost hacked to the bone. Any more cuts will result in job redundancies. So I'm standing for TUSC as it's anti-cuts.

Why should people vote for you?

As a firefighter I've seen how the cuts are affecting the emergency response people get. You could say the same for the ambulance and the police.

Also I'm a young person, so I know what young people are feeling in terms of very high tuition fees if they go to university. If they don't go to university there's a higher chance they'll be offered a zero-hour con-

tract if they've not got a degree. Many that do go to university then get jobs that aren't suitable for their skills and are overqualified for the jobs available. They're not in the right jobs because there's a lack of those at the moment.

There's got to be investment in the public sector, and in the private sector people have got to have decent contracts. Zero-hour or temporary contracts are no good for young people - especially if they want to get their own home. A lot of people are stuck with their parents still. They need a proper full-time contract.

Students at Dudley College are quite angry that they don't get Education Maintenance Allowance which was scrapped by the current government. I received EMA and greatly appreciated it while I was at college. Now a lot of young people can't afford to travel to their college or buy materials needed for their course. Some decide not to go to college, others have to work a lot for that money which cuts across their education. EMA should be reinstated.



Lobbying for affordable housing

Leeds Socialist Party member

TUSC supporters lobbied Leeds city council on 1 April, calling for affordable housing for all. A deputation, led by Socialist Party member and Headingley TUSC council candidate Iain Dalton, addressed the council.

Over the last few months, Leeds TUSC supporters have been campaigning door-to-door calling for a mass council house building programme and the establishment of a not-for-profit, council-run, letting agency.

With over 20,000 on the council house waiting list in Leeds, and a

Private Finance Initiative funded council scheme only providing 388 new homes and just over 1,000 refurbished homes, the council's plans fall far short of what is required.

Tenants are being left in the hands of big landlords and private letting agents, many charging exorbitant rents and 'admin' fees often for poor quality housing. In the university areas, landlords have crammed four or more students into what had previously been two-bed properties, pushing families out of the area. This situation has been worsened by the Tory bedroom tax, implemented by Leeds' Labour council like many others around the country.

Our campaign has helped unite students and local residents. We've had hundreds of signatures and have also started an online petition: www.change.org/p/leeds-city-council-establish-a-council-run-letting-agency-build-council-houses.

TUSC Horsforth ward candidate Gary Kaye and student KT Johnston were also in the delegation, which was interviewed by the BBC.

The council referred the issues raised by the deputation to council officers in conjunction with the councillor responsible for housing, Peter Gruen. We now plan on continuing to collect signatures and delivering them to the councillor.

Election hustings: we shall be heard!

Dave Reid
TUSC agent, Cardiff Central

TUSC can beat most of the parties in a fair vote - if we are given a chance to be heard. This was the lesson from the hustings organised by the YMCA in Cardiff Central.

Despite the event being packed with Labour and Liberal supporters in this marginal seat, TUSC candidate Steve Williams came third in the vote ahead of the Tories, Ukip and the Greens.

Originally the YMCA did not invite any of our candidates to speak at the event. After all, TUSC is virtually never covered in the mainstream media. So it did not occur to the YMCA to invite a TUSC speaker. The YMCA said we would have to make do with a place in the audience.

But an exchange of emails finally convinced them that we should

be included. We pointed out that according to electoral law any organisation that organises a hustings event open to the general public and only invites candidates from a few parties but not all standing in the constituency will be deemed to be making a contribution to those parties' election funds.

The YMCA relented and on the morning of the debate invited Steve Williams to speak at the event. No other socialists were allowed into the ticket-only event (which had been booked days in advance by Labour and Liberal supporters) but by all accounts he slated the main capitalist parties and won the majority of the unaligned audience over.

The chief executive of the YMCA emailed TUSC to thank Steve for being an excellent panel member and said: "As I was one of the people who had not considered TUSC as a main party originally, I apologise especially as TUSC came third."

EDL would be stopped again in Walthamstow

The far-right English Defence League (EDL) has announced that it is intending to hold a demonstration in Walthamstow on 9 May 2015, having received objections from the family of soldier Lee Rigby to a provocative march in Woolwich around the anniversary of his death.

Nancy Taaffe, TUSC parliamentary candidate for Walthamstow said: "The EDL is not welcome here. They were chased



away from Walthamstow twice in the second half of 2012 through the opposition of the local population. Now, they want to peddle their divisive message again through our streets.

"TUSC opposes this march. If it goes ahead, TUSC will help to mobilise thousands of workers and young people against it, as was done before. EDL only sows division and hatred when we need unity against racism and austerity."



Visit the TUSC website
www.tusc.org.uk

New website for the 2015 campaign:
www.tusc2015.com

The TUSC manifesto launch will take place on 10 April at 11am by Canary Wharf London Underground (Jubilee Line) station

Don't miss the TUSC election broadcast on 17 April on BBC2 at 5.55pm, ITV at 6.25pm and BBC1 at 6.55pm

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance involving the RMT transport union, the Socialist Party, other socialist groups and leading members of other trade unions. This May TUSC is standing over 130 candidates in the general election and over 600 in the local elections.



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Tory MP's 'socialism'

We're often told that socialism is unpopular; however Tory MP Chloe Smith would beg to differ. In re-election leaflets distributed in her North Norwich battleground, she quoted approvingly the view that she "seems to act more like a socialist than a Conservative"! As a former Treasury minister, Chloe Smith's record includes implementing tax cuts for millionaires, the bedroom tax, cutting working families' tax credit and raising VAT! So did Labour challenger Jessica Asato take the chance to outline a real socialist programme? Not a chance.

The only party representing socialism in these elections is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Ben Robinson

Crocodile tears

I was quite shocked to read the name of political parties who addressed the recent event in Liverpool organised by the youth charity Uprising. Each of the big five mainstream parties who addressed this meeting have councillors up and down the country who have implemented cuts in public services and yet according to an article in the Liverpool Echo, each spoke against cuts. The only party which has a 100% track

record of opposing all cuts is TUSC - yet this group was not invited to address the meeting. The working class in this city are not stupid and will not be fooled by crocodile tears.

Raphael Parkinson, Liverpool

Tory welfare threat

Tory chancellor George Osborne confirmed in his budget that the Tories plan to make £12 billion in welfare savings if they win the general election. £2 billion will be cut by freezing most working age benefits. But that still leaves £10 billion to account for.

Pensioner income is guaranteed. So working age claimants will bear the brunt of the cuts. Around five million working age claimants have to soak up £10 billion in cuts over two years, so the average cut is likely to be around £19 a week.

Cuts could include abolishing the work-related activity component of Employment and Support Allowance; removing the lower rate of Disability Living Allowance care and/or mobility for working age claimants; making the points system for Personal Independence Payment much harsher; and reducing the percentage of rent that housing benefit covers.

John Smithee, Cambridgeshire

We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Art reviews

Adventures of the black square

Niall Mulholland reviews *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015*

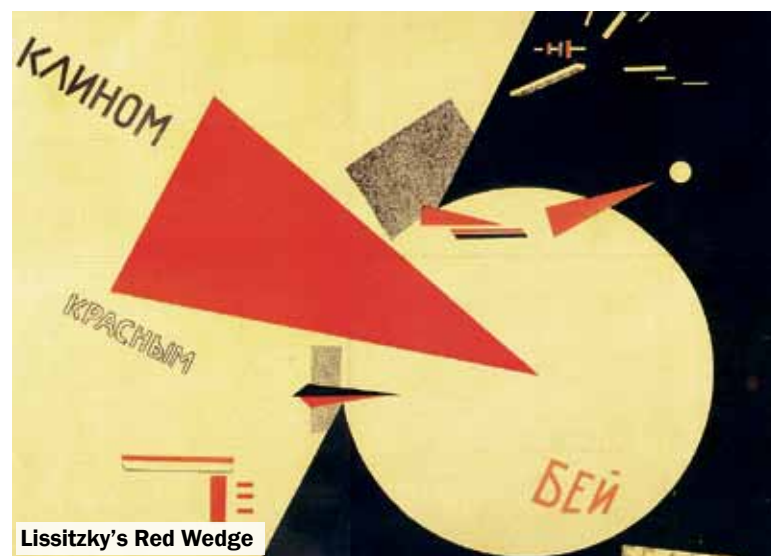
This epic, ambitious exhibition of over 100 artists in paintings, film, photographs, and sculptures, shown recently in Whitechapel Art gallery, east London, poses the question: "How does art relate to society and politics?" It shows how over the last 100 years abstract art has reacted to historical events.

Abstract art originated at the start of the 20th century from the Modernist movement.

Artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Hans Arp rejected conventional forms and created works without obvious subject matter, emphasising instead shape, colour and texture.

A significant moment was when Russian artist Kazimir Malevich presented a series of paintings of blocks of colour floating against white at an exhibition in St Petersburg in 1915. These were the first examples of geometrical abstraction and the rise of Constructivist art from its revolutionary beginnings in Russia and Europe.

The mass slaughter of World War One acted as an accelerator to the form. Artists rejected all types of authority and traditional modes. The 1917 Russian Revolution was also another great impulse to the new art: from El Lissitzky's iconic poster "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" (1920) to Aleksandr Rodchenko's photographs of Moscow's daring new radio towers and the works of other important Soviet artists, such as Vladimir Tatlin.



Lissitzky's Red Wedge

The development in the 1920s and 1930s of the De Stijl artistic movement of Piet Mondrian and Theo Van Doesburg was also well represented in the exhibition, which influenced the Bauhaus movement of art, crafts and architecture. Fascism in Italy and Germany also demanded a Modernist change of style, although this was barely dealt with in the exhibition.

A welcome addition to the usual story on abstract art was Latin America and the works of artists such as Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. Abstract art in 1950s Brazil reflected growing national self-confidence as the economy grew. It also reflected the dark years of right wing military dictatorship that followed in the 1960s.

The section on contemporary artists was the weakest part of the exhibition. Sarah Morris and Armando Andrade Tudela produce

clever depictions of the influence of abstract art on design and corporate brands. But while artists are still experimenting with representations of reality and society, they rarely challenge or indicate other possibilities. Too much feels sterile, even superficial.

This is not entirely the artists' fault. "Artists of the Weimar Republic or Leninist Russia... could still believe in good faith and, without bombast, that art could morally influence the world."

"Today, the idea has been largely dismissed, as it must be in a mass media society where art's principal social role is to be investment capital," wrote the late art critic Robert Hughes.

But as class struggles develop, the best artists will be impelled to make searching critiques of modern capitalist society, pushing abstract art in new, exciting and true directions.

Searching for the marvellous

Dave Beale

Currently on display in Skipton (North Yorkshire) is a wonderful collection of surrealist art by Peter Harris. For decades, Peter has been creating work for his own pleasure and satisfaction but this has rarely been on public display.

A supporter of the Socialist Party and its forerunner, the Militant, for over 30 years, Peter Harris is a founding member of Blackburn Contemporary Artists and active participant in the English Surrealist group. Of the surrealists, Peter says: "They had utter contempt for capitalism's cultural elitism and the artists and poets who provided innocuous comfort for the existing repressive order."

Using mixed media - collage, photographs and boxes - Peter is provoked by bitter struggles against injustice and oppression but also his love of mountain walks and nature.

Of the 50 pieces in the exhibition, some are black and white photomontage, others diversely coloured with various small objects



fixed to the surface of multi-layered photographic images, or sometimes fixed to the glass itself.

There are works in response to the horrors of the Vietnam war and

the Chilean dictatorship, as well as Peter's own political experiences as a victim of expulsions from the Labour Party in 1980s Blackburn. In contrast to some very unsettling, even violent images, there are also tranquil aspects of landscapes and wild land.

Peter points out: "The surrealists saw the importance of the writings of people such as Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and identified themselves with the cause of working-class self-emanicipation, through a political revolution. Only then will society be able to move on to really begin refashioning human understanding and profoundly changing the lives we lead."

This exhibition is well worth a visit!

■ 'Searching for the marvellous in an age of isolation, fear and hate' is at Mill Bridge Gallery, Skipton until 25 April (possibly longer). Check for opening days and times at www.millbridgegallery.co.uk

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26 years after the stadium disaster Heartbreak, disbelief and anger at Hillsborough inquests

The 26th anniversary of the Hillsborough stadium disaster in Sheffield, when 96 Liverpool football supporters were crushed to death, takes place on 15 April. Responsibility for this disaster rests with the South Yorkshire police chiefs and the political establishment at the time, who connived to cover up their failings and instead blamed the victims.

Tony Mulhearn, former Liverpool city councillor, and TUSC candidate in the forthcoming general election, comments on the latest revelations from the current inquests into the 96 deaths. Below, are reprinted extracts from articles in the Socialist following publication of the Independent Panel Inquiry findings in September 2012.

The inquests into the Hillsborough stadium deaths are entering their second year. They have been the scene of heartbreak for the families of the victims who have been compelled to relive the horror of those appalling events.

Reflecting the unprecedented levels of publicity given to the cover-up, the coroner told the jury they would have to investigate each of the 96 deaths. He added: "We shall consider the experiences and deaths of each one of those 96 individuals."

The human aspect of the inquest was underlined by Steve Kelly, who lost his brother Michael aged 38. He told the court: 'In life, he was an individual. In death, he is a number. I want to remove that sequence of numbers from him. I am here today waiting to reclaim my brother.'

The callous disregard for the grief of the bereaved was endemic in the whole police operation. This was revealed by Leslie Jones and wife Doreen who had been brought the body of son Richard, 25, to identify.

In December 2012, after years of campaigning by the Hillsborough disaster survivors and the victims' families and supporters, and the publication of the Hillsborough Independent Panel's report, the High Court quashed the "accidental deaths" verdicts of the original inquests. It ordered new ones to be held, which began on 31 March 2014.

He said: "Doreen tried to get down to give him a cuddle. But the police

officer pulled her up roughly and said: 'Sorry, he's the property of the coroner now, you can't touch him.'"

Layer after layer of the cover up has been peeled back, revealing a conspiracy whose objective was to make the victims responsible for a disaster which was the result of grotesque neglect by the authorities at every level, all the way up to Margaret Thatcher. It was the former Tory Prime minister who made the infamous remark: "The police should not be seen to be responsible."

The facts of the cover-up are in the public domain and well documented. However, in a rare revelation by a senior participant, retired chief superintendent Duckenfield, who originally claimed that the fans had forced open the gates, accepted that he had lied and that his failures were the direct cause of the deaths of 96 fans.

That the inquest is so meticulous and searching is a tribute to the courage of the families and the incredible levels of mass support from the fans and the wider population.

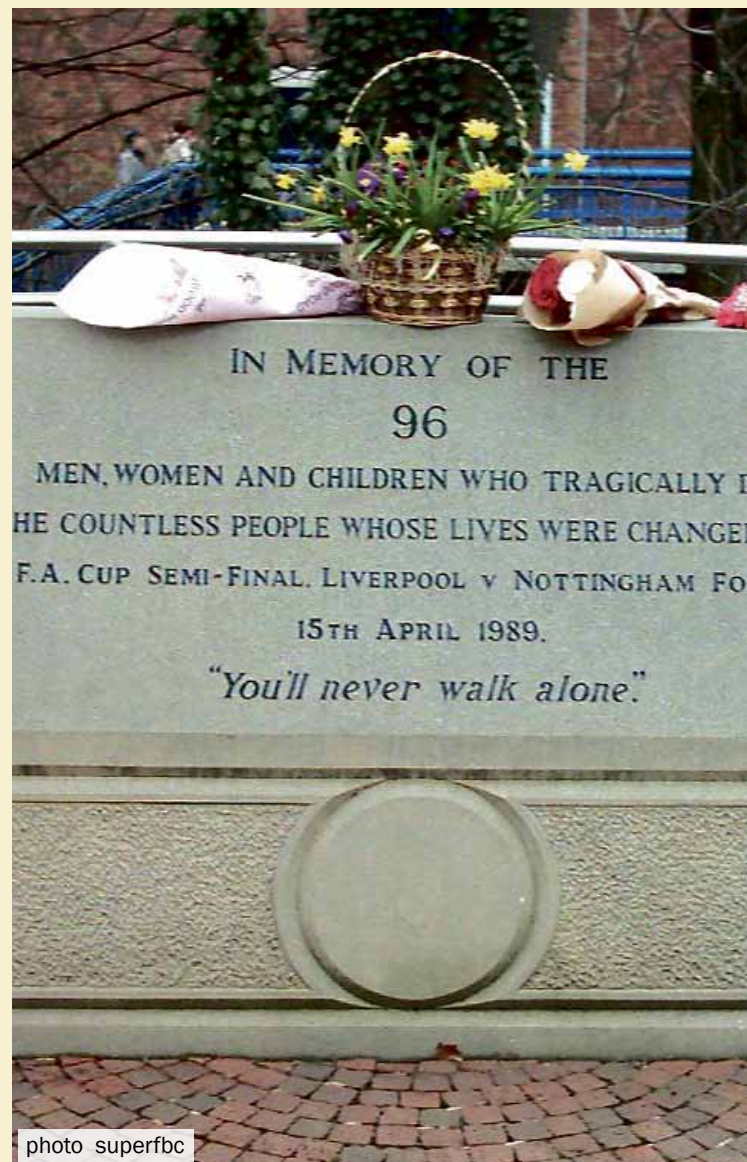


photo superbfc

Hillsborough - eventually, the truth



The report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel has ripped aside the tangled web of lies and cover-up woven by the South Yorkshire police, the government and the army of lickspittles in the press who denigrated Liverpool and the victims of the man-made catastrophe in 1989 that was Hillsborough.

Many who survived the day continue to suffer extreme trauma as a result of their experience. Some suffered personality changes and went to an early grave.

Yesterday, the radio airwaves were alive with ordinary people expressing their outrage at the events which followed the tragedy.

The police, the Sun, with Thatcher and her government implicated in the cover-up, were subject to excoriating condemnation.

The Sun's later apology was contemptuously dismissed for the hollow gesture that it was.

Role of the state

There can be no doubt that the instructions for the cover up came from the very tops of the state machine.

The brutal anti-working class culture of the South Yorkshire police force which played a leading and pernicious role in crushing the miners in their struggle to defend their jobs and communities was laid bare by this report.

Michael Mansfield QC, who assisted the families, clearly identified the link. The police authorities revelled in an atmosphere of impunity which flowed from the anti-working class outlook of the then Thatcher government.

Liverpool was also the city where the Militant-led socialist council in the mid-1980s had resisted the attacks of the Thatcher government by mobilising the support thousands of working class people.

By falsely accusing Liverpool football fans as being drunken hooligans, the ruling classes also intended to denigrate the city's tradition of militant struggle.

Cameron's frank admission of the cover-up and his apology surprised many. But if he had attempted to continue the cover-up his government could have fallen, he had no choice in the face of the evidence but to admit the truth.

Not only are the families to be applauded for their courage and tenacity in the pursuit of justice, but a debt of honour is owed to them for showing that working class people fired with courage and determination can render the forces of the state accountable.

Tony Mulhearn

The Sun's vile slanders

On the day after the Hillsborough disaster the Sun's front page falsely claimed that drunken Liverpool fans had urinated on police, pick-pocketed dead victims and prevented police resuscitating some of the victims.



It took Kelvin MacKenzie, former editor of the Sun, nearly 25 years to claim to be "sorry" for his paper's coverage of Hillsborough.

Nothing he ever says will atone for the impact of the Sun's disgusting coverage of the tragedy in 1989.

Sections of the media believed - like the police and often in collusion with them - that they could act with impunity.

The Sun was not alone in regurgitating the lies that South Yorkshire Police peddled through a local news agency.

But MacKenzie's role in the "reporting" of Hillsborough was the most vicious hooligan act in the sordid history of Britain's tabloid media.

It was left to the people of Liverpool to rise up in united anger to boycott the Sun. The paper's circulation in Merseyside fell by more than 200,000 (40%) within days.

Ken Smith



Israel/Palestine: Palestinian Land Day
Members, both Palestinian and Israeli, of Socialist Struggle (CWI Israel/Palestine) took part in the 39th Palestinian Land Day, commemorating the first mass revolt of Palestinian people inside Israel against the expropriation of Palestinian land for Jewish settlements.



Australia: marching against racism
Socialist Party (CWI Australia) members took part in and helped organise counter-demonstrations on 4 April to rallies of the newly formed anti-Muslim 'Reclaim Australia'. This organisation looks to far-right groups in Europe such as Pegida and the English Defence League for inspiration. See www.socialistpartyaustralia.org



Ireland: supporting striking Dunnes workers
On 2 April workers at Dunnes supermarket stores across Ireland took strike action for security in jobs, wages and conditions. See www.socialistworld.net for a video ('Paul Murphy speaks in support of striking workers') of Socialist Party, CWI Ireland, TD Paul Murphy speaking in the Irish parliament in support of the strike.

NIGERIA: RULING PARTY CRUMBLES IN HISTORIC ELECTION

National executive committee, Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI in Nigeria)

Without doubt the 28 March 2015 presidential election was a major turning point for Nigeria. For the first time in the country's 55 year existence as an independent country, a ruling party - the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which has been in power since the end of military rule in 1999 - was roundly defeated in an election. The contest was essentially a two-horse race between the biggest elite political parties - the PDP and the All Progressive Congress (APC).

The winner of the election is APC's General Muhammadu Buhari - former military ruler and a Muslim from the northwest region. He won over 15 million votes (54%). Now the PDP is a minority party in the next National Assembly as the APC, in addition to winning the presidency, also won over 60 seats in the Senate and a majority in the House of Representatives. But the APC will still lack the two-thirds majority needed for key decisions.

Past elections frequently returned the ruling PDP, which often used the power of incumbency, state funds, the police and the army to carry out massive rigging of polls in its favour.

Renewed austerity

These elections marked a shift of power from one section of the ruling class to another. The anger reflected at the polls was due to a combination of factors. For example, there is the threat of renewed austerity. The benefits of previously high oil prices had been stolen by the corrupt ruling elite.

According to the United States' Department of Energy, Nigeria earned \$424bn from oil exports between 2010 and 2014. But there was nothing to show for this huge revenue in term of infrastructural development and living conditions of the vast majority.

Another big factor is the government's inability to tackle insecurity, particularly the threat of Boko Haram terrorism.

The working class can now feel the potency of its power to punish any party at the polls and effect a change of government. As the last results were announced in the evening of 31 March, there were spontaneous celebrations. Nevertheless it should be noted that less than half of the registered voters officially voted - tens of millions felt that the election offered no choice or was irrelevant to their lives.

Since last year the country has hit economic crisis as a result of the collapse of the global price of crude oil. About 18 state governments, including those governed by the opposition APC, owe workers between two and five months' salaries.

The collapse of oil prices has led to the free fall of the naira which has lost about 20% of its value against the dollar, threatening the performance of banks and operations of manufacturers and importers.

Inflation

Just after the election the London Economist magazine wrote that "inflation, now at 8.4% ... could reach 15% before the end of the year" and that falling oil income means "more budget cuts will be needed. Road-building and other construction may be frozen because there is no money to pay contractors."

This has elicited worries among investors whose profitability is threatened and, of course, anger among the working class. It was of little surprise therefore, that apart from the Boko Haram insurgency, the issues that dominated the campaign were the economy and the corruption of the regime.

The Goodluck Jonathan presidency was first elected in 2011 with about 24 million votes. There was much expectation that he would usher in a period of social and economic progress. But just as the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) warned, the Jonathan presidency worked in favour of capitalism and the interests of imperialism.

Against the background of the failure of Jonathan's government, new divisions opened up in the Nigerian ruling class and the main imperialist powers distanced themselves from him.

Another factor in this election was the candidacy of Buhari - a former military dictator who ruled Nigeria from December 1983 until August



Young Nigerians celebrate the election results

1985 when he was removed in a coup. This 20-month rule was characterised by attempts to curb corruption and waste but also austerity policies, attacks on democratic and workers' rights, expulsion of migrant workers.

His regime broke ties with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) when the fund asked the government to devalue the naira by 60%, yet the reforms he imposed on his own were as vicious as those required by the IMF.

Incorruptible?

However Buhari is largely seen by the poor of the north and now by a substantial section of workers and urban youth in the South, as an austere and incorruptible person who had the chance to amass wealth while in government but instead lived a modest life. It is this perception of Buhari, coupled with the absence of a credible and genuine working class political alternative, that created the popularity and enthusiasm for his campaign.

Most local and international observers reported that a feature of this election was 'minimal irregularities, rigging and violence'. Yet this did not stop 50 people being killed during the balloting.

In its report, the European Union Election Observation Mission observed other glitches in the elec-

tions, including late opening of polling sites, failing biometric voter verification, some 'regrettable' violent incidents and re-polling on Sunday.



The working masses and youth whose power sent the Jonathan government packing will not be sitting idle while their living conditions are attacked

According to the Transition Monitoring Group, the votes from some strongholds of President Jonathan appear to have been significantly inflated. On Monday, protesters in their thousands laid siege to the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) demanding that elections be re-conducted in one state.

The working class of Nigeria, especially the sections that invested the most illusion in Buhari, are entering a new period where these illusions will be subjected to the most severe tests. The aftermath of the elections, some sobriety seems to be quietly overtaking the dizzying enthusiasm of the past weeks.

The Buhari government is coming in at a very bleak period for

capitalism. The unfolding economic situation will constrain it seriously and force it to abandon many of its promises at a time when working people will be expecting change.

Beyond some initial temporary concessions to appease the masses' expectations, the same pro-capitalist economic policies that defined past governments - privatisation, deregulation, underfunding of education, tuition fee hikes - will most likely be the hallmark of the new administration.

New party needed

However, the working masses and youth whose power sent the Jonathan/PDP government packing will not be sitting idle while their living conditions are attacked. Mass protests and strikes could be on the agenda sooner than later.

As disappointment in the Buhari government spreads and the scales begin to fall from masses' eyes, there will be frantic search for an alternative.

The best way to avoid a situation where the working class again has to put faith in rival wings of the ruling elite for its salvation, is for the labour movement to begin the important work of building a mass working class political alternative.

We in the DSM repeat our call for the labour movement to convene a summit of trade unions and socialists where the question of building an alternative working class political party can be posed. See www.socialistworld.net for full version of this article



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, 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.

- 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!

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

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

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

- NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY
- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a 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!

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5-6.30pm Whitehall McDonald's

Glasgow:

(contact 07927 342 060)
12 noon Maryhill Road McDonald's
5pm Sauchiehall Street McDonald's then marching down to Argyle Street McDonald's for 6pm

Sheffield:

(contact 07809 839 793)
6pm Fargate McDonald's

Manchester:

(contact 07769 611 320)
12 noon McDonald's HQ in Salford and the McDonald's next to it

Leeds:

(contact 07809 839 793)
4.30pm Lower Briggate McDonald's

North East:

(contact 07989 806 104)
12-2pm McDonald's Queen St Arcade, Northgate, Darlington
4-6pm Teeside-details tbc

Southampton:

(contact 07833 681 910)
11.30am-2pm McDonald's at West Quay and McDonald's in Shirley

Leicester:

(contact 07703 353 130)
2-6pm McDonald's at the Clock Tower, East Gates

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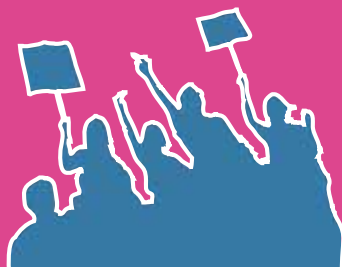
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