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the Socialist

Migrant boat tragedy: end refugee horror

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Establishment parties face further instability

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Enthusiastic responses to TUSC party political broadcast

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£30BN NHS FUNDING SHORTFALL

STOP NHS CUTS!

VOTE TUSC

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

Like a tiny plaster over a gaping wound, promises to improve the NHS made by the establishment parties are worthless. Even the former boss of the NHS, Sir David Nicholson, says that these party election pledges will not fill its "financial hole".

There will be a £30 billion predicted annual shortfall by 2020 - enough money to fund 100 hospitals. Some of this gap is meant to be reduced by £22 billion a year "efficiency savings" - in plain language, cuts.

Even Nicholson says these would be a "big ask" that "no healthcare system in the world has delivered on this scale". They could not be achieved without cutting staff, hitting patient care, longer waits and ultimately more deaths.

The Tories and Lib Dems have promised an extra £8 billion, but not until 2020. Labour says £2.5 billion. Yet already three quarters of hospitals can't balance the books.

The NHS must be properly funded. Privatisation, which is bleeding the NHS of billions, must be scrapped. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing in these elections on a programme to defend the NHS. None of the others will!



For socialist policies to save the NHS...

> See pages 8 and 9

Fleeing refugees drown in 'Mediterranean cemetery'

Simon Carter

Hundreds of refugees drowned in the Mediterranean Sea last week when their flimsy people-smuggling boats capsized off the Libyan coast. In the same week the Italian coastguard reported that 10,000 refugees on boats had been rescued.

Last year an estimated 3,500 asylum seekers fleeing war torn countries, persecution and poverty drowned attempting to get to Europe.

That figure is likely to be exceeded in 2015 as a cheaper European Union (EU) 'search and rescue' operation - Triton - comes into effect. The British government decided not to contribute, arguing that the operation would only encourage refugees to make the crossing. But these fleeing refugees are so desperate they are prepared to risk their lives.

There is no legal route into Europe for these desperate people, no processing of asylum seekers in North Africa before many attempt the perilous sea crossing. Less than 1% of global refugees get anywhere near the EU. Yet the EU's asylum policy criminalises refugees and militarises its borders.

The number of boat refugees has increased as a consequence of brutal sectarian civil wars raging in Syria, Iraq Somalia and Afghanistan. Many young Eritrean men have fled military conscription, which the



Less than 1% of global refugees get anywhere near the EU. Yet the EU's asylum policy criminalises refugees and militarises its borders.

BBC describes as effective "slavery". Embarrassed by the death toll, EU political leaders, like the UK's foreign secretary Philip Hammond, have pledged to take action against people traffickers but continue to keep the drawbridge into 'Fortress Europe' firmly pulled up.

But capitalist ministers like Hammond cannot so readily wash their hands of responsibility for this crisis. On the contrary, western powers' military interventions in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa have created political instability, fuelled sectarian violence and dislocated the affected countries' economies.

However, in 2011 millions of poor people, workers and youth rose up in many Middle Eastern countries against impoverishment and lack of democratic rights.

In some instances this 'Arab Spring' succeeded in overthrowing rotten, imperialist-backed dictatorships, such as in Tunisia and Egypt. Similar movements developed



photo UNHCR

against the Gaddafi regime in Libya and that of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and elsewhere in the region.

But in the absence of a mass socialist alternative developing from independent working class forces, these revolutions stalled and counter-revolution, assisted by imperialism, has temporarily succeeded.

Unsurprisingly, the resulting nightmare living conditions have forced millions of people into becoming internally and externally

displaced refugees - at the mercy of rich, powerful and ruthless human traffickers.

And for those asylum seekers that do succeed in stepping ashore in Europe they often face a precarious and uncertain future. Many end up in overcrowded and often violent refugee centres and camps in Greece, Italy and elsewhere.

These refugees are often targeted by far-right groups and by right-wing politicians who scapegoat

them for the economic failings of capitalism.

Because former social-democratic parties, like Labour, have embraced capitalist policies, there are no major parties that will uphold and defend the rights of asylum seekers and counter the many lies put out in the media about them. Defending asylum rights therefore dovetails into the fight against capitalist austerity and for socialist policies.

Tories reassure tax avoiders

In what may not be the most shocking news, a frank admission has exposed the Con-Dem government's reported 'crackdown' on tax avoidance as being nothing more than posturing.

Last year David Maclean, a Tory peer - also known as Baron Blencathra - wrote to the government of the Cayman Islands (a Caribbean tax haven), to reassure it that the crackdown was a "purely political gesture" to ward off pressure from the G8 leading nations and European Union.

The obscene amount of tax evaded and avoided by big business and the rich costs us billions of pounds each year. At the same time many millions in poverty are compelled to food banks, see their services and benefits slashed, and survive on low pay.



But a government led by the Tory party - a party of and for the rich and big business - was never likely to be serious about cracking down on offshore tax havens, especially before an election when it requires millions in donations from donors, many of who are also tax avoiders.

However, such a blunt and cynical admission from Maclean will infuriate people. The charity Oxfam esti-

mates that a massive £12 trillion is being hidden in tax havens around the world and it believes that £4.7 trillion is hidden in UK tax havens.

These huge sums dwarf the government's current deficit and if collected and used, would not only condemn austerity to the past but could be invested to create what we need - for example a massive council house building programme, jobs, apprenticeships, a £10 per hour minimum wage and more besides.

Cracking down on tax avoidance and clawing back the money owed but hidden abroad can only be done effectively by public ownership and democratic control of the banks, a demand only supported by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the May elections.

Scott Jones

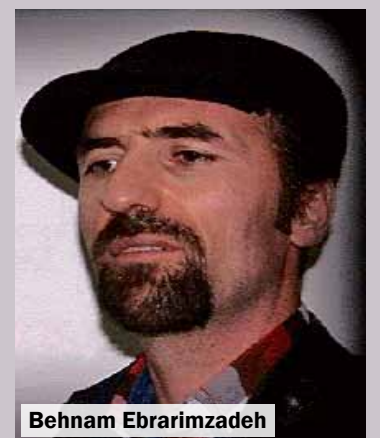
Iran: End repression of workers

A picket of the Iranian embassy has been organised by supporters of jailed labour activist Behnam Ebrarimzadeh, who is suffering poor health.

Join the picket of the Iranian embassy 16 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PT on 1 May 2015, 6-8 pm - jointly organised by the CFPPI and the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers.

For more information contact: shiva.mahbobi@gmail.com

●Ahead of May Day - a day of international workers' solidarity - Shiva Mahbobi, former political prisoner and spokesperson for the Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI), spoke to Haldane Society of Socialist



Behnam Ebrarimzadeh

Lawyers member Paul Heron. The interview, describing workers' repression in Iran, can be read on www.socialistparty.org.uk

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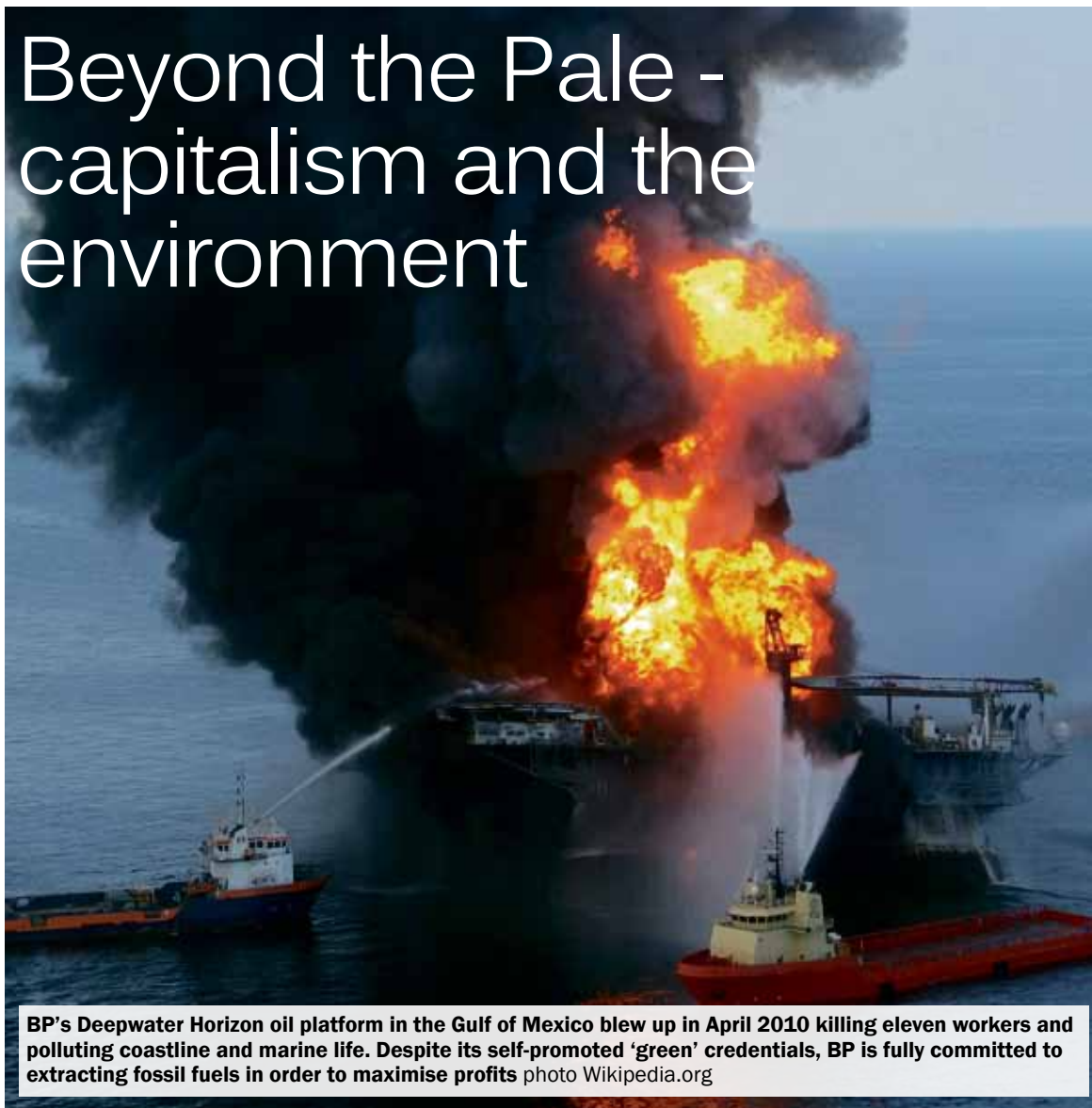
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Beyond the Pale - capitalism and the environment



BP's Deepwater Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico blew up in April 2010 killing eleven workers and polluting coastline and marine life. Despite its self-promoted 'green' credentials, BP is fully committed to extracting fossil fuels in order to maximise profits photo Wikipedia.org

Pete Dickenson

In the UK's general election, environment and climate change are issues the establishment parties want to downplay, if not try to forget about entirely.

Global warming dangers haven't gone away, as shown by the devastating cyclone in the South Pacific in March, but the corporate agenda that the main parties really represent has moved on. In the age of austerity there is no longer any room for even small expenditure to tackle climate change that could hit profits in any way at all.

This is shown most clearly by the case of BP, one of Britain's biggest oil multinationals. In 2003 it

re-branded itself with the slogan 'Beyond Petroleum' and adopted a new green logo, with the main aim of benefiting from some favourable public relations (PR).

An objective was also to test diversification from oil production, a major driver of global warming, into renewable energy. This would act



Pressure from multinational companies... resulted in governments dropping even token policies to stop climate change

as insurance in the (unlikely) event that action was forced on them by governments, as the environmental crisis deepened. Another factor was the lure of state subsidies for technologies like solar power, which promised an easy return on investment.

Everything changed in the years after 2008 as the financial crisis was followed by austerity. Pressure from multinational companies, who refused to pay anything significant to prevent environmental breakdown, resulted in governments dropping even token policies to stop climate change, including subsidies for renewables.

BP then cynically dropped its 'green' agenda. In 2009 the firm closed down BP Alternative Energy as a separate business, and BP Solar was closed in 2011. All work on carbon capture and storage was abandoned.

At the same time the company stepped up investment in tar sands extraction in Canada, an extremely polluting source of energy.

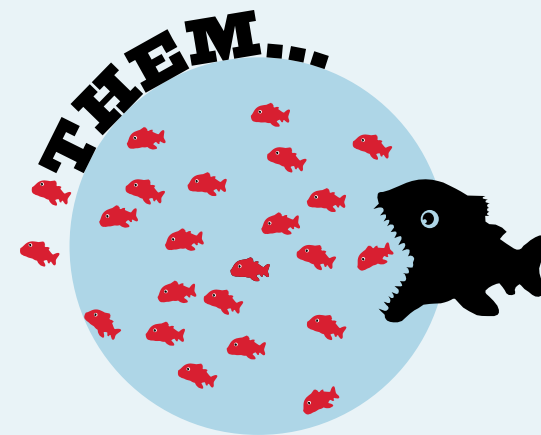
Most shockingly the BP archive on renewables' research, held at Warwick University, is only open to the public for research done before 1976. All the extensive work done since then, which is by far the most useful, is banned from view.

BP shareholders are worried about the bad PR the company is generating, particularly on the fifth anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the worst oil spill in history, caused by a BP rig in the Gulf of Mexico.

A shareholders' meeting last week called on the firm to have increased transparency on climate issues. This won't result though in any basic change in policy, just an attempt at more effective spin.

BP and other multinationals set the real political agenda for all the main parties and they will continue to block any effective action on global warming or other environmental issues that threaten their earnings.

The first step in changing this must be the bringing into democratic public ownership of these corporations, so that the needs of people and the planet come before profit.



■ Prioritising profits

The government has been slammed over privatising the processing of visa applications to the UK.

Last year, visa administration was outsourced to French company Teleperformance by the Home Office under a £300 million five-year deal. Since then visa delays have reportedly grown worse, leading to missed funerals and the cancellation of a wedding.

One applicant, having paid the company £103 for its 'priority service', did not receive the necessary paperwork in time, resulting in being unable to get to his dying grandfather's bedside in time.

A company spokesperson said "we aim to provide excellent customer service at all times." Adding, "We know there is always room to do better." So that's all right then.

be irrelevant to this rich, xenophobic bigot.

■ What recovery?

Before readers open a bottle of champagne to celebrate, the fall in unemployment is not all it seems. While Tory Chancellor George Osborne crowds about a drop of 76,000 to 1.84 million unemployed, the numbers in part-time jobs were up by 29,000 and the numbers in low-paid self-employment remain at a record 4.5 million.

Average pay, including city bonuses, rose in the three months to February by 1.8%, down on the 1.9% in January. This government has left office with people's pay packets worth less than when they came into power - the first time since World War Two.

■ Spirit of greed

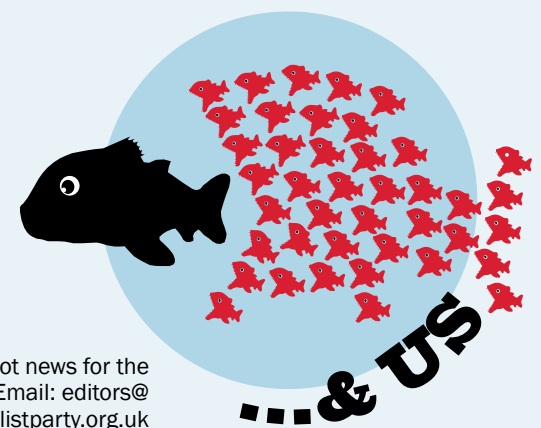
'Spirit of Thatcher' might sound like some rusting cross-channel car ferry but it refers to a financial rip-off concocted by David Cameron. The PM has pledged to sell-off the publicly owned stake in Lloyds Bank. Lloyds was saved by the last Labour government with a £20 billion bailout. Now, the Tories intend to flog-off £4 billion of stock at a discounted price to those investors who can find a spare £10,000 down the back of the sofa.

A further £5 billion of shares will be sold to 'institutional investors'. Expect a substantial loss to the taxpayer if the previous Royal Mail sell-off is anything to go by.

■ Ukip minimum wage

The 'very nasty party' continued to live up to its acquired name when Ukip leader Nigel Farage came out against an increase in the minimum wage, because that would encourage more migrant labour from Romania. On a live radio phone in, Farage responded to a caller's question, saying: "If you increase the minimum wage, you may actually even attract more migrant labour."

The fact that millions of people in the UK are struggling to live on a £6.50 (or less) hourly wage while top company executives are reaping record high salaries and financial perks, appeared to



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What we think

ELECTION: DISTORTED EFFECT OF ANGER AGAINST AUSTERITY

The desperate measures of both Labour and the Tories to gain votes by stealing each other's clothes have made virtually no difference to the polls. Yet in contrast to the frozen character of the general election campaign, there is growing worry among the British capitalist class about what they will face after 7 May. This has been reflected in the financial markets. The FTSE 250 is 5% below its level of a year ago. 63% of major companies' chief finance officers say they face the highest levels of uncertainty for two years.

The Labour leadership has done all it can to emphasise that a Labour government would be a safe pair of hands for big business. First Blair was wheeled out to argue that a Labour government would not hold a referendum on Europe and therefore be the best option for business. Now Ed Miliband has made an appeal to 'moderate' Tories that he would be their champion, emphasising that Labour stands on the 'centre ground'. The central promise in Labour's manifesto was to cut the deficit every year. Asked in the latest TV debate what he would cut, Miliband cited hundreds of millions more that could be cut from local authorities - which have already had their spending slashed by over 40%.



Politics is fragmenting. As a result there is no possibility of a genuinely strong government coming out of the election

Yet despite the best efforts of the 'big three parties' the accumulated anger at endless austerity has had an effect on the election campaign, albeit in a distorted way. Politics is fragmenting, with support for the three major establishment parties in decline. As a result there is no possibility of a genuinely strong government coming out of the election, able to effectively rule in the interests of the 1%.

The challengers' debate gave a glimpse of what the capitalist class fear. Miliband, determined to appear 'responsible', came under attack from the 'three women' of the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Greens, all of whom concentrated on attacking his support for 'austerity-lite'. Miliband's defence was to point out that Plaid Cymru and the SNP - far from being anti-austerity - had also carried out cuts in office! This is true, but it is not an accident that all three tried to claim the anti-austerity mantle - they did so because it is popular. Even before that final debate, one opinion poll showed the SNP would poll 9% if it stood across Britain.

Green Party

In England the Greens have increased both in the polls and in membership by emphasising that they are anti-austerity and left wing. For this they have been attacked in the capitalist press. The Guardian, for example, con-



Milton Keynes TUSC
out campaigning photo
Milton Keynes TUSC

demned their policies as the economics of 'la-la land'. In fact their economic programme is very limited, incomparable, for example, to the programme of the 1945 Labour government.

The Greens call for renationalisation of the railways, but not any of the other services and industries that have been privatised, including Royal Mail that was sold off for a song by the current government. They promise to halt further privatisation of the NHS but not to reverse what has taken place unless it is possible to: "buy out existing Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts where that would represent good value for money". The PFI robbers have already made billions in profit out of our NHS and should be kicked out without compensating the big shareholders.

The Greens would also leave the banks in the hands of the private sector. Their modest aim is for the public sector to make up 45% of GDP, about the same as Germany today and considerably lower than France. Nonetheless, the Greens will gain the votes of some workers who want to vote against austerity, and do not yet know about TUSC, or see the Greens as a more prominent alternative at this stage.

Scotland

In Scotland anti-austerity voters will flock to the SNP in their millions, almost obliterating Labour. The Tories and the right-wing media have been trying to whip up fears about the 'match made in hell' of a Labour government supported by the SNP. In part this is just electioneering, with some more serious sections of the Tory party openly criticising the strategy because it could further strengthen the SNP. However, it does also reflect real fears among the capitalist class. Their fears are over the threat of Scottish independence, but also of how a

minority Labour government, reliant on the votes of the SNP - and possibly also Plaid Cymru and the Greens - would not be able to withstand mass pressure from the working class.

As even the IMF has warned, there is no prospect of healthy economic growth for the UK economy. A Labour-led government would be likely to be faced at a certain stage with a new slowdown at the same time as it added more austerity to the misery the working class has already suffered in the last five years. The result would be a new mass wave of struggle against austerity. The idea that Labour would face that while being propped up by parties who say they want to push a Labour government left fills the capitalist class with dread.

It is therefore not insignificant that when the Liberals launched their manifesto Clegg made it clear that a government propped up by the SNP was not acceptable to him, while at the same time emphasising that a referendum on Europe was not a 'red line' for him. In other words he indicated that the Liberal leadership would much rather another coalition with the Tories than one with Labour, if it was reliant on SNP votes.

It is probable that there is also a section of the Labour leadership who agree with Clegg's prognosis and would rather allow a Tory minority government than Labour enter into an agreement with the SNP. If they were to go down this road, however, it would be disastrous for Labour, leading to splits particularly from the trade unions, and posing very quickly the development of a new mass party of the working class.

Impossible to predict

It is not possible to predict at this stage what the outcome will be of the tortuous negotiations that are likely to follow the general election. It is certain, however, that the resulting government will be very weak, and will attempt to introduce further vicious austerity. The capitalist class would prefer another Tory government, but they could live to regret that wish if a weak Tory government tries to push through further anti-trade union laws and austerity, and is then faced with an uprising of the working class which could even force it out of office.

The vital work TUSC is doing in beginning to create a genuinely anti-austerity, socialist electoral force is preparation for the stormy events that will come after the election.



SNP leader
Nicola Sturgeon



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30 year anniversary:

WHEN 250,000 SCHOOL STUDENTS WALKED OUT... AND WON!

This month marks the 30th anniversary of the 1985 school student strikes.

Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party, played a leading role in organising them.

Hannah Sell, deputy general secretary of the Socialist Party, a school student at the time, spoke to the Socialist. Around the page are quotes from the Militant newspaper in 1985.

What were the school student strikes about?

They were in opposition to the removal of unemployment benefits for 16 and 17 year olds. Effectively that meant if you couldn't get work or you weren't staying on at school (which in those days only a minority did) you were forced onto the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) - which was a 'slave labour' scheme, the equivalent of today's 'workfare'.

The Liverpool Labour Party women's council canvassed support of parents for the schools student's strike. Leaflets were distributed to explain what the strike was about and to counteract attempts by the press and others to claim that the strike was irresponsibly exploiting the fears of young people.

How were the strikes organised, and what happened?

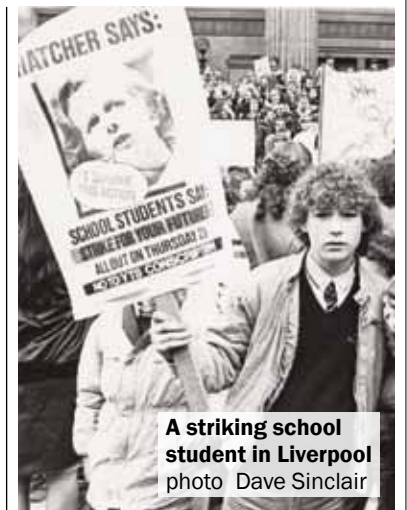
Strikes had taken already place in Scotland that had been very successful. Two weeks before the national school students strike was the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) conference.

All 200 school students who were at that conference, including me, were called together to organise the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC), which was campaigning against the YTS, and to organise for the strike. It was members of LPYS, supporters of the Militant, who were key to organising it.

Not only was the school strike in Northern Ireland well supported, it also cut across the sectarian divide. Over 2,000 marched in Belfast behind the Labour and Trade Union Group banner, then proceeded to blaze through the city centre in what can only be described as the biggest and best ever demonstration of Catholic and Protestant youth in the North for decades.



A YTURC campaign demonstration in Glasgow photo Militant



A striking school student in Liverpool photo Dave Sinclair

In Scotland a demonstration was held on Saturday. Music was provided by Billy Bragg who told the crowd of 2,000: "Get political and join the Young Socialists"

have been a feature of many of the movements involving youth since - against the Iraq war in 2003 and during the student movement in 2010. And this year we've seen some in Lewisham over academies, so we can see the beginnings of it again.

The first strike in 1985 started a tradition among a whole generation of school students. There was big intimidation at my school - everyone said they were going to come out and then were threatened with suspension. In other schools, students were locked in the tennis courts so they couldn't get out. In the end only 150 of us were out in Wolverhampton city centre.

But it created the idea of going on strike and later that year ten schools in Wolverhampton came out on strike for the right to a school students union, which we won. We then had the right to meet in the council chamber on Saturdays and organise a school students union that fought on lots of different issues.

After Labour leader Neil Kinnock described those behind the strikes as a 'bunch of dafties'...

The strike was backed by Paul Weller and Mick Talbot of Style Council and Suggs of Madness. On Kinnock's 'dafties' comment Paul Weller told NME that Kinnock "is only ill-advised" but added: "That's only me trying to be optimistic about it." NME added: "the 'dafties' were widely assumed to mean the LPYS and YTURC who together have done more to expose the nature of YTS and attract young voters to Labour than anyone else in the Labour party hierarchy."

“It was just after the miners' strike and the idea of going on strike, of that being the main weapon you had to fight back, was deeply ingrained

So we then went back and leafleted all the schools that we could, organised in our own schools, and got people out on strike - 250,000 across the country.

What was achieved?

We won! I still have a copy of the letter from Tory minister Norman Fowler saying that they were not going to withdraw benefits. They eventually were withdrawn in 1988 but for three years we stopped that taking place.

What are the similarities to what young people face today?

There are lots of similarities. One is the enormous anger that existed.

One thing that was different then was that it was just after the miners' strike and the idea of going on strike, of that being the main weapon you had to fight back, was deeply ingrained. In my school everyone was on one side or the other in the miners' strike - it was a dividing factor in society. Obviously that's not exactly

Perhaps the worst police harassment took place in Wales. The most ominous case was in Cardiff. On the Thursday three young Socialists were suspended from Glan Ely High School. The next day 100 students walked out in protest. One of them phoned local Militant supporters to come and support the impromptu demonstration. However, when they left the building and got into their car they were immediately

met by a police van and booked for motoring offences. Another police car 'coincidentally' arrived at the same time. Were phones tapped or had the police been 'staking out' the building? Police harassment didn't stop the success of Thursday's demonstration which was joined by over 3,000. The next day 50 school students joined the LPYS at a branch meeting of the Cardiff West branch.

the same today, although when the big public sector strikes took place in 2011 you would have had more of that mood.

In terms of what young people face, there are huge similarities. There was mass youth unemployment, young people were leaving school with no prospects, no chance of decent work. They face the same today but in some ways it's worse - the 'home-owning democracy' was still there as a dream when I left school, now no young person thinks they'll be able to buy their own house!

I think the idea of school student strikes will catch on again. They

“I think the idea of school student strikes will catch on again

STOP THE DISMANTLING OF OUR NHS

Lancashire GP and Socialist Party member **Jackie Grunsell** answers questions about the state of the NHS.

What has happened to the NHS under the Tory and Lib Dem government?

Five years ago the Con-Dems formed a government with a pledge not to 'meddle' with or cut the NHS. With another general election imminent this pledge can only be described as a barefaced lie.

This government seemed intent on dismantling our national health service, to be replaced with a hotchpotch of uncoordinated, competing, often poorly funded, understaffed services run in the interests of private profit rather than patient care.

In one fell swoop, the 2012 Health and Social Care Act removed the obligation on the health secretary to provide health services across the UK. This saw the end to the idea of a universal health care system in England. The top-down reorganisations have diverted an estimated £3 billion away from patient care, not to mention their time cost.

One of the central claims of the government was giving more power to GPs to decide local patients' priorities by making Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) responsible for selecting what services will or won't be provided for their area.

In reality, most GPs still have little or no involvement in the process. They simply don't have the time due to ever burgeoning workloads. Of those GPs who sit on commissioning groups, 40% have been identified as having a 'conflict of interest'. In other words, as well as being responsible for commissioning services, they are also involved in provider organisations that could stand to make money if the CCG commissioned them! CCGs also have ever decreasing budgets as the government demands 'efficiency savings' of £22 billion across the NHS.

The Health and Social Care Act forces CCGs to put contracts for services out to tender to 'any qualified provider'. This has allowed more and more contracts to be won by private, 'for profit' companies.

About a third of contracts awarded between April 2013 and August 2014 went to the private sector. It also makes services increasingly unstable and unsustainable. Contracts are awarded for limited time periods - 2-3 years - then come back up for tender again. The process costs valuable time and money - something most



photo Paul Mattsson

“”
The 2012 Health and Social Care Act removed the obligation on the health secretary to provide health services across the UK

public sector organisations don't have the luxury of.

The whole system is weighted in favour of the private sector with its expertise in developing bids and short termism. And when things don't work out as planned, or turn out to be unprofitable, the private sector can simply bail out. The example of Circle dropping out of running Hinchbrook hospital, Cambridgeshire, is just one high-profile case of many where private companies have abandoned their contracts early.

Is the government protecting the NHS from cuts?

No, massive cuts in funding are taking place. Closures of accident and emergency departments (A&Es) and maternity units have continued apace. Waiting lists for operations are growing, as are the numbers of patients on A&E trolleys and people waiting weeks for a GP appointment. Flu epidemics, elderly bed blockers and inappropriately

demanding patients have all been blamed. But what do you expect if you close hundreds of A&Es, ambulance stations and hospital beds?

Lack of community nurses and inadequate social care means there is no way to safely discharge those who are recovering and need rehabilitation. They either languish in hospital beds or get sent home without the care they need, only to be readmitted via A&E a few days later.

Huge changes to GP contracts over the Con-Dem years have seen a funding crisis like no other. GP shortages and a lack of money mean the trickle of practices closing is set to become a flood. The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) estimates over 500 practices are threatened with closure. Far from being 'in control', GPs feeling demoralised and powerless, are retiring early or emigrating, and are not being replaced as fewer new doctors choose the profession.

The Health and Social Care Act

also lifted the cap on the share of funding NHS hospitals could earn from taking private patients to 49%. Nationally, NHS hospitals currently get 2% of their income from private patients. But several specialist centres, in particular in London, have dramatically increased their private income share by over 30% in some cases. This is disgraceful when waiting lists for NHS patients are expanding daily.

The ultimate lie of the Con-Dems was that these reforms would improve patient choice. Instead, services are fragmented, not all are available in all areas and private health providers pick and choose which patients they will see and treat. Competition has put constraints on organisations cooperating and means any accountability to the public has gone out the window. 'Commercial confidentiality' gives companies the right to keep information about contracts and tendering processes hidden as it may be 'commercially sensitive.'

What parts of the Health and Social Care Act are still yet to be implemented?

A majority of NHS-run contracts are due for renewal. Over the next few years more will go out to tender and run the risk of being privatised. As funding continues to be squeezed, it is possible that hospitals will raise more from private, rather than NHS, patients. More privatisation is on its way.

Why are the changes being made? Will they improve the NHS?

No! The Tories have had a long term goal of privatisation and removing government responsibility for comprehensive health care. They have accelerated the process of handing over the NHS to their rich friends, lobbyists and party donors. But all main parties have politicians responsible for health care who also have financial interests in private health organisations. The ultimate aim seems to

be a US-style, private insurance based, system. There is a deliberate undermining of general practice, the cornerstone of the NHS and one of the key reasons for it being very efficient and cost effective in the past. As patients increasingly struggle to access NHS care, private insurers have the opportunity to step in, offering quicker and seemingly better service - but only for those who can afford it.

Do previous governments carry any responsibility for privatisation?

Yes, absolutely! Since the NHS was set up, every government has gradually undermined the principle of universal comprehensive care free at the point of use. Things changed more decisively in the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher's Tory government introduced the 'purchaser provider split' and an internal market in the NHS. Marketisation, privatisation and chronic underfunding have stepped up since.

The 1997-2010 New Labour governments ensured all new hospitals were built under Private Finance Initiative deals (PFI). These have proved hugely expensive and drain billions of NHS money into the pockets of private shareholders on a yearly basis.

Under New Labour, ancillary services in hospitals were privatised. Steadily, more clinical services began to go down that road. More than any government before it, Labour accelerated the pace at which parts of the NHS were sold off and introduced competition with the private sector, supposedly as a way of reducing waiting lists, through independent sector treatment centres, walk-in centres etc.

Labour first demanded £20 billion NHS cuts by 2015 which the Con-Dems have pursued since. Labour introduced payments by results, paying hospitals a set fee for a particular service. If it ended up costing more to provide than the tariff allowed, the hospital ended up out of pocket. This, combined with PFI, has left hospital trusts up and down the country in debt and therefore finding 'savings' i.e. making cuts.

Even if the Health and Social Care Act hadn't been passed through parliament, we would still be seeing the ongoing privatisation of health care. Labour showed it represents the same rich interests as the Tories and Lib Dems are doing now. While Labour promises to repeal the Health and Social Care Act, it will not abolish privatisation and continue to put services out for tender.

“”
More than any government before it, Labour accelerated the pace at which parts of the NHS were sold off

A socialist NHS programme

■ **No cuts. Axe the Act**

Abolish the Health and Social Care Act. No more cuts, closures or privatisation. Not one more ward closure or job loss in the NHS. For a massive programme of investment to improve and expand services.

■ **End big business profiteering from the NHS**

Scrap PFI. There are 149 PFI hospitals in Britain, valued at £12.27 billion. A recent University of Edinburgh report shows the NHS will pay £70.5 billion for them, wasting nearly £60 billion that is going from the public to the private sector. Costs for building a private hospital are estimated to be up to 4% higher due because the contractors have to pay higher interest rates compared to public funding.

Repaying PFI debt eats up well over £8 out of every £100 of a hospital's budget in London, as against a 5.8% debt rate for conventionally built hospitals. Half the larger PFI-financed hospitals are in financial difficulties, compared with a quarter of non-PFI hospitals. Take these buildings back into public ownership and plough the money saved back into the NHS.

■ **End private medical practice**

These organisations cherry pick the low risk, predictable procedures which attract guaranteed funding, diverting it away from NHS services which still do the high-risk, more costly work. They increase the risk of NHS services closing down by 'going out of business'.

No to 'Social Enterprises!' Don't be fooled by the 'not for profit' claims, these are a step towards privatising community health services by taking them out the hands of the NHS.

■ **Nationalise the pharmaceutical, medical supply industries and all private health providers**

Compensation to shareholders should be paid only on the basis of proven need. These companies are ripping off the NHS, charging over the odds for their products. Competition means money is spent duplicating products in an attempt to corner valuable markets. Research into rare conditions and less profitable areas is neglected because 'market forces' dictate what is done. Bring these companies under working class control and management.

■ **Abolish foundation trusts and CCGs**

For democratic control and accountability of health services. Plan health care on the basis of the population's needs, with care decisions made by democratically elected representatives of health workers, the community, as well as local and national government.

■ **For a well-funded NHS, free at the point of use**

Including free prescriptions, eye tests, dental care and podiatry etc. Reinvest money saved by ending PFI and privatisation. Nationalisation of drug and medical supply companies would allow production at a fair cost.

■ **End NHS job losses and low pay**

A 35-hour week without loss of pay. Give health workers an above inflation pay increase. Retain national pay bargaining. No attacks on pensions.

■ **For united action to defend the NHS**

Trade unions should take action supported by anti-cuts campaigns and service users. For health campaigners to link up with groups fighting other public sector cuts. Support the call for a 24-hour general strike against austerity.

■ **For a socialist planned economy**

Ending poverty, bad housing, unemployment, dangerous workplaces, pollution and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill health.

USDAW CONFERENCE

Stop the supermarket bosses' attacks on workers

Iain Dalton
Vice-chair, Usdaw F148 (personal capacity)

The past year has been a bruising one for retail and distribution workers. One supermarket company after another has faced a crisis while high street shop closures have failed to significantly slow.

Retail workers still aren't paid a living wage while our terms, conditions and pensions are under attack.

This impression is backed up by survey figures quoted in the 'Cost of Living Crisis' document being presented to Usdaw's 2015 Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) in Blackpool.

Only 5% of respondents feel better off compared to five years ago. 31% have had their working hours cut and a measly 8% have had pay rises that keep up with inflation.

29% struggle to pay their bills every month, 52% occasionally struggle and 21% regularly go with-

out meals. No wonder there are reports of supermarket workers using food banks.

Yet Usdaw's response has been insufficient. Despite supporting the call at the TUC congress last year for a £10 an hour minimum wage, our leaders now support Labour's far weaker £8 an hour by 2020 pledge.

Labour also says it will abolish only 'exploitative' zero-hour contracts - rather than banning them altogether.

In a climate where major supermarkets face multiple crises, financial fiddling as well as new challenges in the online and discount sectors, this may seem far off.

But despite the headline figures, the supermarkets still control the overwhelming majority of the food retail market and are profitable. Losses due to one-off write-downs are being used to justify forcing through attacks on our conditions.

Retail workers should stand firm and refuse to suffer as a consequence of the retail bosses' mis-

takes. The support for this position was demonstrated by the 45% of the vote won by Socialist Party member Amy Murphy in the recent presidential elections.

Ushaw's official opposition to pension changes in Tesco is welcome. But this shouldn't just remain a negotiating stance, but be taken to its logical conclusion of a public and industrial campaign.

We need to campaign for a living wage for all retail and distribution and fight to defend and improve our existing terms and conditions. Doing so can also help Usdaw recruit the two million unorganised retail workers.

What will the general election mean for Usdaw members? An Activist fringe meeting 6pm, Sunday 26 April Britannia Room, Ruskin Hotel, Albert Road, Blackpool FY1 4PW Chair, Amy Murphy, Usdaw executive member (personal capacity)

Pay issues dominate at Unison Health conference

Neil Cafferky

Health workers gathered in Liverpool for Unison Health conference on 13-14 April, coming at a time when the NHS has become a key election battleground. It followed on from the poor NHS pay deal negotiated by the union's leadership.

The fallout from the industrial action - called off in January - impacted on the conference as the most controversial debates were around withdrawing from the Pay Review Body (PRB).

Withdrawal from the PRB was moved by Northern Ireland delegates, fresh from successful strike action with Nipsa and other public sector unions on 13 March that brought Northern Ireland to a standstill. They argued for the union

to end its participation in this supposedly neutral body and negotiate directly with the government as a national union.

Supporting the motion, Socialist Party member Roger Davey reminded conference that members' pay had fallen year on year under PRB. Any gain of the movement has been won through struggle and collective negotiation from a position of strength, not PRB or any other mechanism, he said.

Despite a lively debate and none of the speakers opposing withdrawal putting forward any positive points in favour of the PRB, the motion was lost by three to one. The argument that withdrawing from PRB was a leap into the unknown won over majority of delegates.

There were positive developments at the conference. A motion back-

ing a £10 an hour minimum wage moved by Socialist Party member and Mid Yorkshire branch delegate Dave Byrom was overwhelmingly passed.

Inevitably in the run up to a general election, there was a great deal of talking up the Labour Party by Unison leaders. This was met with little enthusiasm from the conference floor, although equally there was a burning desire to see the back of the Tories.

It was clear from many speeches that attacks on unsocial hours payments were uppermost in the minds of many delegates. In his general secretary address Dave Prentis pledged that any attack on unsocial hours would be met with strike action. Given the leadership's past record activists will have to work hard to ensure that this time it is a fight to the finish.



KONE ENGINEERS

Across the country around 300 engineering service workers, employed by the lift firm Kone, are holding regular Monday strikes. The dispute is about Kone's intention to use unreliable "spy in the cab" tracking devices.

The Unite rep from Gateshead's Team Valley Trading Estate explained that at the company's request Unite met with Acas negotiators on 16 April in central London for mediation. However, there was nothing forthcoming from the talks.

He said: "We were prepared to talk through the night, with no time constraint imposed by Unite." However, there was disappointment as Kone brought nothing new to the table and left without a resolution.

Strikers were clearly disappointed that the company walked away from the negotiations, given that Kone approached Acas in the first place.

When Kone left the talks it didn't even have the courtesy to tell Unite. Acas had to let the union know they'd gone.

Talking to the strikers at Gateshead's Kone factory unit, it was clear that the company's action has galvanised the mood on the picket line, and strikers are reviewing how to proceed.

The other main Kone sites are at: Chertsey, Glasgow, Keighley and Warrington.
Elaine Brunskill

CWU CONFERENCE

We need a fighting trade union

Clive Walder

This year's Communication Workers' Union (CWU) conference will be the last with Billy Hayes as general secretary following his recent election defeat to Dave Ward.

On balance, Socialist Party members gave Hayes critical support because it has been possible on occasions to move him to a more fighting position. But we have criticised him for not being sufficiently firm industrially and particularly over his support for Labour.

Dave Ward's election material struck a critical tone about the relationship between the union and Labour: "No more something for nothing, blind loyalty to Labour." He criticised Hayes for "acting as a liaison officer for the Labour Party". This would have undoubtedly registered with many CWU members, particularly postal workers. Labour's leadership has ruled out renationalising Royal Mail, even though the party's conference voted unanimously for it in 2013. But Ward wants to reform the link rather than break it.

Ward was able to pose as the 'change' candidate. However, many members feel that the union is at a crossroads, unable to significantly improve either working conditions or pay in the face of hardnosed bosses.

Yet, as postal-sector deputy general secretary, he was incapable of organising the serious industrial struggle necessary to prevent Royal Mail privatisation.

Now that the election is over, beginning with conference, the union should confront key workplace and political issues. Delegates should use conference to let Ward know they expect him to deliver on the more assertive stance that his election campaign indicated.

Many motions criticising the Labour link should be supported, they include changing union rules to allow donations to the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC); organising a left-of-Labour activist conference to discuss

improving working class political representation; and one calling for the Northern Ireland political fund to finance anti-austerity candidates. The leadership opposes the last motion even though the Labour Party doesn't organise in Northern Ireland.

Conference should also support motions backing the £10-an-hour minimum wage campaign, and to urge the TUC to prepare a major campaign against austerity and in support of workers in struggle.

Renationalisation

Delegates should support a Socialist Party members' motion on fighting austerity whoever wins the election. It calls for "mass coordinated industrial action... including preparations for a 24-hour general strike to stop any attempt by a new government to carry through these cuts" and demands "that the TUC supports the CWU claim for any future Labour government to commit to renationalisation of Royal Mail".

The issues of the day are finding a reflection in the conference agenda. Socialists in the union should demand that Dave Ward campaigns on the union's progressive policies and gives members and reps the confidence to stand up to management.

The executive elections produced no real change which reflects inactivity in parts of the union, coupled with rigid control by executive members and their supporters in many branches. With a new general secretary and a largely unchanged executive, militants in the union still need to campaign to defend members in the workplace and hold the leadership to account. There is an urgent need to build the left at both branch and executive level.

CWU conference official National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) fringe meeting Lunch break, Sunday 26 April Branksome Suite, BIC Conference Centre, Bournemouth Speakers: Tony Kearns CWU senior deputy general secretary (invited), Rob Williams, NSSN national chair and Clive Walder, CWU activist

Get the weekly National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) bulletin for regular union news - sign up at: bit.ly/16sZJxm
Come to the NSSN national conference Saturday 4 July, 11am-4.30pm, Conway Hall, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL. Put the date in your diary now! Speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and BFAWU general secretary Ronnie Draper
www.shopstewards.net

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Labour don't get it

Blair's appearance to back Ed Miliband in the election proves again that Labour "just don't get it". Even a Miliband victory would not disguise the distrust and disillusionment of millions of former Labour voters.

Blair is a loathed pro-establishment figure and warmonger. His government policies just picked up where Thatcher and Major's Tory government left off. For decades we have seen a stream of pro-business, anti-working class policies and pro-business, imperialist foreign policy.

A Guardian report of Blair's speech at the Institute of Government shortly after Cameron formed his coalition, says: 'Tony Blair told David Cameron's coalition to "overcome civil service inertia, challenge policy failure, work more with the private sector and recognise that in a non-ideological age it could learn from the experiences of the previous Labour government".'

Cameron (Blair said) should hold off the record discussions with former Labour ministers to learn what had worked and what had failed. "The British people have again elected a centrist government. In the extraordinary way that they do... they elected a Conservative government and put Liberal Democrats working alongside them."

Blair's 2015 campaign appearance was similarly designed to appease the bosses. But for us it proves that Labour

versus Con-Dem gives us no choice at all. Labour or any form of coalition should expect their post-election 'honeymoon' to be short-lived.

Sue Powell

Not getting better

Back in 1997 Labour promised that 'things can only get better', but they didn't for many of us. In my own workplace, there followed mass privatisation, allowing a multinational consortium of IT companies to earn big riches, whilst workers like myself endured heavy cuts.

I felt let down, but was further angered by the illegal Iraq war and misleading claims about Weapons of Mass Destruction. Despite widespread opposition to the war, there was scarcely any resistance to either Labour's economic or international policies at grassroots level, even in their industrial heartlands.

Since then the squeezing of ordinary people by the super-rich has gone from bad to worse. I find one of the most painful injustices is 'social cleansing', where people are forced away from their homes due to spiralling rents, yet the wealthy buy up properties to make quick profits like a Monopoly game. With Labour's previous deceit, I consider TUSC to be the only option for those wanting real change.

Andrew Wilkins, Andover



Dallas dreams or fracking nightmare?

Sarah Welch

Oil reserves have been discovered in the Horse Hill area around Gatwick airport. The chief executive of UK Oil and Gas Investments (UKOG) claimed there were up to 100 billion gallons of oil there though it is 3,000ft under the ground and it is anticipated that just 5% to 15% can be recovered.

UKOG predicts that by 2030 that the area could be producing 10%-30% of Britain's oil. But the oil company's predictions are seen as at least in part wishful thinking. After UKOG's announcement, the company's shares quadrupled in value. But even if this is maintained we will not see sudden drops in prices at the petrol pumps as the find is not significant enough to have an impact on the global price of oil.

The media made much of this find, declaring it will bring jobs and greater prosperity to the country. However, nobody knows how much oil there is until they have properly tested and drilled. If they have to drill deeper the fracking method will be used.

Many people are worried about fracking and campaigners are already gearing up to fight. Any drilling would face huge opposition as we saw at Balcombe in Sussex, the scene of big anti-fracking protests. Up to 80 people protested at Horse Hill last year and a dozen people kept a constant presence at the site for three months during test drilling.

Residents are worried that if this goes ahead these companies will go to great lengths to extract the oil. Trespass laws have been changed, so companies can access the oil



from beneath peoples' properties and there are worries about compulsory purchase orders being used to gain access to the sites.

Suspicious jobs

The jobs argument is also debatable. David Cameron claims the shale gas revolution would create 74,000 jobs across the UK. These figures (published by the Institute of Directors) are suspicious, not least because the report was funded by the fracking company Cuadrilla!

Environmentally this could be a disaster. We know so little about the dangers of fracking. In some states in America communities suffered water shortages and contamination in their water. Environmentalists say they have recorded far more earth tremors and more sink holes have been reported.

Surely the way forward is to invest in real solutions such as renewable power and energy efficiency. To plunder more oil from the earth when we have enough coal, oil and gas reserves to fry the planet seems utter madness.

What we do know is that the only people to truly benefit from this find would be oil companies' chief executives and shareholders. These people care only for profit and not for the consequences for ordinary people and the planet.

We can protect ourselves from this and everyone, not just the rich, could benefit. But the solution must start with nationalising the energy industries. Under democratic control we can plan for a much better future for all and use clean renewable energy that is kinder to our planet.

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

Janner scandal: ruling class closes ranks

A Leicester Socialist Party member

The latest in the series of horrific mass child sexual abuse scandals is around Greville Janner, a Labour Party member of the House of Lords.

Scandalously, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) says Janner will not be prosecuted, due to dementia and the "public interest". 'Ill health' hasn't prevented Janner from writing to the Lords on 9 April, asking for 'extended leave', giving him the option of returning to the red benches.

The police and CPS had numerous opportunities over a long period of time to investigate and prosecute him as a result of the evidence they had. The allegations are of the most horrific kind - that he raped and sa-

distically abused vulnerable young boys in Leicestershire children's homes while he was Labour MP for Leicester West.

Survivors of the abuse, who up until now have not been heard, have publically protested at the decision. Ironically, Janner, a Queen's Counsel, argued in the past that Nazi war criminals should be prosecuted no matter how old or ill they are.

Janner was a friend of Frank Beck, a council official in charge of Leicestershire children's homes. Beck was convicted in 1991 for sexual abuse on a massive scale.

In Beck's trial, Janner was named as being involved in abuse. What followed was the most blatant example of an establishment cover-up. Janner, using parliamentary privilege, denied the allegations in

the Commons.

He was noisily backed by MPs of all parties. Keith Vaz, currently Labour MP for Leicester East and chair of the Commons home affairs select committee, called him a "brave man".

This was followed by a deafening silence in the media and no follow-up by the police or CPS. Janner retired from parliament and was then elevated to the House of Lords.

Even in the 1980s the rumours about him were well known. But he was protected by the establishment. He may get away without facing a trial for the rest of his life. Yet working class people sometimes get jailed for relatively minor offences.

This case, along with others we know about, shows how the ruling class seeks to protect its own by denying victims proper justice.

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

The April issue includes:

- **SNP** Does the SNP pose a real threat to the Westminster establishment? by Philip Stott
- **Varoufakis** Why 'erratic Marxism' is not the answer for Greece by Peter Taaffe
- **Oil and the economy** New risks for world capitalism by Lynn Walsh



Subscribe for £18 a year at www.socialismtoday.org / £2.50 including postage: **Socialism Today** PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.

Fast food workers hungry for justice

Low-paid workers around the planet took action on 15 April. The day of action protested against low pay and encouraged workers to organise to improve their lot.

In the UK, the bakers' union BFAWU - along with campaign group Youth Fight for Jobs and others - has founded Fast Food Rights. The campaign's demands include scrapping zero-hour contracts, implementing a £10 an hour minimum wage now, and trade union rights for all.

Both the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) back all Fast Food Rights demands. We were out in force to leaflet service-sector workplaces, rattle greedy bosses and recruit workers to the union!



photo Leeds SP

Southampton

We leafleted a variety of fast-food workers, explaining why they should join a union. The TUSC media blackout was briefly broken in Southampton: we were mentioned by name in a piece on BBC South Today.

Josh Asker

London

Over 50 low-paid workers protested outside McDonald's at Marble Arch. Some had turned up early to speak to workers inside, but management took our material off them. Joining a union is a legal right!

The protest occupied McDonald's, demanding to speak to staff. Management told us we were breaking the law.

They are hardly the ones to talk! There have been prominent allegations of wage theft and union busting against the firm.

We agreed to end the occupation if a representative could speak to staff. I was allowed to speak to them about joining a union on behalf of Youth Fight for Jobs.

Helen Pattison



photo H Caffrey

We paid a visit to the McDonald's northern regional office. After the protest we leafleted the McDonald's outlet next door. Among those involved were nine TUSC candidates and BFAWU young members' rep Apryl Walcott.

Hugh Caffrey and Paul Gerrard



photo Liverpool SP

We are living in food-bank Britain. Working people are being paid a pittance and the bosses are raking in unprecedented profits. This protest is about fighting for the right to dignity for ordinary workers, and especially for the next generation.

Tony Mulhearn, TUSC PPC (Liverpool Riverside)

Around 40 protested outside McDonald's on Whitehall.

Speakers from the National Shop Stewards Network, Youth Fight for Jobs and public-sector union PCS spoke about the need to join a union to fight for better wages and conditions. A victimised union rep at the nearby National Gallery sent solidarity from her campaign.

Mary Finch

Students at Poplar College, east London, immediately responded to our demands. Very many are forced to work to survive - super-exploited on zero-hour, minimum-wage contracts. Quite a buzz developed as word got around among students and staff.

Pete Dickenson



photo Sheffield SP

Watch more reports online

RT UK youtu.be/hlbQjSUF9Is
War on Want youtu.be/rFmNwFYPeTI



photo Swansea SP

Glasgow

Nearly 100 took part in Fast Food Rights protests in Glasgow.

Four joined BFAWU on the day. Hundreds of young people signed up for information on the £10 Now campaign.

Matt Dobson and Bryan Boyle

NUS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Socialist Students calls for action on education

Mary Finch

Leeds Socialist Students

Now is a time when fighting back is becoming ever more important. But no mass organisations are willing to play the role of leaders. Socialist Students has to step up!

Three members of Leeds Socialist Students were delegates at the recent National Union of Students (NUS) 2015 women's conference.

A motion to campaign for free education, living grants for all students and a democratically run education system passed overwhelmingly. Conference also supported a motion to fight for affordable homes and mass building of social housing.

A Socialist Students member spoke to a motion to train women students in organising struggle, instead of preparing us for positions of corporate leadership.

Unfortunately, these motions were the only concrete plans for action.

The composite resolution on free education only called for concrete activity because University Col-

lege London students raised it. The women's committee had proposed only to "oppose" tuition fees and a graduate tax.

It is telling that NUS chose to spend resources on a four-star hotel with jacuzzi, sauna and pool. This suggests its priorities are far from investing in struggle. One delegate commented on the irony that, after lengthy discussions on women's rights, black women workers - likely earning below the living wage - cleared away our plates.

Leadership

Socialist Students places no faith in the current NUS leadership. But we recognise the NUS still has a mass platform and huge resources that - under mass pressure - can be put to the service of the student movement.

As always, where the NUS or students' unions are insensitive to pressure from below, we must be ready to call our own actions. For example, in Yorkshire Socialist Students organised a regional demonstration for free education that attracted around 150 students and young people.

Election appeal update

Naomi Byron

Socialist Party finance team

"TUSC does what it says on the tin" - Bob Crow. The brilliant election broadcast made that clear to even more people.

People have been waiting years for an electoral alternative that represents their views - now we need to tell them about TUSC. If you support what we're doing, get involved in TUSC, join the Socialist Party and donate to support the socialist

election challenge.

Thanks to all who have sent donations, including Joanne Harris £100, Anthony Bukowski £5, Alan Manley £40, Brian Debus £400, Matt Wright £150, Jim Reading £50, Pete Offord £250 and Mariam Kamish £200.

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

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Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	April to June 2015	Deadline 30 June 2015
West Midlands	2,100	589	28%	
East Midlands	1,600	364	23%	
Yorkshire	2,900	600	21%	
North West	1,200	201	17%	
South West	1,400	187	13%	
Eastern	1,200	102	9%	
Wales	2,300	175	8%	
London	6,100	370	6%	
Souther	1,200	54	5%	
England and Wales	3,650	340	9%	
TOTAL	25,000	2,982	12%	

We place no faith in the current NUS leadership



photo Senan

TUSC V BROADCASTERS AND BANKSTERS

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

“ I have been looking for a party I could believe in and become a part of (I have wanted to get into politics for a long while but didn't trust the parties available) but after tonight's broadcast I think I've found it, TUSC. I was a union rep for Unite before and I am still a union member.”

This is one of the responses received by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition following transmission of its first Party Election Broadcast (PEB) on Friday 17 April.

In four minutes and 40 seconds TUSC rejected the austerity lies, made the case for a socialist alternative and showed that working class people are central to the fightback - and it struck a chord with thousands of people.

Of course TUSC's 280 seconds is not enough to answer all the right-wing propaganda. That will come with the development of a mass workers' party and the experience of big struggles.

Even this statutory minimum of airtime from the BBC, alongside some coverage of the TUSC manifesto launch, gives a glimpse of how socialist and working class participation in political debates that chimes with people's experience and desire for change would have a huge impact.

Its long absence results from the move to the right by the Labour leaders, rendering the working class politically voiceless, and from the pro-establishment BBC and big-business owned media.

Broadcast hurdles

The first battle was to get a broadcast. The threshold criterion is standing in one-sixth of the parliamentary seats. Standing a candidate means raising a £500 deposit, collecting nominations and filling in paperwork.

So a broadcast requires £53,000, 10,600 signatures on 106 forms and so on. The cards are stacked against those without fat cheque-

books and an election machine behind them. But across Scotland, Wales and England, TUSC's supporters - workers, trade unionists, socialists and other campaigners - overcame all of those obstacles and got 135 names on the ballot papers, not to mention over 600 council candidates, to form this historic anti-austerity working class challenge.

Other hurdles to getting the broadcast aired emerged. The guidelines state that: “Where candidates are included in a party election broadcast there should not be any explicit visual or verbal reference made to their constituencies.” And the script complied with that.

Liverpool record

However, ITV said that Tony Mulhearn, a leading figure in Liverpool's socialist Labour council of 1983-1987, now standing in the Liverpool Riverside seat, was not allowed to even utter the word 'Liverpool' when he made the point that Labour-led councils like in his city were passing on Tory cuts. So the line was removed to ensure transmission.

Later Channel 4 (C4) queried Tony's subtitle, “one of the Liverpool councillors that defeated Thatcher”, for the same reason. They backed off when it was argued that it was clearly historical and that there are five 'Liverpool' constituencies. How much these 'compliance' issues are related to the magnificent record of the socialists in Merseyside we may never know.

Demonstration

And then there was the demo. TUSC's 100% anti-austerity challenge is like no other and needed a PEB like no other, one which put the working class at its most powerful to the fore. So the broadcast starts with footage of a massive trade union march against austerity. This inclusion of a display of working class organisation and strength was queried and partially gagged.

C4 said permission was required from the leaders of Unison and Unite who everyone knows are tied to Labour. This was a public demo

filmed by a TUSC supporter. There was no guideline transgression in the inclusion of this footage.

In fact, the BBC accepted and transmitted it. And yet there was a challenge. Given the closeness in time to the transmission date, TUSC offered to blur the footage to ensure the PEB was accepted by the deadline.

Initially C4 demanded that the colours of the Unison and Unite balloons on the demo be changed too! This ridiculous demand was

eventually dropped.

While awaiting written confirmation of a verbal 'ok' from ITV, a call came to say that they had heard from C4 and they had changed their mind and also wanted a fuzzy version.

In the end, no amount of blurring prevented the message getting through to those who saw the broadcast - TUSC is a step towards building the much-needed independent political voice for the working class.

TV review: Dave Nellist on Daily Politics

Last year Andrew Neil 'interviewed' TUSC national chair and former Labour MP Dave Nellist on Daily Politics (DP). The interview comprised of questions about TUSC's 'small size' and lasted five minutes and 22 seconds.

In this year's DP interview Andrew Neil changed tack. Instead he spent seven minutes trying to undermine TUSC.

TUSC is committed to nationalising the banks. Andrew's question was: “Would you expropriate the banks or buy them at market rate?”

Answering the question

Dave did something almost unique in TV politics - he answered the question. He explained that the banks would be nationalised with compensation given on the basis of proven need. However, he was interrupted and his points were ignored.

With socialist nationalisation, bank shareholders complaining about the loss of the 'market value' of their shares would have the right to appeal for financial support - they would be asked to prove their need.

Office for National Statistics analysis of share ownership of UK quoted shares, which includes the banks, shows that over half the stock market is owned by 'rest of the world investors', with a big proportion held in 'multiple-ownership pooled accounts where the beneficial owner is unknown'.

“ ”
The cards are stacked against those without fat cheque books and an election machine behind them

“ ”
In the end, no amount of blurring prevented the message getting through to those who saw the broadcast

Increasing support

The TUSC voice, unequivocally calling for the nationalisation of the banks under democratic public ownership and control, will increasingly gain the ear of working class people as they move into struggle against the next pro-austerity, pro-capitalist government, whoever abides in Number Ten.

Andrew Neil's attempt to dismiss nationalisation won't be the last, nor will it prevent the idea from gaining support.

Labour is facing electoral oblivion in Scotland

The Scottish National Party (SNP) launched its election manifesto as opinion polls point to a SNP landslide at Labour's expense, on 7 May. **Philip Stott**, Socialist Party Scotland, reports.

What Scotland Thinks website indicates that Labour will lose 36 of the 41 seats it won in 2010. The SNP, according to the polls, will win 53 of Scotland's 59 Westminster MPs.

Even if Scottish Labour restrict its losses to avoid losing every seat, it's clear that Scottish politics is approaching a watershed moment.

A TNS-BMRB poll found that the increase in SNP support has occurred primarily amongst working class and younger voters. 57% of working-class voters say they will vote SNP and 71% amongst those aged 18-34.

This coincides with the televised debates involving the SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon. Strenuous efforts have been made by the SNP leadership to claim the mantle of an "anti-austerity" alternative standing to the left of Labour.

The SNP manifesto opposes the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons, calls for an end to cuts, a minimum wage of £8.70 an hour by 2020 and cuts in tuition fees in England and Wales.

The huge growth in support for the SNP in Scotland following the TV debates shows the potential for a genuine anti-austerity alternative to be built. The SNP's membership has grown still further to 104,000 in Scotland. Thousands of people in England have also applied to join the SNP as well.

However, the SNP in power have carried out Tory cuts in Scotland since 2010. Their proposed public spending increases, even if they were fully implemented, would leave over 90% of the austerity



Striking Dundee porters are demanding action from the SNP Scottish government to end low pay

programme intact.

Their support for big business and capitalism mean the SNP are not be a sustainable vehicle for working class people seeking a struggle against austerity. PCS, Unison and Unite union members in Scotland are currently involved in strike action against cuts, a direct result of the SNP's role in austerity. Nor do the SNP leadership support public ownership, even of the privatised utilities.

In contrast, TUSC is 100% anti-austerity, pro-public ownership and stands for socialist change.

more articles and analysis on
www.socialistpartyscotland.org

KENT WORKERS MAYDAY RALLY Aylesham



Monday 4th May 2015

bring your banners for 11am start. march, speakers, stalls, food, music & drink

sponsored by

SERTUC, South East Kent Trades Union Council & Canterbury and District Trades Union Council

Speakers include:

Tony Lennon, SERTUC Vice President.
Peter Pinkney, RMT President. **Liz French**, Ex Miners wife. **Suz Muna**, Unite the Union, Nat. Exec. Council London & Eastern Ter. Rep & Sec. Unite Housing workers Branch. **Amy Douglas**, USDAW National executive committee. **Lesli Miller**, Unite/GPMU Chair Press & Broadcasting Freedom (former Mother of the Chapel, Mirror Newspapers). **Rosie Kirk**, RMT Young Members President. **Delia Hazrati**, Unite Community Kent Branch, Sec. **Dave Smith**, Blacklisted Construction Worker (Author of *Blacklisted The Secret War between Big Business and Union Activists*). **Chris Weller**, Unison Local Government Branch, Chair. **Darren Proctor**, International Transport Federation Inspector. **David Lloyd**, Secretary of Unison, Kent Branch. **Paul Winter**, Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign. **Mathieu Bollet**, CGT Versailles, France.

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TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) enamel badge £2.50 each or £2 each for orders of 5 or more available from Left Books

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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.

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 to end 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 environ-

mental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.

- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.

- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.

- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building

of a new 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!

**Join the fightback!
 Join the Socialists!**

www.socialistparty.org.uk 02089888777

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HOUSING CRISIS

We demand:

- Rent controls now
- A massive council house building programme
- Nationalise the banks and giant construction companies

Brian Debus (TUSC parliamentary candidate Hackney South & Shoreditch) and Roger Shrives

There is a severe crisis in housing. Low pay and sky-high rents mean that private renters spend over half their income paying the rent. For many young people buying a house, or even leaving their parents' home, is an impossible dream.

Insufficient council housing and inflated house prices force people looking for somewhere to live into private rented accommodation. But just 39% of all new homes built in London in 2013 were bought to live in. The other 61% were bought by investors wanting to rent to tenants. Private landlords make a pretty penny out of this.

Landlords

The campaign group Generation Rent calculate that landlords, who house nearly five million households in Britain, earn £77 billion a year - £42 billion in rising rents and £35 billion in rising house prices.

Landlords pay £8 billion a year in tax but get subsidies from the taxpayer of nearly £27 billion a year. That's £1,000 for every household in the country! Over £9 billion of housing benefit goes directly to landlords.

But why is there no outcry from parliament condemning this rip-off? Perhaps the silence is because 25% of Tory MPs, 15% of Lib Dem MPs and 13% of Labour MPs own properties that they rent out.

In some areas, 70% of privately rented homes don't meet the gov-



photo Paul Mattsson

ernment's decent homes standard. A BBC Panorama programme on 20 April showed some glaring examples of 'rogue landlords' in London. One landlord was getting £12,000 a month in housing benefit for one property before the council closed it down for unsafe electrics and evacuated the tenants.

But fines chased by local councils are described as 'pathetically small'

and the landlord can keep claiming the housing benefit. The press blame low-income tenants for big benefit bills, but the real gainers are private landlords.

We want a socialist solution. We demand rent control now! Democratic rent councils should decide fair rents in every area and stop landlords overcharging tenants.

Scarcity of affordable housing is

an ideal environment for bad landlords. Councils in England are sitting on enough brownfield land to build a million decent council homes. The 'big four' property developers are sitting on enough land to immediately build 1.4 million homes.

Why shouldn't that land and the construction industry's biggest vultures be nationalised? We could

then carry out a mass programme of council house building and renovation to tackle the shortages with good quality housing at low rents.

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