

£1/£2 solidarity price

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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

Junior Doctors: striking back

Health unions and TUC must coordinate action and call a national demo
> Pages 7, 12 & back page



Refugee crisis: cruel capitalist regimes responsible > Pages 4-5



EU referendum: Chance for the trade unions to lead the debate > Pages 14-15



HOUSING CRISIS: CAN'T PAY, WILL STAY!

Nancy Taaffe
Housing campaigner, Walthamstow

What do Focus E15 Mums, New Era tenants, and the residents of Butterfields estate in Walthamstow have in common?

Answer - when faced with a rent hike or eviction notices these tenants didn't accept the situation. Instead, they fought back.

Central to their successes were declarations, either explicit or implicit, of not moving, not shutting up and not going quickly or quietly. This tactic forced bullying landlords, whether council, charity, housing association or private, to reconsider.

Now we are faced with something similar on a national scale. The national bully is the Tory government and the hated Housing

and Planning Bill 2015-16, which serves notice on secure tenancies and affordable rents. In response, we should declare loudly: "Can't pay - will stay!"

£2,000 a month

This bill will force councils and housing associations to sell off properties, further reducing affordable stock. It also introduces the idea of market rents for all housing, which in some areas of London means paying as much as £2,000 a month.

The bill will impose some form of

'pay to stay', which means assessing social housing tenants' income and raising rents accordingly. Even though this aspect may be amended, any presence in the bill means it will be a constant threat.

We urge everybody to join the demo on 13 March. If we unify the housing movement around the pledge not to move, coupled with the demand for rent controls in the private sector, we could not only kill this rotten bill but begin the fight-back for a mass council housing programme to meet our housing needs.

Kill the housing bill national demo

Sunday 13 March at 12pm
Lincoln's Inn, Newman's Row, WC2A 3TL, London

■ Socialist policies to end the housing crisis - see pages 8&9

■ Tax attacks

Chancellor George Osborne's tax cuts have cost the Treasury £2.4 billion. No surprise there, you might think. But he claimed the reduction had actually increased takings by £8 billion!

Osborne supported this breathtaking tall tale with a bit of clever accountancy.

In 2012, the chancellor promised the super-rich he would slash their income tax from 50p to 45p in the pound. Their beady little eyes shone wetly with tears of tax-dodging delight. They duly deferred payments until 2013 to take advantage of the cut.

This meant an artificial drop in tax receipts for 2012 and a corresponding increase in 2013. If you compare those two years out of context, you get the £8 billion lie. But the overall takings for the period were actually £2.4 billion less.

The Socialist is amazed it has to say this, but cutting taxes doesn't earn you more taxes. That's not what Osborne really expected, of course. His job is to transfer wealth from the workers who make it to the bosses who fund his party.

+£8 billion

Amount George Osborne claimed his tax cuts raised

-£2.4 billion

Actual amount they 'raised'

■ Fraud fraud

Over 85% of allegations of benefit fraud between 2010 and 2015 were false, according to a Freedom of Information request by the Observer.

Tories and Blairites have encouraged working class communities to turn in on themselves and witch-hunt supposed benefit cheats. Establishment politicians want to criminalise the welfare state and scapegoat claimants.

But the government's own figures show fraudulent claims made up a minuscule 0.7% of benefit expenditure in 2012-2013. The £1.2 billion cost doesn't even reach the estimated £1.6 billion the Department for Work and Pensions underpaid to claimants. The capitalists who caused the financial crisis avoid £34 billion in tax every year.

The Socialist campaigns for liveable benefits and well-paid, guaranteed employment for all, without compulsion. Take the wealth off the 1%, not struggling benefit claimants.

Union confirms TTIP will boost European Union NHS sell-offs

Robert Charlesworth

It's official: TTIP is bad for your health.

Recent legal advice commissioned by general union Unite confirms corporate interests could use the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) to attack any government taking privatised parts of the NHS back into public ownership.

The trade agreement was cooked up largely in secret between the unelected European Commission and big business in the European Union (EU) and United States.

TTIP procurement rules could force the NHS to contract out services it wants to keep in-house. The threat of legal action for huge damages in secret contracts would create "regulatory chill" - inhibiting the state from fighting privatisation. Some campaigners want specific clauses inserted to protect the NHS.

Protecting our health service from rapacious private firms and corporate lawyers is right. But the deal would also prevent the government from renationalising the railways, something which around two thirds of the public supports. It would also un-

dermine environmental protection measures aimed at pesticide manufacturers and industrial polluters.

TTIP is a corporate wish list that goes far beyond even the significant privatising powers in EU competition law. The Socialist Party says the whole agreement should be scrapped. Workers should vote to leave the free-market treaty organisation it is based on, the EU.

Tories

The Tories have been staunch supporters of TTIP, with David Cameron saying he wants to "put rocket boosters on it." It is yet another nail in the coffin of the 'social Europe' illusion.

This is the Europe of the Lisbon Treaty. Decades of anti-worker legislation have undermined trade union agreements, reducing wage levels and working conditions. The EU's undemocratic structures do not allow reform from within.

Voting 'out' would knock back TTIP and weaken the capitalists and their politicians. This would give trade unions and anti-austerity campaigns an opening to press the advantage and struggle for big gains.

> More on the EU: pages 14 and 15

Photo Andreas Rueda /Creative Commons

■ On this day: 14 March 1991

Birmingham Six freed

25 years ago, the Birmingham Six - wrongfully convicted of an IRA pub bombing - walked free after sixteen years in prison. Police and prison guards had beaten and tortured them to extract false confessions and exact extrajudicial punishment. The capitalist establishment had used the men as political scapegoats.

Dave Nellist - then a Labour MP and supporter of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist - looks back on their campaign. Read the full story leading up to the 1991 release of the Birmingham Six in the next issue of the Socialist and online at sociallistparty.org.uk.



Innocent: Paddy Hill of the Birmingham Six photo Wikimedia/Creative Commons



Some of TUSC's 2015 parliamentary candidates photo Paul Mattsson

TUSC NAMES FIRST 2016 ELECTION CHALLENGERS

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has approved the first batch of candidates for English council elections on 5 May.

TUSC's local election platform this year is headed: "Build on Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity call - a councillors' revolt could stop the Tory cuts!" It takes into account that Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader, on an anti-austerity message, has changed the political situation compared to the first five years of TUSC's existence.

There will not be TUSC candidates standing against Labour councillors

who vote against cuts in the council chamber. But the big majority of Labour councillors did not support Jeremy Corbyn for leader and still continue to vote for cuts.

Any politician who does that shouldn't be surprised if they are challenged by anti-austerity candidates at the ballot box, no matter what party label they wear. We need councillors who will stand up to the Tories, not carry out their policies.

That's what TUSC candidates promise, and with a record to prove it. Among the first batch is Warrington councillor Kevin Bennett, standing for re-election. Kevin has

provided the only serious opposition to austerity on the council.

The steering committee is especially pleased to announce the TUSC candidate for mayor of Liverpool. Roger Bannister, a longstanding member of public sector union Unison's national executive committee, will stand against Labour's "I can't do anything" incumbent Joe Anderson.

Liverpool 47

In the city's last mayoral contest in 2012, the TUSC candidate was Tony Mulhearn. Tony was one of the 'Liverpool 47' councillors who defied Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. He polled 4,792 votes, ahead of the Tories and double the Ukip vote.

Roger, standing with the full support of Tony, also represents the traditions of the 47. He was expelled from Labour alongside Tony in 1986 for his role in the Liverpool struggle.

The candidates approved by the steering committee also include the first twenty from Sheffield. This follows the successful conference initiated by public sector union PCS for a 'people's budget' in the city.

■ The next date for candidate applications is 16 March. The application form is on the TUSC website at tusc.org.uk/txt/358

Young people could have to work until 75

James Roberts Sixth form student

Workers entering employment in Britain today could have to wait until their mid-seventies to retire.

Just two years ago the Tories increased the state pension age to 67. Now a fresh review by the former director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, John Cridland, could recommend the Tories lift it again.

Most people in Britain today already work inexcusably long hours for insufficient wages. Some experts claim retirement may be as late as 81 for higher-paid workers.

This is another attack on the youngest and poorest in society. Young people already face zero-hour contracts, high-cost renting and exorbitant education fees. Now we watch on as our working lives extend uncontrollably.

A growth in life expectancy - mainly among top earners - does not have to result in the working class toiling until death.

The poverty wages paid to many employees will never provide a gold-standard private pension - the state is our only option. The lack of funding for state pensions is not



photo Darron Birgenheier /Creative Commons

caused by people living longer, but by the massive tax breaks establishment politicians continuously supply to greedy private enterprise.

Nationalise the banks and big business under the democratic control and management of workers and service users. Combine this with strong, progressive taxation on the cash piles of the super-rich.

Socialism is the only way to guarantee pensions, and ensure our lives are peaceful and fulfilling for as long as possible.

DONATE TODAY!

If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:

- pay by card on 020 8988 8777 or socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



'Heathrow 13' climate activists avoid jail time

Paul Heron Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers executive committee (personal capacity)

'Heathrow 13' climate activists have received suspended sentences for protesting against airport expansion.

On 25 January, district judge Deborah Wright found the 13 activists guilty of aggravated trespass and being unlawfully airside. They had occupied part of Heathrow Airport in July 2015.

Justice Wright rejected the 13's claim to a 'necessity defence'. That is an argument that their actions were to prevent serious injury or death. She told them to expect custodial sentences at their sentencing hearing.

No doubt the establishment would have liked to make an example of the Heathrow 13 to discourage future acts of protest. The threat of jail time - an attack on the democratic right to protest - galvanised supporters.

Environmental campaigners, trade unionists and community activists rallied outside on the day of sentencing. 300 people were packed outside the court on 24 February, mirroring a ferocious campaign to ensure the Heathrow 13 did not receive a custodial sentence.

In the end, that campaign was successful. Although the 13 all received sentences of six weeks, suspended for 12 months, the campaign ensured their liberty and helped keep climate change on the agenda.

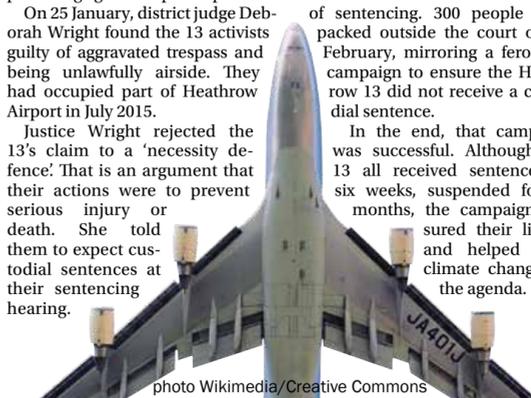
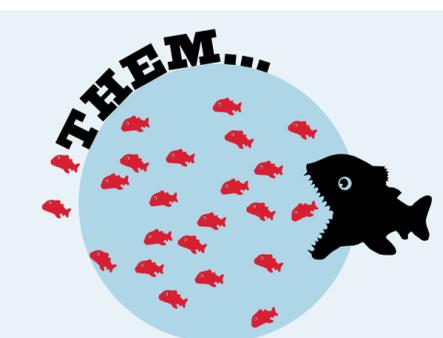


photo Wikimedia/Creative Commons



■ Bosses overpaid...

Pay for chief executives is "absurdly high" according to the top ten international recruitment firms.

The London School of Economics found that average pay for bosses at FTSE 100 firms is now £4.6 million a year. Meanwhile, the Royal Bank of Scotland paid its chief executive £3.8 million for losing £2 billion in 2015.

Even when they're not scuppering the economy, top bosses' and shareholders' pay is pure theft. Workers make all the wealth they portion out among themselves. Let's take it back off them, and plan its use democratically to meet our needs, not their profit targets.



Absurdly high

Top recruiters' opinion of CEOs' salaries. FTSE 100 chiefs average £4.6 million a year.

■ ...women underpaid

Women earn almost £300,000 less over their careers than men.

Figures from recruitment firm Robert Half described an average 24% gap between men and women's salaries. The impact of childcare means women are likely to be in lower-paid jobs or miss opportunities for advancement. That's on top of gender discrimination in education, hiring and promotions.

Over a 52-year career, the £5,732 annual gap amounts to £298,064. The Socialist fights for free childcare and education, and secure, well-paid employment for all workers. For a socialist society free from discrimination, where everyone can reach their full potential.

£298,064

Average pay gap between women and men over a 52-year career

■ 'Democracy' hypocrisy

The Tories' planned Trade Union Bill will force unions to count abstentions as votes against striking. It will insist on minimum thresholds for some workers - 40% overall on a minimum 50% turnout - before unions can take action.

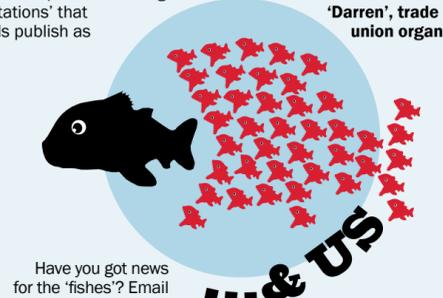
No such restrictions for the establishment's 'democratic' attacks on workers.

Readers may want to search for actual responses to 'budget consultations' that councils publish as

justification for cuts. One reader noticed that Labour-controlled Derbyshire County Council claimed support for a council tax rise of 4% and huge cuts to services.

Yet the total number of respondents was under 900, out of a population of 780,000. Even allowing for those under voting age, this means those 'supporting' the council amount to well under 0.5%!

'Darren', trade union organiser



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

Refugee crisis CRUEL CAPITALIST REGIMES RESPONSIBLE



What we think

As the European Union (EU) referendum campaign gears up, the issue of migration has been put centre stage by the pro-big business campaigns on both the 'remain' and 'exit' sides of the debate. Some of those who are rightly repelled by the 'little Englander' nationalism of the capitalist 'leave' campaign will be tempted to vote to remain in the EU in the hope this would mean a more humane attitude being taken to refugees fleeing war.

The truth is very different. As arguments over refugees threaten to tear the EU apart it is highlighting how capitalist politicians - in or out of the EU - are incapable of offering a solution to the refugee crisis. Instead they all attempt to offload the problem onto other countries while leaving refugees living in appalling inhuman conditions.

Capitalist politicians continent-wide pose as being 'tough on migration' and play on workers' genuine fears about the ability of public services to cope with an increase in the number of refugees. Public services, of course, that have been cut to the bone by those same capitalist politicians.

Contrary to the propaganda of capitalist governments most of those trying to reach Europe are only doing so as a result of the truly desperate situation they face at home. Of those who arrive first in Greece (currently more than half of the total) more than 85% have come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

All of these are countries where Western military intervention has helped to create the nightmare situations from which people are now being forced to run. Most never reach Europe - for example around six and a half million Syrian refugees are displaced within the country.

Iraq war

Britain's New Labour government took part in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, despite massive opposition from the population, which was the beginning of the hell on earth that has since engulfed large parts of the Middle East - above all Syria. Now the current government has joined in the US-led bombing of Syria alongside France and other countries. This will do nothing to bring peace to Syria, but will only increase the death, misery and the number of refugees forced to flee for their lives.

And it costs a fortune - £438,000 per raid according to the Metro newspaper. Yet while a fortune is being spent raining death on Syrians, hardly any are being granted asylum. In the last quarter of 2015, after Cameron had been forced under public pressure to promise to help Syrian asylum seekers, only a measly 339 were granted refugee status by the UK government.

But nor is the EU a haven for refugees: it is not known as Fortress Europe for nothing. The tragedy of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean has been caused by EU policy over recent years.

The building of huge walls, guarded by armed soldiers, stopped people crossing into Europe by land, so they took to the sea. The capitalist politicians of Europe, including the British government, responded by cutting back the rescue boats. The barbaric logic of the argument was



The EU's proposals also turn Greece into a giant holding pen - in reality a prison camp - for refugees



photo Creative Commons/Freedom House

that, if more refugees drowned, it would convince others not to come.

This unbelievable cruelty didn't work of course. Instead the numbers drowning increased exponentially. In April 2015 1,308 migrants are believed to have drowned compared to 42 in the previous April when the Mare Nostrum rescue boats were still in operation.

In the summer of last year capitalist politicians temporarily changed tack in the face of the public outcry following photographs of a drowned Syrian toddler, Aylan Kurdi. A number of countries - particularly Germany - relaxed the borders and allowed more refugees to enter. That phase, however, did not last long.

Quickly the different countries of the EU started squabbling among themselves as they tried to offload refugees onto others. The Schengen agreement, which previously allowed free movement within large parts of the EU (but not Britain), has effectively been suspended as country after country reintroduced national border checks.

Turkey

The latest ruse to emerge from an EU summit is to try and pay the Turkish government to act as the border police holding back refugees trying to reach Europe. In return they have promised €6 billion in aid to Turkey (although the previous pledge for €3 billion has not actually been paid) and to speed up EU membership talks.

In addition, for every individual returned to Turkey the EU has agreed to take one Syrian refugee from Turkey (where there are currently more than 600,000). This desperate plan will be a logistical nightmare to try and implement.

Nor will it actually give Turkey an incentive to try and stop boats of refugees setting off for Greece. On the contrary, the Turkish state may conclude that allowing the boats to set off will force the EU to take more Syrians

from them.

In their desperation to dump the refugee crisis on Turkey the EU has brushed aside the highly undemocratic character of the Turkish regime and the war it is conducting against the Kurdish people. Yet just last Friday the Turkish government stepped in and took over the largest circulation national newspaper because it had dared to criticise them.

And the Turkish government has been carrying out a brutal civil war against the Kurdish people in south-eastern Turkey, resulting in hundreds of deaths. It has also been bombing Kurdish controlled villages within Syria - effectively aiding Isis. Yet EU powers have done no more than gently chastise Erdogan, Turkey's president, for this crime.

The EU's proposals also turn Greece into a giant holding pen - in reality a prison camp - for refugees. There will soon be an estimated 70,000 refugees trapped in Greece following the closure of Greece's border with Macedonia. This decision was not taken by the Macedonian government alone, but as a result of a 'mini-summit' of Austria and central and eastern European states. Greece was not even invited.

The vast majority of refugees are not aiming to settle in Greece, but to travel through to northern Europe. Now they are left - starving and homeless - on the streets of Greece. Greece is already suffering vicious austerity at the hands of the EU - with over 50% youth unemployment and average wages having fallen by more than a third - now the country is being expected to somehow look after the bulk of the refugees who manage to reach Europe.

Control of decisions whether to grant asylum cannot be left in the hands of the Tories, or the equally callous governments of the rest of the EU. The workers' movement across Europe should demand that elected committees of ordinary working people, including representatives of

migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases and grant asylum.

Many working class people - in Greece but also Britain and other countries - feel that, while they sympathise with the suffering of the refugees - their countries' public services and housing supply cannot cope with the numbers that are looking for shelter. This idea is whipped up by the right-wing politicians who are constantly telling workers that the reason they are not paid enough, or cannot find decent housing, or a job, is because of the migrants.

Poorest

At the same time it is usually the poorest sections of society whose communities are expected to house refugees. In Britain, for example, the private companies onto which the government has offloaded responsibility for housing refugees have a 'business model' reliant on housing refugees in the parts of Britain with the very lowest rents.

Meanwhile, in the richest boroughs of London there are an estimated 75,000 empty residential properties, mostly owned by speculators interested only in making a fat profit. If homes owned by speculators alone were requisitioned by the government it would go a long way to providing housing both for the 68,000 households currently registered as homeless in Britain, and to providing houses for refugees.

Refugees and migrants are not responsible for the endless austerity we have endured both in Britain and across the EU. In Britain £80 billion was cut from public spending under the Con-Dem government, coincidentally the same amount as the bankers have received in bonuses since the economic crisis began.

If we allow the governments of Europe to falsely lay the blame for austerity with migrants instead of with the crisis-ridden capitalist system and the bankers and



The capitalist politicians of Europe, including the British government, responded by cutting back the rescue boats. The barbaric logic of the argument was that, if more refugees drowned, it would convince others not to come



Refugee rights demo September 2015
photo Paul Mattsson

billionaires who benefit from it, then the capitalists will succeed in grinding our living conditions into the dirt. It is vital that the workers' movement offers a way forward, otherwise the far right can make gains.

It is a condemnation of the capitalist EU - with a population of 500 million - that it is facing an existential crisis over its inability to cope with the million or so refugees. Yet, according to the Guardian, there are eleven million empty homes in the EU - enough to solve the housing crisis of existing citizens as well as to house the refugees.

The wealth exists to provide help for refugees - but it should not come from those already suffering austerity - but from enormous riches of the 1% - both in Britain and internationally. It was left to Abdullah Kurdi, the bereaved father of the toddlers who drowned in the summer, to point out that the regimes of the Middle East are doing nothing to help refugees, not even recognising the right to asylum in their countries.

EU referendum

Vast sums owned by the billionaire elites of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern regimes are salted away in Britain and other European countries. Over 80% of properties worth over £2 million in London are owned by overseas business people, many from the Middle East. The Middle East elite's wealth in Europe should be seized to pay for looking after the refugees from their regimes and wars.

The Socialist urges its readers to vote for exit in the EU referendum on a socialist and internationalist basis. The EU, as its treatment of refugees demonstrates, is not

internationalist.

In essence it is a coming together of big business across Europe in order to maximise markets and profits. Far from resulting in European harmony, as the current refugee crisis shows, any serious problem leads to an increase in nationalist tensions as the different capitalist classes of Europe attempt to make sure they are not the ones to carry the burden.

EU laws and treaties are designed to assist the capitalist classes of Europe at the expense of the working class and poor. As a result the modest proposals in this editorial to make the 1% pay for the crisis would be illegal under EU law. Of course this would not prevent a determined socialist government implementing such policies, but they are an extra difficulty to overcome.

At the same time any government which implemented socialist policies would not be isolated. It would be enormously popular, not just at home, but internationally. It would be able to make an international appeal for support from workers across Europe and the world.

The only way to permanently end the refugee crisis is to fight for a democratic socialist world. On the basis of capitalism, there will always be people forced to flee their country, not by choice, but out of desperation as a result of war, environmental catastrophe and starvation.

A socialist society would harness the wealth, science and technique created by capitalism in order to meet the needs of the majority worldwide. Only on that basis would it be possible to have a world where people are free to move if they wish to, but are not forced to do so by the nightmare they face at home.



“Our wages have been frozen for nine years” - a day in the life of a court worker

County court admin worker and PCS rep

Around 75% of the staff in my office are women, something which is reflected throughout the civil service. This is because unions played a critical role in the creation of the public sector as we know it. As a result of a continued strong union presence we have some of the best workplace terms and conditions, including part-time working and flexible hours, as well as statutory maternity leave. However, due to the Tory government's austerity agenda all of this is now under threat.

In June 2015 Tory chancellor George Osborne announced £249 million was to be cut from the Ministry of Justice budget and this is what I see day in, day out.

Cost cutting means that the courts are run on what is fast approaching a skeleton staff. While our workload is steadily increasing, management uses corporate jargon to convince us that these cuts are all about efficiency.

It doesn't take a genius to see through the lies. Workplace stress and time off for anxiety and depression are commonplace. There aren't enough staff to cover absences and parents are forced to scrap over annual leave during school holidays just to spend time with their kids.

All of this means that the service we provide to the public is shocking. We can't handle the phone calls on top of the backlog of admin work, so arrears build up. In the rush to get things

done work gets missed and errors are made. The knock-on effect is that people get their notices late, are given misinformation, and miss their hearing dates and deadlines. These delays disadvantage those who cannot afford solicitors or court costs. There is no access to justice for the poor.

We are subjected to productivity monitoring and 'performance management'. This deflects attention from the root cause while getting rid of staff alongside an ever more discriminatory sickness policy. Since the start of the year everyone I have represented has been female. These include a young Muslim woman suffering the aftermath of a failed abortion and a woman involved in a serious car accident.

Without the union, these women would be on the scrap heap. The most vulnerable are being picked off as easy targets but we are all stressed, overworked, undervalued and underpaid. Our wages have been frozen for almost nine years. I can't even begin to think about running a car, taking on a mortgage or starting a family, and if things stay as they are now that will never change.

But PCS is a fighting union with a socialist leadership. At the National Gallery and the Land Registry our members have had fantastic successes in striking against privatisation, but we need to stop austerity full stop.

The money exists in society for decent jobs and decent wages, but while the billionaire class sets the agenda it will continue to be workers who pay.



photo Paul Mattsson

“Pay the rate” demand construction workers

Alistair Tice
Socialist Party Yorkshire



The European Union Posted Workers Directive means the bosses can pay below the rate and legally get away with it

this 'race to the bottom'?

The local Labour council gave planning consent in 2011 but made no provision for adherence to collective agreements or local employment. Babcock & Wilcox Volund (BWV) and Interserve were contracted to design, construct and then operate the plant.

BWV refused the trade unions' demand that the project include the terms of a national construction industry agreement.

The company then sub-contracted the construction of the boiler to a Croatian firm, the same company that unions caught underpaying migrant workers last year at a power station in Yorkshire.



photo Alistair Tice

Because that job came under the national agreement, unions were able to force the company to repay every euro they owed their workers, only to find out from a worker via e-mail that when they got back to Croatia, also an EU member, the money was retaken from their wages under duress!

The European Union Posted Workers Directive only gives workers 'posted' to work temporarily in

another EU country the protection of the host country's minimum standards - meaning bosses can pay below the rate and legally get away with it if not covered by the agreement.

So much for the Trade Union Congress claim that the EU protects workers. No wonder nearly every construction worker wants out of the bosses' EU.

The overwhelming attitude was

to stop the exploitation of migrant workers by trying to get them to join a union and a united fight against the bosses undermining hard-won terms and conditions.

Many of the protesters had been involved in the 2009 Lindsey Oil Refinery strikes, the last time industry workers protested across the country. They recognise that struggle would have to be repeated to win again.

Junior doctors' strike: ORGANISE TO KILL OFF HUNT'S CONTRACT

As we go to press, junior doctors are due to take another round of strike action - this time for 48 hours, on 9 and 10 March with more dates planned in April - against Jeremy Hunt and the Tories who are imposing a contract which will remove safeguards to them working more unsocial hours, and for less pay. **Bill Mullins** attended a meeting on 3 March organised by junior doctors at Kings College Hospital, south London:

There are over 800 junior doctors at Kings College Hospital in south London where the junior doctors committee organised a meeting to explain to the local community what their dispute was about and to appeal for support.

Junior doctor Chris explained the battle that the doctors are in with the government over the imposed contracts: "The next five years will be bleak and could see the end of the NHS if we are not successful." He added "we need community support to defend the core principals of a free health service at the point of need, involving not just junior doctors but also nurses and all other health workers."

Will Nash, a trainee physiatrist, explained: "8,000 junior doctors have applied to leave to go abroad as a result of the contract imposi-

tion, this is equivalent to £1 billion worth of training."

Rudi, about to finish her training as a consultant oncologist, said: "In a survey of oncologists 97% said the new contract would affect care and 57% said they would seriously consider leaving the profession. Hunt won't be able to ignore the 57,000 junior doctor opposition to his plans much longer."

The junior doctors had invited Tony from the campaign to defend Lewisham Hospital which had been successfully won.

Magnus Dewsbury, on behalf of the Socialist Party, asked people to take away a model resolution from the National Shop Stewards Network (see back page) to take to local trade union branches and workplaces.

It was agreed that there should be



photo Paul Mattsson

a local support group set up from the community as well as junior doctors from Kings going out to local workplaces and trade union

branches to explain their case to the wider working class. See www.socialistparty.org.uk for picket line reports

THOUSANDS TO STRIKE IN DEFENCE OF SIXTH FORM COLLEGES

Thousands of teachers will take strike action and hold a national protest in central London on 15 March against cuts to funding for sixth form colleges.

4,000 National Union of Teachers (NUT) members at 93 sixth form colleges in England and Wales, which are estimated to have lost about £100 million since 2010, voted 86% in favour of action on a turnout of 44%.

The strike takes place the day before George Osborne's budget speech and sends a strong message about his education funding cuts. Cuts to 16-19 funding have been even greater than cuts to school funding. Teachers in sixth form colleges are facing threats to pay, working conditions and employment and students are facing threats to their education.

This strong ballot result shows the strength of feeling among sixth form college teachers. Sixth form colleges provide a vital service to over 150,000 young people, many from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Funding has already been cut in real terms by 14% and further real terms cuts of 8% are now planned. Colleges are dropping courses and increasing class sizes. If this situation is not reversed, many colleges will face closure.

The situation is untenable. It is clear that further education colleges are bearing the brunt of austerity measures to state education.

But the problems facing teachers are across the board and are the result of a government that is trying to ripen the school system ready for privatisation.

Socialist Party members have been at the forefront of the Local Associations for National Action Campaign (Lanac) in NUT. Lanac has consistently argued for a serious plan of escalating national action and teachers will need to be prepared for this to defeat the government.

Yorkshire National Shop Stewards Network conference: Trade union reps and members share experiences

The fourth annual conference of the Yorkshire Shop Stewards Network was held in Leeds on 5 March, attended by representatives from ten different trade unions from across the region.

Opening the conference, RMT transport union executive member Andy Budds said it was no accident that it had been the Tory transport minister who first announced the anti-trade union bill because the government wants to break the RMT.

Recalling that his union's former general secretary, the late Bob Crow, had been accused of being a 'dinosaur', Andy asked "who's the real dinosaurs?" when the Tories want to take us back to the conditions of the 19th century!



photo TU Senan

Continuing that theme, Ian Hodson, national president of the BFAWU bakers' union, said that he called the bill the 'masters and servants act'. Calling on all trade unions to take action, Ian said: "If you are going to defend your right to strike, then you must be prepared to use that right to strike."

Melody Redman, a junior doctor at York Hospital, explained the background to their dispute. She stressed that Hunt's propaganda about more pay and less hours was in no way matched by the reality on the ground.

CWU postal worker shop steward John Vasey thanked the National Shop Stewards Network for its active support in helping him win reinstatement to his postie's job in Wakefield after being victimised and sacked by Royal Mail.

Leeds Unison branch youth officer Ben Mayor talked about the difficulties of working in the social care sector but how small successes helped recruit more members.

Vicky Blake was introduced as the UCU lecturers' union anti-casualisation officer but said she preferred to describe herself as "the representative of staff on shite contracts!" She vividly described the reality of zero-hour contracts and unpaid work in higher education.

Elisha Andrews, a 17-year-old part-time fast food worker from Hull, explained why she had joined the bakers' union. Three quarters of her workplace are 16 and 17-year-olds, hardly any of them had even heard of trade unions. So the BFAWU and Fast Food Rights campaign made them aware of what unions can do for young people.

Yorkshire NSSN

News in brief

Small Heath strike

Teachers at Small Heath School in Birmingham have voted to continue their strike action. They have now taken 20 days of strike action. But despite eleven hours of meetings with management and the council in February, two NUT reps remain suspended. As previously reported in the Socialist it appears that the school is digging in for a long dispute hoping that support for the strike will wane or parent opposition will grow. But many were won round when they heard the teachers' case at a public meeting.

Pasta Foods dispute

Unite the Union is in dispute with Great Yarmouth food manufacturer Pasta Foods over the unfair dismissal of two reps. Their dismissal is a blatant act by the company to get rid of stewards and weaken the representation. This comes after members and reps working for the company agreed a series of changes to terms and conditions and shift patterns that saved the company from becoming insolvent. Workers and supporters from the local Unite branch and Great Yarmouth Trades Council will be demonstrating in support of those who have been unfairly dismissed, sending a clear message to management that this type of draconian behaviour is not acceptable.

Kevin Reynolds

Jannies conflict

Unison members employed by Cordia as school janitors in Glasgow are to strike for three days on 14-16 March in their ongoing dispute over pay. There are over 130 school janitors in Unison in the city. The janitors have been boycotting the disputed duties for six weeks and have decided to escalate their action as Cordia, a service provider for the council, and the council are refusing to talk to Unison to reach a negotiated settlement. Sam Macartney, Unison Glasgow branch officer, said: "Unison is very clear that school janitors meet the criteria to be awarded this payment."

There will be lobbies of Glasgow City Council at the City Chambers on 14 and 15 March both at 12.30pm as well as a protest at Cordia HQ, Borsari Street on 15 March from 8am.

Read more online at socialistparty.org.uk

WE NEED SOCIALIST POLICIES TO END THE HOUSING CRISIS

Workers in the UK are suffering a severe housing crisis that is only set to get worse. **Laurel Fogarty**, Kingston Socialist Party, explains how a landlord-friendly Tory government is turning this crisis into a disaster for millions of households.



photo Paul Mattsson

The UK's housing sector is teetering on the edge of a catastrophic collapse, reflected in the desperate shortage of good quality, affordable homes.

What began in 1980 with Margaret Thatcher's decimation of social housing stock, has reached fever pitch as Cameron's Tory government pushes forward with its myopic Housing Bill.

The bill, passed in January and now headed to the House of Lords, extends Thatcher's disastrous 'right to buy' policy, adds a 'pay to stay' policy for council tenants, eliminates secure council tenancy, and makes it easier for landlords to evict vulnerable tenants.

19% of English households now live in privately rented accommodation, rising to an expected 25% by 2025. Among the under 40s more than half will be privately renting by then.

Private rents

As the amount of social housing available declined over recent decades a growing number of people on low incomes, those receiving housing benefit and those who have been homeless, are forced into the private rental market.

As reliance on renting from private landlords rockets, the quality of the homes being rented is falling. Around 30% of privately rented homes do not meet the government's decent homes standard with 16% of those homes posing serious risks to tenants, according to homelessness charity Crisis.

The private sector is spectacularly failing to supply the people who need it most with high quality, low cost, secure housing.

£27 billion

Amount private landlords are publicly subsidised each year through huge tax concessions and pocketing housing benefit

Those who cannot afford to buy and are not in the shrinking number of secure council tenancies are stuck paying over the odds for insecure rented accommodation.

In 2014 nearly 42,000 families were evicted from their homes - 115 a week. Many of these evictions, especially in London, were motivated by the landlord's desire to sell housing estates or to build luxury (and unaffordable) housing developments to be sold to wealthy investors.

The housing bill makes this easier by creating new 'fast track' evictions that can be used when landlords claim a property has been abandoned.

Landlords are not required to prove abandonment in court and are required to send just two letters to the property when tenants fall behind on rent.

Tenants who fall behind on rent, regardless of the reason, will have no way to challenge greedy landlords who want them out and may face eviction and homelessness with little notice. This is open to extreme abuse by landlords who want rid of tenants who get housing benefit to help cover their rent, and who might fall behind in rent because of benefit delays or sanctions.

Despite the need for over 300,000 new homes a year to meet the housing needs of low and middle-income workers, the 2010-2015 Con-Dem government achieved just over 100,000 houses (public and private) a year. Fewer houses were built in 2010 than in any year since World War Two.

But Labour's track record is as bad. The Blair and Brown Labour governments only built 7,870 council houses over the course of 13 years. Considerably fewer than under Margaret

Thatcher's tenure.

Determined to keep up its abysmal record, the Tory government's Housing Bill will force councils to prioritise building what Cameron describes as 'starter homes' over increasing the supply of social housing.

These starter homes will cost up to £450,000 in London and £250,000 elsewhere. They will be completely unaffordable for households on the minimum wage in 98% of council areas around the UK, and in the south of England starter homes will be unaffordable for anyone on or below the median wage of £22,000 a year.

The bill extends Thatcher's 'right to buy', a scheme that decimated the supply of social housing in the 1980s. Now housing association tenants as well as direct council tenants will be able to buy their houses for a discount.

The discount will be funded by forcing the sale of valuable local authority properties. Although the government has yet to define 'valuable' properties, the scheme is unlikely to cover its cost.

Crisis

Crisis estimates that 20-40% of houses sold under right to buy have become privately rented properties. These mainly cater for low-income households but at increased rents. In turn, this higher rent means that more tenants need housing benefit to cover their costs and stay in their homes.

Everyone should have a right to good quality, safe and secure housing. The solution to the housing crisis is clear: freely available secure tenancy in high quality social housing that is run for social good, not for profit.

80%

of homes are unaffordable to the average income family

We desperately need a massive campaign of social housing building to provide much needed homes and a genuine safety net for those faced with eviction and homelessness.

The private sector is run for ridiculous profit at our expense and must be regulated. Democratically set caps on rent must be imposed immediately to curb the greed of buy-to-let landlords and to allow families to live in housing that is fit for purpose and affordable.

It was positive that Jeremy Corbyn in his leadership manifesto pledged to scrap the Bedroom Tax, lower rents and introduce rent controls on private landlords, extend security for tenants and ensure good quality housing.

But to achieve this we need a militant mass struggle for housing rights that unites housing campaigners and workers, backed by trade unions.

Occupations, eviction resistance and mass demonstrations will be crucial in challenging the housing crisis. In the fight to eradicate homelessness and poverty, we need a socialist government for the millions, not the millionaires. Such a government, as part of an overall democratic plan of production, would nationalise the banks and major construction companies to fund and build the homes we need.



photo Paul Mattsson

What we say:

- Kill the Housing Bill
- Rent controls
- Mass council house building
- Councils should stop cuts and build council housing like Liverpool's socialist council did in the 1980s
- Lifetime tenancies
- End social cleansing
- Axe the bedroom tax
- Nationalise the banks along with major building companies and land



Liverpool City Council led by Militant (now Socialist Party) in the 1980s refused to implement Tory cuts, instead building thousands of homes photo Dave Sinclair

This is my home!

In January, Tory prime minister David Cameron announced the government would bulldoze many council estates - so-called sink estates - to eradicate 'anti-social behaviour', 'bad parenting' and a 'low quality of life'. Cameron's moral crusade is a distraction. He intends to destroy more council housing, replaced with unaffordable privately rented homes. Barnsley council house tenant **Karen Fletcher** challenges his caricature and explains what life on her estate is really like.

I moved into my council estate after a private landlord decided he wanted my home for a member of his family.

The estate had its problems. It was the 1980s. Then, as now, we had a capitalist, right-wing Tory government. Steelworks were closing, the miners' strike was very recent and painful history and the glass industry was in trouble; these were the main employers.

By the early 1990s the pit closure programme was in full swing and life for my neighbours had become one of daily survival.

When the population is either living entirely on benefits or constantly shifting from short contract to short contract, to benefits, it's a hand to mouth existence. People were depressed, demoralised and trapped.

Students at University College London, who are on indefinite rent strike for a 40% rent cut, were told by a UCL official that it was a "fact of life" that some students couldn't afford to study in London!

Today, the situation is not greatly different. People are still reliant upon fixed contracts, they are still reliant upon two wages coming in to survive. They now have the additional pressures of zero-hour contracts and the brutality of benefit cuts and sanctions.

Housing services

It was also a time of change for how the council ran its housing services. The management was put out to tender to be run by an Arms Length Management Organisation. This gave us refurbished homes and gardens. Only later did tenants realise that the pay-off was that effectively there was no accountability.

If you had a problem you spoke to your councillor and it got sorted out. Now the best response you'll get is to be told that "I have no power, they won't listen to me." It wasn't much of a deal.

Government policy could have made life better, but it has deliberately set out to introduce legislation that has made life worse.

We have streets where the children can play safely. We have schools close enough that the school run is superfluous; we do not believe that you have to have children brought up by nannies and then sent to schools miles away and raised by strangers. We do not wish to see our neighbours sink while we rise.

The quality of life we enjoy does not come from owning multiple houses; holidaying in the latest 'fashionable' resort; spending thousands sending our children to the 'right' schools and universities; or using expense accounts to buy a £30 breakfast.

Our quality of life comes from the fact that our children play together in the street; that they can safely walk to school; that local schools work for all children.

Within easy walking distance of my home are four parks, two heritage villages, several country parks, a leisure centre and some of the most beautiful countryside you will ever see. I am inordinately proud of my neighbours and my adopted village.

The public sector is being destroyed by people who have invested heavily in the buy to rent sector. Some think that private landlords should not have a legal responsibility to provide safe decent housing, but should have their rent and mortgages paid for them by us.

This is where the system fails. It fails because it does not understand us. We are all proud of our homes, we put a lot of time and effort into them. It does not matter that we do not own the property we live in. It is still my home.

Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!

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■ Theatre: Tinned Goods
Women during miners' strike

'Tinned Goods' is a new drama set in the summer of 1984 during the lead-up to the largest women's march ever to take place on British soil. It is visiting theatres around Britain from 11 March.

The play tells the story of the women in a mining town whose community is dramatically affected by the men's decision to strike or not. Friendships suffer under the strain of politics and principles. Sue's husband is on strike while Rachel's is crossing the picket line.

Writer Fiona Whitelaw, also an actor, is a longstanding activist and branch chair in entertainment union Equity. Her latest work features a cast of women playing all the roles, from miners' wives to police, school kids and grandmas.

Producer Caroline Frewin is proud of her company's focus on women-driven political theatre. "With communities still suffering from the dreadful legacy of the mine closures, and with so much in the news about workers' rights, it's great to be able to bring working class women's voices to the stage."

Directed by Alison Belbin and part-funded by general union Unite, Tinned Goods hopes to inspire audiences to get involved in politics, as well as bring the history of this period to new audiences across the country.

■ Venues, dates and tickets available at teaandtenacity.co.uk/news

■ TV: Deutschland 83
Spy thriller's capitalist bias

German spy thriller Deutschland 83, currently available on 4OD, is very good entertainment. But it shows a very one-sided view of the standard of living of East German workers.

The main character's mother needs a kidney transplant and can only get it by encouraging her son to become a spy. This is the basis of the whole series.

All health systems, whether in Stalinist or capitalist countries, have waiting lists. The mother was told she could jump the queue. In the capitalist West, if you've got the money, you can go private.

The shocking collapse of the grossly undemocratic - but nevertheless planned - Stalinist economies is far better brought out in the film 'Goodbye Lenin'.

The introduction of capitalism in these countries has meant the collapse of services like housing and health which previously were free. The result has been the lowering of life expectancy and other indicators. Yes, the bureaucracy always ensured it got to the head of the queue first. But for millions, there was a far higher level of public services than under capitalism.

The series never brings this out, but concentrates on the Stasi and spy services instead.

Bill Mullins



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

■ International Women's Day

The last issue of the Socialist celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March. Below, some of the Socialist's readers comment on the ongoing fight to end misogyny and capitalism.

What my mother would have said to David Cameron

So David Cameron's mother is apparently more concerned with Jeremy Corbyn's attire, and whether he wants "God" to "save our gracious queen", than whether he defends ordinary people against austerity.

My mother was a lifelong socialist and supporter of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party. Sadly she died in 1986. But I think I know what she would've said.

She would've told David Cameron that the working class is not fooled by politicians in Saville Row suits. She would have angrily berated him for attacking the welfare state that she and her mother before her had fought so hard to win. She would've told him that one worker was worth 100 of his ilk.

She was confident that the future belongs to workers and socialism and not to Tory politicians, defenders of the capitalist system which came into existence dripping with blood and will leave the stage of history having wreaked havoc on the world and its environment.

Heather Rawling
National Union of Teachers (retired) - personal capacity

Equality through prisons

Tory MP Philip Davies - infamous for "talking out" parliamentary debates on preventing landlords from evicting tenants for asking for repairs, a bill to provide first-aid training to children and another to exempt carers from hospital parking fees - has championed "equality" by demanding more women are sent to prison.

"Somehow, the fact that hardly any women are in prison in the first place seems to be a problem, because it is just because they are women. If there

is to be true equality, this cannot be allowed to continue..."

"I do not believe there is actually an issue between men and women... Often, problems are stirred up by those who might be described as militant feminists and the politically correct males who sometimes pander to them."

Many women might feel they are already in a prison. Trapped in violent relationships, stuck in awful, poorly paid jobs, unable to get or afford child care, struggling as carers, and often seeing their and their children's hopes thwarted by an exploitative and unfair system.

Sometimes they are so disheartened they might believe it is their fault. Yet it is no coincidence that many of Corbyn's and Sanders' supporters are women, and that women make up the majority of trade union members.

International Women's Day reminds us that women are not just victims. Once they enter the struggle they are undaunted.

Sue Powell
Gloucester

The lost girls and boys

It seems like the Tories live in a fairy tale. A recent report showed that in the UK 3.7 million children are living in poverty. Even more shocking is that 60% have parents in paid work.

What should they do? Tackle the issue of low-paid, insecure work? Raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour and scrap zero-hour contracts?

No. They decided to exclude those children from future reports, only including school achievements and whether the children's parents are workless.

For 60% of children in poverty in the UK - well, I guess it's a trip to Neverland, as it seems they do not exist.

Tanis Belsham-Wray
Leeds



photo Paul Mattsson

■ European Union

The mainstream media wants to frame the entire EU referendum debate as one wing of the Tories against the other. The majority of the capitalist class backs EU membership - and not because it's good for workers. Socialist readers comment on the left case for exit below.

Union leaders surrender

Apart from the Tories tearing themselves to pieces, there is another important debate going on within the workers' movement. Unfortunately, those at the head of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress seem to be set on campaigning to remain within the EU bosses' club.

The right-wing union leaders clamour the most for staying in the EU, due to their incapacity to lead any sort of struggle. Take retail union Usdaw, whose leadership has been throwing itself behind the campaign to stay in. Yet at the same time, it has been letting premium payments and other working conditions go without even the pretence of a campaign.

It demonstrates they have more confidence in the capitalist governments of the rest of Europe to defend the interests of workers, than they have confidence in workers themselves.

Socialists have to start from the interests of workers, and their ability to struggle. Just like in Greece, if a left government (perhaps under Corbyn?) were elected in Britain on an anti-austerity programme, the full weight of the EU establishment would be set against it. For that reason alone workers should vote to Exit.

Iain Dalton
Leeds

'Social Europe' illusion

Our party has welcomed the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, as we supported his challenge. With his backing of continued membership of the EU we find ourselves on opposite sides of the debate.

In his support for the EU, Comrade Corbyn naively fosters support for the idea of 'social Europe' among a section of workers who are genuinely internationalist in their outlook. However, part of the responsibility of leadership is to explode illusions.

As the experience of the Greek workers has shown, the real power in the EU has been proved to lie with big business. It cannot be reformed.

Successive British governments have behaved in the same manner as every country in the European club - blaming

the EU for their own shortcomings, while setting aside the rules when it serves their interests.

If Corbyn and Labour are to provide real leadership to the workers of Britain they must dispose of the fig leaf of 'social Europe' and grapple with the power of capital.

Gareth Pincott
Westcoaster

State aid illegal

I had to smile recently when a member of the Labour Party I know, a right winger, said I was 'racist' for wanting to come out of the EU. I was born in Derby, my mother was Irish, my father was Spanish and my wife is Polish.

In the early 1970s when I was at school, I can remember thousands of Rolls Royce workers taking to the streets. That movement forced the Conservative government to nationalise Rolls Royce in 24 hours.

Move forwards to today, and thousands of steel workers are losing their jobs. EU law forbids the government giving state aid. Nationalisation would be "unfair competition". The Labour right winger was not aware that EU law restricts state aid, and with that he went bright red and stormed off.

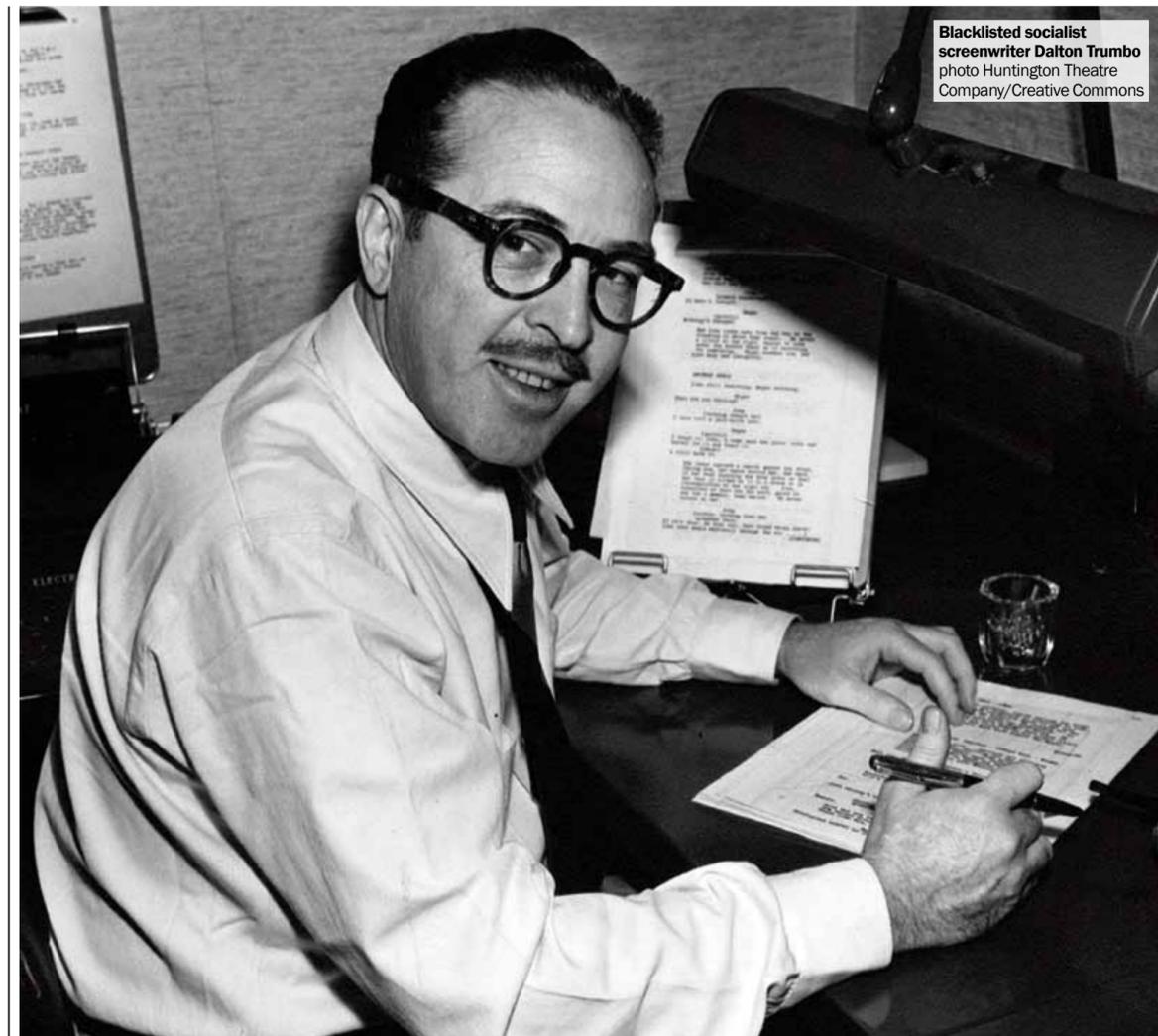
All this is just one of dozens of reasons why I will say, like they do in Dragons' Den, "I'm out."

Chris Fernandez
Derby

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



photo Paul Mattsson



Blacklisted socialist screenwriter Dalton Trumbo photo Huntington Theatre Company/Creative Commons

From Hollywood's red carpet to the blacklist and back again

Film review: Trumbo

Scott Jones

Imagine losing your job for the views you hold. Imagine being imprisoned for membership of a legal political party. Imagine being vilified and physically assaulted for being a socialist. Imagine it takes place in the name of 'democracy', in the 'land of the free'.

This was the reality of life in 'McCarthyite' America in the 1950s for thousands of people who went to prison, or were prevented from working or even travelling. Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy was prosecuting a vicious, public campaign against socialists and democratic rights.

The movie Trumbo tells the story of the 151 film industry stars who

were blacklisted for alleged communist sympathies. Specifically the 'Hollywood Ten' whose fame and wealth didn't stop them being jailed by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

The title character, Dalton Trumbo, was a screenwriter who joined the Communist Party of the USA in the 1940s.

He opposed fascism and supported workers in struggle. Like many of his generation, he was radicalised by the Great Depression and political polarisation of the 1930s. Trumbo aligned himself with the labour movement.

Bryan Cranston, a latecomer to Hollywood stardom following his starring role in Breaking Bad, plays Trumbo fantastically. He brings to

life a man who was obviously very passionate, funny and talented in a relevant and insightful film.

Assisted by comedian Louis CK, who plays a fictional character, he leads the Hollywood Ten when they are subpoenaed by the HUAC to testify before Congress regarding communism in the movie industry.

Contempt

They refuse to directly answer questions leading to 'contempt of Congress' charges. Trumbo serves eleven months in prison.

Ironically in prison he meets J Parnell Thomas, former head of the HUAC, who like a 'true patriot' was imprisoned for tax evasion!

After his release, the blacklisted Trumbo struggles to find work. Along with other blacklisted writers he is forced to write screenplays under false names. This eventually leads to Trumbo winning two Oscars, for Ro-

man Holiday and the Brave One.

This success leads those in the know to recruit him to write Spartacus. Star Kirk Douglas insists Trumbo is named when the film is released and the effectiveness of the blacklist is therefore broken.

However, the blacklist was much more effective in ruining the lives and careers of an estimated 12,000 union activists, workers and teachers, something not mentioned in the film. And blacklisting of union activists and socialists still goes on today, even in Britain.

Despite the vehement and ruthless demonising of socialist ideas and socialists during the McCarthy era, the USA of today is seeing millions embrace 'democratic socialist' Bernie Sanders in the race for president.

Seattle has twice elected revolutionary socialist Kshama Sawant to city council. And socialism became the most looked-up word of 2015.

Support the paper that supports struggle Take out a May Day greeting!



On the campaign trail during the elections photo Sarah Wrack

Len Hockey
Secretary, Unite, Barts NHS Trust (personal capacity)

International Workers' Day is a time when we express solidarity with all parts of the movement. Central to this is approaching fellow trade unionists in your workplace to build support for a May Day greeting in the Socialist newspaper.

Using petition sheets to collect names and pledges helps support our paper and politically connect with colleagues.

The consistent record of the Socialist newspaper at my hospital over the years has enabled me to successfully make the case for financial resources for the party to

hospital workers. This has included publicising strikes, raising solidarity and providing workers and their union organisation with a strategy to win.

Through individual discussion, highlighting current political and industrial initiatives that the party is involved in, this has made for successful May Day greetings appeals.

Serious approach

I was able to point to the serious approach of socialist fighters and our policies and programme.

This was particularly the case after we successfully encouraged five Whippets Cross health workers to stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist (TUSC) 2014 local election challenge. I also stood in last year's general election, along

with fellow Socialist Party member Nancy Taaffe in the constituency where the hospital is.

The contrast between us and careerist pro-capitalist politicians was clear - summed up in our demand of 'a workers' representative on a worker's wage'.

In this, the year of the 90th anniversary of the great British general strike and the current magnificent determination of junior doctors to struggle to defend our NHS, these lessons and experiences can translate into a deepening resolve to build a real, enduring socialist solution to the unending nightmare that is capitalism.

For petition sheets, model motions, prices and advice, contact jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk or phone 020 8988 8781

THOUSANDS MARCH IN SOLIDARITY WITH KURDS

Mira Glavardanov
Haringey and Enfield Socialist Party

The first national demonstration against Turkey's war on the Kurds, called by the Kurdish movement in the UK, took place on 6 March in London. Thousands from the Kurdish community, trade unionists, socialists and other supporters marched to Trafalgar Square.

The appalling treatment of the stateless Kurds in Turkey and other countries where they have a sizable population is nothing new. However, the recent developments in the Middle East have brought about renewed atrocities by the Turkish state.

It has imposed curfews on towns

and cities, deployed tanks, bombs and snipers, killed hundreds of people and burned villages.

There has been no condemnation of the atrocities by the UK government and no reporting in the British media about the attacks.

The silence was certainly broken for several hours in central London at the demo though, with loud chanting in both Kurdish and English.

There were several speeches at the beginning of the march, including by Paula Mitchell,



photos Judy Beishon

from the Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), who emphasised the need for working class unity across the ethnic divide against all imperialist and reactionary regimes, as the only way to achieve peace and fight for a decent life for all.

The march finished with a rally at Trafalgar Square. There were speakers from the RMT, Green Party and others. A speaker from the Kurdish women's movement spoke of the role of Kurdish female fighters and sent solidarity messages for International Women's Day.

The Socialist Party supports the Kurds' right to self-determination, solidarity with Turkish and other workers in the region, and a socialist Middle East.

Enthusiastic reception for anti-austerity ideas in South Wales



Jeremy Corbyn addresses the crowd photo Dave Reid

Ross Saunders
Socialist Party Wales

South Wales saw a glimpse of the working-class thirst for a radical alternative to pro-capitalist politicians on 5 March, when over 500 trade unionists and supporters gathered to hear Jeremy Corbyn and other speakers at the Trade Union Pride rally in Cardiff.

A thousand more heard him address the Keir Hardie memorial lecture in Aberdare later that day.

Speaking at the rally, Jeremy Corbyn repeated his promise to repeal the anti-trade-union laws if elected and defended unions' right to play a political role. A welcome change to the union-bashing Tory-lite politics that have dominated the party for decades.

The support for trade union rights in Wales has encouraged First Minister Carwyn Jones to take a stance

in opposition to Cameron on the question of trade-union rights.

This stance should be linked to a mass movement in solidarity with unions who defy the laws. But to build that movement, the fight against the anti-trade-union laws must also be linked to the fight against austerity.

Cuts

To date, the Welsh government has not been an ally in that fight, dutifully carrying out all the cuts demanded by the Tories, including big cuts to the NHS and public services.

The Assembly should defy Cameron's cuts and co-ordinate health boards, councils, fire authorities and other bodies to spend reserves while a mass movement to win more funding is built. Katrine Williams, Cardiff Trades Council president and Socialist Party member, demanded this fighting programme when she spoke at the rally.

Sure Start threatened

Protesters gathered outside the Sure Start centre in Calmore, Southampton to express their dismay at the threat to children's services. The centres were saved five years ago after a vigorous campaign by service users. In its latest round of cuts, Hampshire County Council is proposing to slash £8.5 million from children's services by closing 54 children's centres across Hampshire and wants to combine all children's services in the remaining centres. The eleven so-called hub centres will prove difficult for people to access. The closure of the centres would mean over-stretched services and would lead to many more problems in the future. The Hampshire Save our Children's Centres campaign group will hold a protest outside the council on the 13 May followed by a deputation to the council meeting.

Jane Ward
Southampton Socialist Party

Anti-cuts lobby

Councillors in Waltham Forest, east London, met on 3 March to vote on a budget proposal which includes almost £10 million of cuts. The mood from the councillors seemed to be that they had no choice in the matter, even though the council holds £10.6 million in the bank as a 'rainy day fund.' On top of that there is a further £78 million in allocated reserves assigned to certain areas of the budget. The reserves offer an option to avoid the cuts this year and save vital services. If the proposal goes ahead the result will be the privatisation of all children's centres in the borough and major cuts to day services for adults with learning disabilities. Instead of gutting local services and further privatisation, the option of using the reserves coupled with the use of borrowing powers should be used to avoid cuts. This would allow time to link up with other Labour councils nationally and begin a mass campaign to fight for the money back.

Henry Williams
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

IWD meetings
Socialist Party meetings to mark International Women's Day: the struggle for equality and should women vote for women?

Cardiff West: 9 March, 7.30pm upstairs in the Old Market Tavern on Trinity Street
Newham, east London: 10 March, 7.30pm at Bryant Street Methodist Church, Stratford, E15
Southwark, south London: 10 March, 7.30pm at Beormund Community Centre, 177 Abbey Street, SE1
Waltham Forest, east London: 10 March, 7.30pm at William Morris Centre, Greenleaf Road, Walthamstow, E17
Cardiff East: 10 March, 7.30pm at the Andrew Buchan, Albany Road
Tower Hamlets: 16 March, 7.30pm in the cafe at the Idea Store, 323 Whitechapel Road, E1

Solidarity with junior doctors!

As junior doctors in England made preparations for a historic 48-hour strike, the Socialist Party in Swansea held a campaign stall in solidarity and support of their defence of the NHS.

The junior doctor contract has not been changed in Wales and strike action is not planned this side of the Severn bridge. But armed with petitions, copies of the Socialist and leaflets, six members called on the Swansea public to 'show their

solidarity to the junior doctors taking strike action in England.' The response was overwhelming.

One junior doctor working in Wales pointed out that this was everyone's fight. Doctors work across the borders of the UK and attacks to the NHS made in England this year can spread to Wales next year.

We sold 30 copies of the Socialist and raised £30 for the fighting fund.

Claire Job
Swansea Socialist Party

FAR-RIGHT FRUSTRATED AND EMBARRASSED IN NEWCASTLE



photo Paul Mattsson

William Jarrett
Socialist Party Newcastle

As groups gathered across European cities on 28 February to demand safe passage for refugees, it came to the attention of Newcastle Socialist Party that the English Defence League (EDL) had gathered at Grey's Monument in the city centre.

Our regular Saturday campaign stall was to take place elsewhere, until we heard of the far right's presence. Fast planning resulted in an excellent response and we set up a stall and worked with another left group against the fascist menace.

Crowds quickly gathered as Socialist Party members took to the megaphone, putting forward our programme. Petty divisions and hatred were no match for our

demands to undertake a mass council house building project, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and nationalisation.

The atmosphere turned in our favour immediately with over a hundred people clearly on our side.

We remained at the Monument until the 15-20 EDL members folded up their banner and abandoned the city centre in frustration and embarrassment.

By that time, we had sold over 20 copies of the Socialist, raised significant money for the fighting fund and had three young people express an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

Read more online at socialistparty.org.uk

GLASGOW COUNCIL USE SCARE TACTICS UNDER PRESSURE TO FIGHT CUTS

Socialist Party Scotland

Mass pressure is building on Glasgow Labour, who face a choice on 10 March on whether to implement £133 million of cuts.

Trade unions are preparing for widespread industrial action and a mass mobilisation of communities against the cuts.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) responded to the report in the Evening Times newspaper on 3 March, that Glasgow Council officers have produced a letter to councillors outlining the consequences of not setting a budget.

Jamie Coccozza, a member of Socialist Party Scotland (formerly Militant) and TUSC, commented: "The letter is a reflection of the mass

pressure that is building on elected councillors not to implement savage Tory austerity.

"Neither TUSC nor the joint trade unions in Glasgow are calling for a budget not to be set. TUSC's alternative is for a no-cuts budget. At the same time this could launch a mass campaign of councillors, the trade unions and the wider working class for a return of the almost £1 billion stolen from Glasgow since 2010."

The article is inaccurate over the history of the heroic Liverpool Council struggle in the 1980s. The socialist Liverpool Council began in 1984 by setting a needs budget, defying Thatcher's cuts, and mobilising a mass campaign that was successful in winning increased funding from the Tories.

The following year Liverpool de-



photo TUSC Scotland

laid setting a rate for a short time because other Labour councils in Britain advocated such a stand. In the end Liverpool stood alone. It was the delay in setting the rate that led to the councillors being surcharged and made liable for the money.

Today, the surcharging of councillors is no longer available as a sanction. If Glasgow Council refuses to make cuts and set a no-cuts budget

they would win mass support. Are the so-called 'anti-austerity' Scottish National Party going to play the role of the Thatcher government in the 1980s by sending in commissioners to administer the cuts?

It's long past time that so-called 'anti-austerity' politicians from Labour and the SNP stood up and stopped playing pass the parcel with Tory cuts.

A CHANCE FOR THE TRADE UNIONS TO LEAD THE EU REFERENDUM DEBATE

Although the majority of trade unions support the idea of a so-called 'social Europe' they have often opposed, at least on paper, the reality of European Union (EU) policies and not all of them have a formal position on the EU referendum. With Unison announcing a branch consultation on the issue, and other unions likely to follow suit, there is still a chance for the unions to put themselves at the head of a working class leave campaign. If the unions did so, argues Socialist Party executive member **Clive Heemskerk**, it could transform the situation in Britain.

The Unison public sector trade union, Britain's second largest union, is holding a branch consultation on what position it should take in June's EU referendum.

The union has policy on EU-related issues, for example opposing the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which would accelerate the corporate takeover of the public services its members work in, including the NHS. But as the branch consultation document says, this is the "first time in a generation that trade unions need to consider what the issues important to workers and trade unionists are" on the question of EU membership itself.

'Social Europe'

The document makes clear that the Unison leadership, under general secretary Dave Prentis, still clings to the idea that a 'social Europe' is possible.

They define this as "a society that combines economic growth with high living standards and good working conditions, best exemplified by the Nordic countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Norway".

That Norway is not a member of the EU seems to have escaped the authors' attention. And also, more importantly, the fact that the 'Nordic model', based on the unique circumstances of the post-war economic boom, is long gone.

The Economist magazine in 2013 even went so far as to praise the Nordic countries for carrying out a "silent revolution" (a counter-revolution in reality), with Sweden's public spending as a proportion of GDP slashed from 67% in 1993 to 49% in 2013.

With the massive scaling back of the welfare state, private companies running schools, elderly homes and nurseries, and transport fully deregulated, they concluded that the late neoliberal economist Milton Friedman "would be more at home in Stockholm than in Washington, DC".

Many of the legal gains for workers claimed for 'social Europe' are in

fact the product of workers' struggle, in Britain and in Europe. And the document is forced to recognise that "in other cases" EU regulations have been used to "stop strike action against EU companies that operate in more than one country" and to stop interference "with the right of a company in another EU country to bid to bring in a lower-paid workforce" for public contracts.

With a new economic downturn a growing prospect, ending the anaemic 'recovery' from the 2007-08 financial crisis and subsequent recession, the 'social Europe' aspects of the EU will be even more curtailed.

Agency of austerity

While the Unison leadership would clearly like to steer the consultation to a remain position, the document is obliged to reflect union members'



The EU is an agency of austerity. The document admits that neoliberal policies have "become embedded in a series of treaties that govern the economic activity of EU states"

enormous suspicions of the EU.

"Unison", the document says, "would argue that market mechanisms fail to deliver the public services that countries need". For this reason, it goes on, Unison conferences "have consistently criticised and opposed" the EU treaties and services directives, "based on our beliefs about public services and public spending".

The EU's "drive towards greater competition, market liberalisation and a downward push on wages" have "real consequences" it says, "seen in countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy and most particularly



photo Paul Mattsson

Don't exaggerate EU powers

The Socialist Party opposes the EU because of its laws and institutions. While they could not stop a determined workers' government supported by a mass movement from carrying out socialist policies, they are another hurdle to overcome, with real consequences for the day-to-day struggles to defend working class interests.

But there is a danger of exaggerating the EU's powers. The Morning Star, the paper under the political influence of the Communist Party of Britain, recently carried an editorial headed, 'EU membership bars socialism'.

It argued that "socialism and even Keynesian social democracy cease to be options available to voters" in elections "because socialist measures themselves such as renationalising industries or intervening directly in the economy are illegal" (22 February).

This gives a completely wrong direction to the struggle for socialism. What, for example, the Syriza government in Greece lacked was not legal 'permission' to implement socialist policies like nationalisation of the banks but a programme, and the will to carry it out, to overturn capitalism.

In other words, in strongly campaigning for a leave vote, the key task is to help the working class build its own independent party, with socialist policies and a clear internationalist position, to defeat pro-capitalist politicians 'at home' as much as in Brussels.

Greece, where living standards are drastically cut, and public services slashed, while public assets are privatised".

The document points to the EU's role "in liberalising markets and encouraging competition in energy, transport and postal services. It has also restricted companies receiving public subsidies through state aid rules".

There can be no other conclusion to draw but that the EU is an agency of austerity. The document admits that neoliberal policies have "become embedded in a series of treaties that govern the economic activity of EU states".

The Dave Prentis leadership only pays lip service to the basic socialist propositions against 'market mechanisms', in other words capitalism, that are reflected in Unison policy positions on the EU. But even so, how can they suggest that trade unionists should give a vote of confidence to the EU's 'embedded austerity' by voting to remain?

Project Fear

The answer lies in the constant references in the document to 'what the Tories would do' if Britain was outside the EU, a tailored version of the capitalist establishment's 'Project Fear' campaign to try and secure a remain vote.

"Unison does not believe that the current UK government can be trusted with the protection of our workers' rights", is one example. But 'EU law' has not stopped the Tories' Trade Union Bill, the attack on unfair dismissal rights, or any of the attacks on social gains like the bedroom tax, never mind the savage attacks on workers' rights in Greece. The working class will

always have to fight tenaciously for its interests under the capitalist system, whether the EU treaties are in place or not.

There is also an implicit argument that it will be 'business as usual' for Cameron or a new Tory leader if the government loses the referendum. But what happened after the fall of Margaret Thatcher is instructive.

The trigger for her removal was the split in the Tory party over Europe, when Geoffrey Howe resigned in November 1990. But the backdrop, not dissimilar to the discontent with austerity now, was the burning rage at the poll tax, reflected in the mass non-payment movement led by Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party.

Thatcher's successor, John Major, was forced to pump £4.3 billion into local government funding (around £7 billion in today's terms) to finance the abolition of the poll tax, as he attempted to secure his base.

But he was permanently weakened by the split, in a more favourable economic and political context than now, hamstrung by the Tory Maastricht rebels despite winning a bigger majority in 1992 than the Tories have today.

Would Cameron or his successor, if the Tory party holds together, be in a more powerful position?

A defeat for the capitalist establishment, which is what a leave vote would be, will completely shake up the political situation, with

new parliamentary alignments or an early general election all as possible outcomes.

But the unions, or at least a substantial body of them, must take a lead. The Unison document says it "is not impressed" with "the main Remain and Leave campaigns", as "the Remain campaign ignores the threats in the current EU to social Europe, public services and workers' rights" and "the Leave camp is concentrating mainly on issues of migration, asylum and eligibility for state benefits". So why not have an independent working class campaign?

It was a big mistake for Jeremy Corbyn to abandon his past position on the EU to try and appease the Blairite majority in the Parliamentary Labour Party by supporting a 'critical in' vote.

He won't stop the pro-capitalist Labour right moving against him when they feel they can but in the meantime, unless the trade unions step in, working class voters against the EU will be left in the hands of Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage.

Danger

There is a clear danger that the labour movement will repeat the mistake made in 2011, after the 750,000-strong TUC march against austerity, the biggest organised working class demonstration in British history.

Six weeks later Ukip organised a 'rally for cuts', with Farage and 'Eurosceptic' Tories speaking, that mobilised just a few hundred. That was the real balance

of forces in the first year of the Con-Dem government.

But the leadership of the big unions, including Unison, threw it away, both industrially - when they retreated after the 30 November pension strikes of that year - and politically, by refusing to discuss any alternative to Labour as it stuck to the austerity consensus.

This allowed Ukip to partially fill the vacuum. That must not happen again.

Blocking the right

The unions could stop the leave campaign being dominated by the reactionary right. The EU referendum legislation allows the Electoral Commission to choose who shall become the 'official' Remain and Leave campaigns, bestowing them with political 'authority' but also substantial public resources.

But the Electoral Commission is not obliged to designate an official campaign, which is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has a petition to the Commission not to give taxpayers money to Ukip and Tory EU campaigners (see tiny.cc/EUpetitionTUSC).

If the only outcome of the Unison consultation is that the union pressures the Electoral Commission not to hand public funds and media platforms to Ukip et al, that would be a significant blow to the right.

Why should the ordination of reactionary pro-austerity politicians as the representatives of working class anti-austerity leave voters be allowed to go unchallenged?

But a greater prize is possible. The unions still have the chance to put themselves at the head of a working class leave campaign that could transform the situation in Britain.



It was a big mistake for Jeremy Corbyn to abandon his past position on the EU to try and appease the Blairite majority in the Parliamentary Labour Party by supporting a 'critical in' vote

JUNIOR DOCTORS: STRIKING TO WIN

Health unions and TUC must coordinate action and call a national demo

Rob Williams
NSSN

The junior doctors and their union the BMA are in the front line of attacks on the NHS. After two one-day strikes in January and February, the latest stage of their campaign of industrial action was a 48-hour strike on 9-10 March. It will continue with two further 48-hour stoppages in April.

These actions have been called in response to the Tories' intention to impose new contracts in August. The message of junior doctors to Tory health minister Jeremy Hunt is a defiant one - "This isn't over yet... not by a long way!"

This poses a massive responsibility on to the rest of the trade union movement, particularly other NHS unions, to ensure that the junior doctors are not left to fight alone.



Health secretary Hunt photo creative commons/Culture, Media and Sport Office

The Tories - weak and divided, especially by the EU referendum - can be defeated over these contracts.

Every strike day has seen tremendous support from the public and fellow health workers. Picket lines have been inundated with the banners of local union branches and trades councils. But it's not enough. The support must be mobilised into a mass movement.

The National Shop Stewards Network has been in contact with a number of junior doctors and many of our supporters have invited them to speak at their union meetings to help build solidarity. In consultation with them, we have drawn up a model motion that can be discussed and hopefully passed throughout the union movement.

It calls on the TUC and the unions to "urgently convene a special TUC general council with an invitation to the BMA and the other health unions.

This meeting should discuss organising an emergency Saturday national demonstration on the theme of 'Defending the NHS, supporting the junior doctors' and coordinating industrial action against Tory health service cuts and their effect on health workers, such as the attack on NHS bursaries."

Please move our motion in your union and trades council to help build the mass action that can defeat the Tories.

■ See www.shopstewards.net for model motion

■ More on junior doctors - see pages 7&12



The Tories - weak and divided, especially by the EU referendum - can be defeated over these contracts



photo Paul Mattsson

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