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Victories at Kone engineering and Lewisham schools show...

Strikes get results

Bob Severn

Strike action gets results - no wonder the Tories want to virtually ban it!

Teachers, parents and school students in Lewisham, south London, are celebrating a tremendous victory as plans to make three schools into academies have been sidelined. This follows a hard-fought campaign including demonstrations and strikes by both teachers and pupils, and a legal challenge.

Meanwhile, after escalating strike action, Kone engineers have won a victory over the use of 'spy in the cab' technology to discipline workers.

An all-out strike by Glasgow homelessness caseworkers has made the city's Labour council recognise that those workers should be on a higher pay grade.

And Network Rail workers have been given a much improved pay offer due to the threat of action by the RMT union. Striking works - and big business bosses can't stand it.

Living standards, public services and conditions at work have taken a hammering. That's why a fightback is needed.

Despite their increasing fortunes - Britain's five wealthiest families now own more than the poorest fifth of the population - the rich still want to get richer as the rest of us face austerity.

Draconian

That's why they are getting their Tory government to make further attacks on the right to strike in a country that has already has some of the most draconian anti-union laws.

The Queen's Speech included a bill that would make striking illegal unless a strike ballot had a 50% turnout. Yet only 24% of the electorate voted for the Tories!

Trade union leaders - through the Trades Union Congress - should now be planning coordinated trade union action against further austerity and attacks on workers' rights. This should start with a workers' demonstration on the day the anti-union bill gets its first reading in parliament.

The National Shop Stewards Network conference will bring together workers on the frontline of the fight against the Tories' austerity onslaught.

Come to the National Shop Stewards Network 2015 conference

Saturday 4 July, 11am to 4.30pm

Conway Hall, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL

www.shopstewards.net

Confirmed speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, BFAWU general secretary Ronnie Draper and anti-blacklisting campaigner Dave Smith

Tories deepen housing crisis

As private landlords and super-rich cash in

Alison Hill

One hundred million pounds of central London property was sold in the 24 hours after the Tory victory in the general election, as rich buyers breathed a sigh of relief that Labour's timid mansion tax was dead and the tax loopholes for super-rich 'non-doms' would continue.

This is a different world to most of us who are experiencing the effects of this runaway property market, making housing to buy or rent unaffordable.

Summing up the current 'them and us' housing scandal the chief executive of Shelter recently said: "No matter how hard they work or save, an entire generation is being forced to watch their dreams of a stable future slip through their fingers, stuck in properties where rents eat up their salaries and short-term contracts leave them with no stability at all".

So much for the hard working families that Cameron bangs on about. There's plenty of people working hard but with absolutely no prospect of finding an affordable, secure place to live as a result.

Shortage

There is a desperate shortage of affordable housing. Councils have effectively privatised much of their stock, making being on the housing waiting list almost a pointless exercise. And since the Tories brought in the 'right to buy' council houses in 1980, thousands of previously council owned homes have become nice little earners for private landlords.

Now the Tories want to force housing associations to sell off their assets at a discount, so the only providers of remotely affordable housing are to be hamstrung.

The Tories smugly point to the private sector to fill the gaps. But we all know that private renting is expensive and sometimes even dangerous.

Citizens Advice produced a report that found one in six privately rented homes in England are "physically unsafe" - 750,000 households. This can include damp, cold, rodent infestation and risk of falls.

And if tenants complain about the conditions then they risk being turfed-out in favour of someone who will keep quiet.

The big building firms whinge that there's too much 'red tape' but private developers are no longer obliged to provide even a small number of 'affordable homes' in new housing projects. And housing starts are at their lowest levels since the 1920s. Clearly the private sector cannot meet the housing needs of the population. Yet a decent, secure, affordable place to live should be everyone's basic right.

We say:

- End the privatisation of council and housing association housing.
- Estates should be run under the democratic control of tenants and the local community, with affordable rents and secure tenancies.
- Rent controls to stop private landlords charging excessive rents.
- For the nationalisation of the banks and building industry under democratic workers' control and management, to fund and build a massive scheme of affordable council house building.

Editorial from the Socialist issue 858

Labour leadership 'choice' confirms need for new party

The Labour Party was founded over a century ago by trade unionists determined to create an independent political voice for working class people. Decades have passed since the pro-big business wing of the Labour Party, epitomised by Tony Blair, successfully wrested the party from the democratic influence of the organised working class, transforming it into one more capitalist party. The end result is the 'choice' between the utterly bland 'corporate speak' candidates on offer in the Labour leadership contest.

Blairism according to the media cacophony and the bleating of the Labour Party leadership candidates, was what made Labour popular. But this is not borne out by the facts. From 1997 to 2010 Labour lost five million, mainly working class, voters. In the 2015 general election Miliband failed to win back the majority of them. Among the poorest section of the working class - unskilled and casual workers and the unemployed - Labour's vote actually fell even further from 40% in 2010 to 37% in 2015.

This is no surprise. A real 'aspirational' programme, promising measures like an immediate increase in the minimum wage - to £10 an hour - instead of the measly £8 by 2020 that was on offer, and a mass programme of council house building, would have enthused millions of ex-Labour voters. Instead, far from being 'too left wing', Labour under Miliband offered austerity-lite.

This, of course, is not the conclusion being drawn by the Labour leadership contenders. Instead they are vying for who can lurch furthest to the right. Ultra-Blairite Liz Kendall has argued that the 50p top rate of tax on income over £150,000 a year should not be permanent. She has even gone so far in donning Tory clothes as to call for 2% of GDP to be allocated to 'defence', effectively posturing to the right of the Tory leadership.

Yvette Cooper has called for Labour to support Tory cuts in corporation tax to 20%. Andy Burnham, who has been described in the capitalist media as the 'trade unions' candidate' has done everything in his power to demonstrate that he is just a Blairite with a northern accent. He has dismissed Miliband's mansion tax as the 'politics of envy'. His campaign was launched at the

headquarters of financiers Ernst & Young, which is up to its neck in tax avoidance. Entrepreneurs declared Burnham, "will be as much our heroes as the nurse or the teacher".

Trade union influence

All have joined in the capitalist media's clamour to denounce any 'trade union influence' on the leadership election. Kendall has attacked Len McCluskey, the general secretary of Unite the Union, for even daring to intervene in the Labour leadership campaign. The unions, that founded the Labour Party, are no longer allowed to even comment on its deliberations!

In reality, Miliband had already acted - in the Collins Review - to destroy the last vestiges of democratic influence by the trade unions on the Labour Party. The money of many union members money funds the Labour Party - to the tune of £7 million in the last quarter of 2014 alone - but they have no influence on its policies. The bar of needing support of 35 MPs to stand excludes the possibility of any left-wing candidate making it to the ballot paper. An open letter by MPs which called not for a restoration of trade union rights within the Labour Party - but merely defended the current right of the trade unions to support Labour without influence - could only get thirty Labour MPs to sign.

It is true that individual trade unionists who sign up to become 'affiliated supporters' will be able to vote in the Labour leadership contest, but so will any other individual who pays £3 to become a 'registered supporter'. This is a complete negation of the history of the Labour Party, where the organised working class could influence Labour via its democratic structures.

The introduction of One Member One Vote was used by the right wing as a means to mobilise the more passive membership of the Labour Party - sitting at home and seeing debates within the party via the capitalist media - against the more active layers who participated in the democratic structures of the party. Post-Collins this has gone further, to something akin to a US primary system, where voters do not even have to be party members. They will have a choice, not between different policies, but merely different styles of Blairism.

Break from Labour

The workers movement is facing a massive struggle against austerity and to defend its democratic right to organise. The important concessions won by workers this week - on the railways and also against academies in Lewisham - shows that when we fight we can win. But if we do not have a political voice we are fighting with one hand tied behind our backs.

The Labour leadership contest is making an overwhelming case for the trade union movement to break from Labour and to begin to build a new party. Unfortunately, despite overwhelming evidence, this conclusion has not yet been reached by the leaders of the affiliated trade unions. The clamour for such a move, however, is beginning to grow and will develop further in the course of the coming struggles. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is playing a vital role in pioneering the creation of an electoral voice for the struggle against austerity.

The contenders: who are they?

Between now and September, the Labour Party's remaining members have the choice of electing a new party leader following Miliband's failures. The trade unions have no say other than as individual members. These are the main candidates for party leader.

They are all Oxbridge graduates and specialise in progressing from special advisers to ministers, didn't vote against the Iraq war, or support rail renationalisation.

Liz Kendall

- The out and out Blairite. She became a Shadow Health Minister with special responsibility for care and older people. Her line on private healthcare providers is that "what matters is what works".
- She argues that Labour lost the election because it believed a "fantasy" that the public had moved to the left - presumably suggesting a shift to the right is necessary!
- She backed the Tories' benefit cap, and wants further 'reform' (read: cuts and privatisation) of public services. She is opposed to cutting tuition fees and in favour of Tory 'free schools'.
- A poll of readers of Tory blog Conservative Home chose Kendall as their preferred choice - no wonder - there may be some Tory MPs to the left of her!

Andy Burnham

- Says he is running to "rediscover the beating heart of Labour". He was chief secretary to the Treasury in the run-up to the recession.
- He says he wants to end the perception (from who?!) that Labour would give an "easy ride" to benefit claimants and would likely keep some of the Tories' planned £12 billion welfare cuts.
- When privatising company Circle pulled out of running Britain's first wholly-privatised NHS hospital - Hinchingsbrooke - Burnham, Labour's shadow Health Minister, merely said the government had chosen the 'wrong company'. Hardly opposition to privatisation! The privatisation of Hinchingsbrooke began when Andy Burnham was health minister. When Labour left office three bidders - all private companies - were on the shortlist to run the hospital.
- 103 PFI deals were struck by Labour for the NHS with a combined value of £11.4 billion. By the time that they are paid off, they will have cost more than £65 billion. These are the same schemes that Andy Burnham said in 2007 were "the right schemes and offer value for money."
- He is claiming £17,000 a year of public money to rent a London flat as a second home while owning another flat within walking distance of parliament.

Yvette Cooper

- Accused some of her opponents of "swallowing the Tory manifesto" after Miliband left. But she has said she is "in principle" in favour of the benefits cap and backs Tory plans to cut corporation tax because she believes Labour must "reset" its relationship with business.
- Worked for then Labour leader John Smith and Bill Clinton by the age of 23. She was then minister in health and housing - implementing New Labour's right wing policies in both.
- She was ordered to return overpayments of £1,363 after it was decided she had used the second homes allowance for personal gain.

Bruised and Blattered - Fifa's boss eventually agrees to resign

Reclaim football from corrupting big business

Suzanne Beishon

Fifa president Sepp Blatter has finally succumbed to widespread pressure and resigned. He says he will stay on until a special congress is convened to elect his replacement. However, although denying any involvement in the organisation's corruption scandals, Blatter still has to explain how he failed to notice the huge sums of money Fifa dished out in bribes during his tenure.

"Corruption that is rampant, systemic and deep-rooted both abroad and here in the United States" said US attorney general Loretta Lynch.

Yet the world wasn't shocked by the allegations against 14 Fifa officials and high-level football marketing executives, the world was shocked by the fact that something was finally being done about it!

The extreme level of corruption that has allegedly seen \$150 million in bribes has spanned "at least two generations of soccer officials who, as alleged, have abused their positions of trust to acquire millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks," Lynch outlined.

"And it has profoundly harmed a multitude of victims, from the youth leagues and developing countries that should benefit from the revenue generated by the commercial rights these organisations hold, to the fans at home and throughout the world whose support for the game makes those rights valuable."

Alongside the arrests and release of the FBI indictment came the news that Swiss officials were also launching a separate criminal investigation into the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding process that saw the tournaments controversially awarded to Russia and Qatar respectively.

As the news broke on the eve of Fifa's 65th World Congress and the presidential election, fans globally celebrated the demise of the scandal-hit organisation's seemingly untouchable status.

Fifa and beleaguered president Sepp Blatter, before he resigned, tried to put a positive spin on the crisis saying: "Fifa is the damaged party," and that the indictments were a 'witch-hunt'.

The re-election of Blatter for a fifth term, only days before resigning, saw him perversely claim that after holding post since 1998 he was the man to "clean up" football.

But should we really be surprised by the corruption in the lucrative sport's top body?

As Thatcherism ushered in a new age of deregulation and globalisation it wasn't long before business began to look at the popular sport that enrapt millions of working-class fans and sought a way to massively boost their profits.

Ticket prices rose, big-money TV and sponsorship deals came in and football was sanitised and marketed for a global audience.

Rich plaything

The sport has become the plaything of the rich and powerful who are competing to snap up top clubs that they have no ties to, only for their personal pleasure and, most importantly, profit.

The corruption and the wealth siphoned off at the top of football at the expense of ordinary fans is a reflection of what takes place in wider society. While in general society the rich have increased their wealth massively through further exploitation of working people on a global scale - the number of billionaires has in fact doubled since the economic crash - so the greed of the sporting elites has seen them squeeze more and more out of supporters.

While fans take pleasure in the crumbling of "maFifa," we can't rely on the US and Swiss investigations to save football for ordinary fans.

It's telling that it is the corruption and money laundering that has threatened Qatar's right to host the 2022 World Cup and not the appalling rising death toll of migrant workers - 62 workers are expected to have died for each match played by the time the tournament gets underway.

The reality is that under capitalism money is worth more than lives.

It's up to ordinary fans to fight to wrest the people's game from the hands of big business and reclaim it for working people.

A total of 14 Fifa executives have been accused of 47 counts of money laundering, racketeering and tax evasion linked to \$150 million of kick-backs

Former Fifa vice-president Jack Warner is accused of receiving a \$10 million bribe from an unnamed Fifa official to secure South Africa's 2010 world cup bid

John Reid, Socialist Party activist and author of the football fanzine, Reclaim the Game, wrote last year:

"The Football Association (England) spent £15 million in attempting to win the right to host the 2018 World Cup. They need not have bothered. Both Russia and Qatar secured the hosting of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups by making huge secret payments - some would call them bribes.

"Fifa used a Swiss based sports company, International Sport and Leisure (ISL), as a bank to siphon their bribes through. Fifa gave the 'rights' of the World Cup to ISL, who sold on all those rights to all the major multinationals, keeping a hefty commission for themselves."

Reclaim the Game by John Reid

£3.50 including p&p

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Finance capital - taking Liborties

Simon Carter

The ongoing trial of former UBS and Citigroup trader, Tom Hayes, has revealed the huge scale of the 2012 Libor rate fixing scandal perpetrated by the major banks.

Eight banks and finance houses including Barclays Bank, JP Morgan, Swiss bank UBS, Royal Bank of Scotland and Deutsche Bank have already been fined billions by UK and US authorities over the scandal.

Many of these banks are also facing another tranche of hefty fines for fixing the Forex - the foreign exchange currency rates - for at least a decade.

Libor stands for the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate. It is an average interest rate calculated through submissions of interest rates by major banks in London.

The Libor prices the loans made to either building societies or commercial loans to small companies. An increase in Libor can add hundreds of pounds to households' annual mortgage repayments or to small business loans. Libor is used in pricing \$800 trillion worth of financial contracts.

Rigged

In attempting to fix the Libor rate, the banks rigged the market in its favour, making bigger profits.

During the 2007-08 world financial capitalist crisis, and subsequent credit crunch, banks were anxious about lending to one another and the Libor rate rose accordingly. If a bank looked as if it might collapse, the rate they were charged to borrow went up.

Barclay's top management told staff to lie, saying that they could borrow at lower interest rates than they could, in order to cast the bank in a better light.

A further 20 traders have been charged following a Serious Fraud Office investigation but there were probably hundreds more involved, and none of the banks' top fat cats have been charged.

As expected, the banks and the UK government have issued the usual statements about "tighter rules", being "more rigorous" and ensuring "transparency", etc.

But it's clear that even when news of the scandal first surfaced the banks' traders continued their crooked dealings. And, furthermore, what are the chances of new dodgy dealings of finance capital being exposed in the coming years?

It's equally scandalous, but completely in character, that establishment party politicians ignore the only meaningful course of action to prevent these money grubbing parasites re-offending, ie nationalisation of the banks, under democratic workers' control and management.

Then, instead of lining their pockets at our expense the huge financial funds of the banking sector could be used to finance a vast expansion of jobs, vitally needed council housing, environmentally friendly infrastructure projects, and public services as part of a socialist plan of production.

Setting the anti-war record straight

Charles Kennedy, the former Lib Dem leader who died on 2 June, is being remembered in the pro-establishment media for his speech at the mass anti-war demo on 15 February 2003.

But neither he nor his pro-capitalist party was anti-war. Kennedy backed the troops going into Iraq the following month. How was he able to get away with this deception?

Against the objections of the Socialist Party representatives on the Stop the War Coalition committee, the Socialist Workers Party and its allies unfortunately pushed the decision through the committee to give a platform to Kennedy - without any public criticisms - in front of the massive crowd in Hyde Park.

They also refused to allow any speaker on behalf of a socialist organisation. Unchallenged the myth of the 'anti-war' Lib Dems could blossom.

This undoubtedly helped to build up their 'radical' image, particularly among young people, contributing to Cleggmania and the formation of the Con-Dem Coalition.

Filipino nurses fight Daily Mail smears

North Kent Socialist Party

The Daily Mail has a habit of blanket scapegoating of the blameless. It was recently the turn of Filipino health workers. On 19 May, the Mail screeched: "NHS STILL hiring Filipino nurses" after the trial of Victorino Chua.

Chua is originally from the Philippines. While working as a nurse in Greater Manchester, he poisoned 22 patients. He has recently been brought to justice.

Of course, his crimes were heinous. So were Harold Shipman's. But the Mail didn't run headlines saying the NHS was "still hiring" bearded white men.

Britain's Filipino community is largely NHS staff. They are well-educated, English-fluent, skilled professionals.

Since the headlines, Filipino nurses have complained about being abused at work by patients, including being asked whether they are 'safe' to practise.

Representatives formed a planning committee, including members of health union Unison. They rightly slammed the Daily Mail for "besmirching the reputation and character of Filipino workers in the UK".

Lively

Around 300 attended their lively rally outside Mail headquarters in leafy Kensington, London. Speakers included Jacqui Berry, a registered nurse and member of Unison's executive.

She said: "It was a Filipino nurse who took me by the hand on my first day in the front line. Another showed me how to measure blood pressure. Another comforted me when my first patient died."

Jacqui said the Mail wants to divide NHS workers - at a time when they face drastic cuts and privatisation. The best way to fight the hate is for health workers of all nationalities to join the union, and fight together against government and right-wing media attacks.

Them & Us

No Tory freebie

The Tories' Childcare Bill announced in the Queen's Speech promises to extend free childcare from 15 to 30 hours a week by 2017. What's the catch?

The Pre-School Learning Alliance says the government grant to childcare providers for the current 15 hours falls, on average, 20% short of the true cost.

"The so-called 'free' childcare scheme is nothing of the sort. For years now, the initiative has been subsidised by providers and parents because of a lack of adequate government funding," says learning Alliance chief executive Neil Leitch "I think this is crunch time, I think there will be a meltdown," he added.

Top dogs

MPs are expected to get a 10% pay rise, making a backbenchers annual salary (excluding generous expenses) £74,000.

Public sector workers, at best, can expect a measly 1% rise, after years of pay freezes,

Hard to swallow

The UK has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world. One in five cancer deaths are now caused by obesity. Odd then that the British Nutrition Foundation has produced a seven-page document which makes no reference to obesity or indeed the links between foods high in saturated fat and sugar and heart disease and diabetes. Well not so strange, as Coca-Cola, Mars and British Sugar helped write the document's "core competencies" on diet and health.

Swingeing fees

If renting a home isn't daunting enough, given the huge increase in rents charged by private landlords, then rip-off estate agent and letting agent fees will bankrupt you. According to Citizens Advice these unjustified fees, in March, were costing an average of £337 for each tenant. On top of a finding a deposit and advance rent, a tenant can face paying thousands of pounds upfront.

Non-doms

Having 'non-dom' status means that foreign super-rich people don't have to pay tax on overseas earnings, despite living in Britain.

However, it seems that 800 fat cats born and resident in the UK also enjoy non-domicile tax status. HSBC bank boss Stuart Gulliver is one of these.

To qualify all it seems they need do is declare an overseas "domicile of choice", making that location their home.

Buy-to-profit

Buy-to-let landlords now own properties worth £990.7 billion.

Mortgage lender Kent Reliance reckons that private landlords made £67.2 billion in capital gains and £44.3 billion in rent in 2014-15.

The lessons of Labour's 1945 victory

This summer will see the 70th anniversary of the election of the 1945 Labour government, which carried out massive improvements for the working class. Tony Mulhearn, former Liverpool Labour city councillor and 2015 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition parliamentary candidate, contrasts this event with Labour's recent election defeat and the aftermath.

After the Tory victory in this year's general election, Britain's rich and powerful have been desperate to assuage the discomfort that even Ed Miliband's very timid proposals in the election caused them.

Slanders pour down like a Niagara, particularly on Len McCluskey who suggested that Andy Burnham might be the best of a bad bunch of leadership contenders (although not a left winger in reality).

When he suggested that Unite would reconsider funding Labour, the hysteria was ratcheted up several notches. Press comment confirmed that the appetite of the ruling class for the blood of those who challenge its privileged position has not diminished over time.

Typical was the Mail on Sunday: "Red Len holds Labour to ransom." Political undertaker Jim Murphy, fresh from driving a stake through the heart of dead Scottish Labour, takes the prize with his barb: 'Support from Len McCluskey is the kiss of death for any potential leader.' Satan accusing Beelzebub of being Godless.

'Pus-filled hate'

Trotsky, in his History of the Russian Revolution, wrote: "When it comes to eliminating even a mild threat to their material interests, the privileged classes set in motion all the prejudices and confusion which humanity is dragging in its wagon train behind it."

And, to paraphrase him, 'in the assault upon the left all the ruling forces, the government, the courts, the intelligence service, the officialdom, the capitalist parties, their press, constitute one colossal unit of pus-filled hate'.

John Cruddas, MP for Dagenham, wrote Labour's manifesto. He is described as the philosopher at the heart of Labour's policy planning, and he is clearly buying into this hysteria.

Viewing the wreckage he said: "this could be the greatest crisis the Labour Party has faced since it was created. It is epic in its scale."

Gobbledegook

He believes his duty lies in being brutally honest about what it got wrong. Cruddas states: "Labour only wins when it has a unifying, compelling, national, popular story to tell. It has only really won in 1945 [a country fit for heroes], in 1964 [on the scientific and technological challenges of the 1960s] and in 1997 [on economic and social modernisation, a compelling vision of national renewal]."

Careful examination of this gobbledegook at least shows he recognises that the programme of 1945 had massive appeal resulting in the election of that great reforming Labour government, led by Clem Attlee - although he lumps Blair's government in with it!

Cruddas is the modern Humphrey Bogart of Casablanca who looks into Ingrid Bergman's unfaithful eyes and murmurs 'never mind, we'll always have 1945,' then walks off in an entirely different direction with a former adversary.

In the general election of July 1945, Labour was returned with a majority for the first time. The achievements of Attlee's post-war government are well recorded. During its six years in office the National Health Service was established and coal, iron, steel and the railways were all nationalised.

When Labour's victory was announced on 26 July 1945 the mythical lady in Claridges, on hearing the news of Labour's landslide victory, exclaimed: "This is terrible, the country will never accept it!" Thus was encapsulated the shock to the ruling class of losing their god given right to rule.

Call for change

With 48% of the vote, Labour gained a Parliamentary majority of 146 seats. The opening paragraph of the manifesto was a clarion call for change. It stated:

"The Labour Party is a socialist party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain - free, democratic, efficient, progressive, public-spirited, its material resources organised in the service of the British people." While it drew short of a rounded out programme for complete socialist change, it charted a course in that direction. For instance it said that:

"There are basic industries ripe and over-ripe for public ownership and management in the direct service of the nation".

It then proposed public ownership of the fuel and power industries and of inland transport. It recognised that co-ordination of transport services by rail, road, air and canal could not be achieved without a unified plan and that was impossible without public ownership. Public ownership of iron and steel was also a target.

It confirmed the role of the state in providing affordable quality housing which, it stated, will be one of the greatest and one of the earliest tests of a government's real determination to put the nation first.

Labour promised to "proceed with a housing programme with the maximum practical speed until every family in this island has a good standard of accommodation. That may well mean centralising and pooling of building materials and components by the state, together with price control."

The election campaign reflected the spirit of 1945.

The sheer campaigning dynamic, which I witnessed, was not only decades apart from 2015, but totally different in the anticipation of something magnificent about to happen. Wagons full of people of all ages constantly roamed the streets, loudspeakers blaring with slogans and demands.

The level of mass participation was without parallel. Bessie Braddock, the Labour candidate for the Liverpool constituency of Exchange, was a household name, even among young children who chanted "vote, vote, vote for Bessie Braddock".

This conscious mass participation in the political process framed the direction of policy inside the Labour Party itself.

Resolution

Labour's manifesto of 1945 was given its socialist backbone by a resolution to the 1944 Labour Party conference. It demanded an explicit commitment to extending the publicly owned sector, was supported by 30 constituencies and moved by Ian Mikardo.

He made a compelling speech in which he demanded that the Labour movement restated its fundamental socialist principles, including wide-ranging measures of public ownership. The motion was carried with acclamation.

As Mikardo walked from the hall still reeling at the tumultuous response from the delegates, he met Herbert Morrison (Peter Mandelson's grandfather) the man who condemned the Poplar Councillors for refusing to cut benefits for the poor. Morrison put a hand on his shoulder and said: 'That was a good speech you made, but you realise, don't you, that you've lost us the general election?'

Labour's victory in 1945 and Mikardo's election as MP for Reading was a total rejection of the right wing's pessimism and congenital conservatism.

The process of internal Labour Party democracy which facilitated a motion from a constituency becoming part of Labour's manifesto in 1945 has now, along with the socialist Clause 4, been ripped out of Labour's constitution.

Witch-hunt

Kinnock's treacherous speech attacking the Liverpool Socialist Council in 1985 unleashed the witch-hunt which drove not only Militant supporters (forerunners of the Socialist Party) out of Labour, but also any branch or constituency which challenged the diktats of the Kinnockites was suspended or closed down.

A one-sided civil war was waged against the party rank and file which culminated in the stifling of democratic discussion and the end of rank and file participation in the decision-making process.

In an ironic twist, while Morrison told Mikado in 1945 that his speech had lost Labour the election, Kinnock was told by right winger Denis Healey in 1985 that his attack on Militant had won Labour the next general election. In the event, in contrast to 1945, Kinnock led labour to the second worst defeat since 1931.

The experience of 1945 is completely lost on the current 'leadership' who, with the encouragement of a cock-a-hoop media, have drawn the incredible conclusion that Miliband had been too left wing.

Shell

This is the whimpering of a hollowed-out shell of a party, colonised at the top by self-seeking career politicians, many of whom like Alan Milburn, found a lucrative position advising private health how to leech on to the NHS, are now anointed by the media as advisors to Labour.

This election has confirmed that TUSC, in the eyes of some of the advanced sections of the working class, is the only serious standard bearer of the spirit of 1945. But a spirit that is not merely a relic of Labour's past to be referred to in sanctimonious speeches, but one which the building of a new mass party of the working class will make a reality.

Extracts from an article in the Socialist from 2005 by Keith Dickinson

The Labour government had been elected as an expression of the working class' anger and determination. They had just fought the war on the battlefields and on the home front and were determined that "never again" would they or their children go through that horror.

Neither did they want to return to pre-war poverty and struggle to survive. These had created the conditions for the rise of fascism in Europe, and as they saw it, the consequent world war.

Workers blamed capitalism and its direct representatives, especially Prime Minister Winston Churchill, portrayed in the media as the man who won the war, and our "natural" next prime minister.

Radical programme

Labour won as a result of the Labour Party's most radical programme ever and despite the weak leadership who were as shocked as anyone at the result.

Victory was due to Labour's rank and file members, workers and soldiers, who reflected the mood nationally. The war effort greatly increased the workers' consciousness of their class and their strength in united action.

The government nationalised coal, oil, gas, electricity, transport, the Bank of England and later iron and steel - most of them bankrupt companies, and all of them vital services needed to reconstruct capitalist society.

From the start, these nationalisations deliberately gave workers no say or control. On the contrary, they made representatives of the old private owners into chairmen of the nationalised industries' boards.

In fact, the 20% of the economy that was nationalised became cheap services and suppliers to the 80% which they left in private hands. Only the NHS has prolonged working class memories of the good things about Labour.

But, in contrast to this record, privatisation of the NHS was accelerated by New Labour under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Revolutionary mood

In 1945 there was a revolutionary mood among Britain's workers and this pressure was even reflected in parliament. On the first day of the new parliament Labour MPs celebrated by singing the socialist anthem, the 'Red Flag'.

But for all the advances in the welfare state from this government, capitalism still ruled in Britain and most of the reforms won have been snatched back over time by the ruling class.

The workers' movement needs to be armed with the ideas and the leadership to successfully "seize the time." The building of a new mass workers' party with a clear thread of Marxist understanding running throughout the ranks and the leadership will lay the basis for such a movement.

Heysel Stadium tragedy 30 years ago

How socialist councillors built bridges

Tony Mulhearn, former Liverpool city councillor from 1983-87 and past President of Liverpool Labour Party writes in reply to a Guardian article on the Heysel stadium disaster.

Ed Vulliamy's piece is important in reminding everyone of the appalling events of 29 May 1985 in which 39 Juventus fans died at a European Cup final at Heysel stadium in Brussels. Unfortunately he also suggests that no apology was received from Liverpool city council.

On the contrary, Labour councillors took the initiative and suggested that a delegation be sent from Liverpool to Turin to offer condolences and to discuss with the authorities what could be done to get to the root of the social conditions which breed violence.

The horrific scenes witnessed on television appalled the whole population of Liverpool.

But it later became quite clear that inadequate facilities at Heysel Stadium, lack of proper policing and chaos in the allocation of tickets and seats for the different fans had all also contributed to this tragedy. Liverpool council's architect had conclusively proved that the stadium was unsafe.

The red top press unleashed a collective character assassination on Liverpool, a city which dared to oppose Margaret Thatcher's savage cuts. Entirely ignored was the fact that genuine football fans in Liverpool consistently condemned mindless hooliganism and violence.

Many fans also reported that the fascist British National Party were handing out leaflets on the ferry taking fans to the match. The socialist group in the European Parliament also commented that on the Italian side young fascist militants had travelled to Belgium with the intention of having a confrontation with the Liverpool 'reds'.

The owner of the Daily Mirror at the time, pension thief Robert Maxwell, said: "This (Liverpool's stance) is the kind of thing that encourages hooliganism." That revealed the attitude of the powerful and privileged toward Liverpool for making a stand against cuts.

Smash Tory austerity!

Make Budget Day a day of action on 8 July

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Solidarity, struggle, hope, renewal and determination: None of these words would be readily brought to mind when contemplating our new Tory government's back-to-the-1930's Queen's Speech. But outside the walls of Parliament, on the streets of London, Leeds, Belfast, Cardiff, Southampton and Liverpool, these were the perfect words to describe the protests and demonstrations taking place.

The Tories and big business are celebrating what they see as a new mandate for austerity. With just 24% of the electorate supporting them, the reality is they have nothing of the sort. But working class and young people have our own mandate: a mandate for a fightback.

The Queen's Speech outlined only some of the carnage the Tories have planned. The attempts to curtail our ability to organise - with anti-trade union laws and attacks on democratic rights - show the government's real fear of the organised workers' movement and its huge potential power.

Deep cuts

On 8 July, George Osborne will be announcing a budget for the billionaires. Deep cuts - enough to make any normal person shudder - are what are coming. No area will be spared.

But it's clear some groups will be hit particularly hard. Among the most vicious attacks Osborne is likely to announce will be those on welfare. Ian Duncan Smith's £12 billion of 'savings' will hit many of society's most vulnerable people hard.

It's also likely we will hear about a number of cuts which specifically target the young. We have already heard that housing benefit is going to be removed from most under-21s. The Queen's Speech also hinted that plans for a youth allowance, which would see 18-21 year olds forced onto slave-labour schemes after six months of unemployment, would now be implemented.

Young people are being punished for the economic failures of this government, and the capitalist system as a whole. That's why it's essential that on 8 July, as Osborne threatens the livelihoods of millions of working class and young people, we organise to issue a threat of our own.

Youth Fight for Jobs is calling for a huge, national day of action to take place on budget day. This needs to be a day of protest on an even bigger scale than that organised to mark the Queen's Speech, with protests in every town.

As Osborne announces his carnage we need to send a message to the Tories in Westminster - that we are preparing an almighty movement against austerity.

Queen's Speech protests: determination to fight back on a new scale

London

"Tory scum, here we come". This chant, which echoed through Westminster's streets on 27 May, was a declaration of war.

Thousands of people gathered outside Downing Street. This fresh, youthful and - above all - angry protest demonstrated the huge appetite for struggle. If we want to beat austerity, we'll need a fight back on a scale not seen for decades.

Youth Fight for Jobs, as well as other campaigns and groups, had put out a call to gather in central London. Organised at relatively short notice, the protest was mainly built through word-of-mouth and social media. By around 5.30pm up to 2,000 mostly young people were marching (and sometimes running) around Westminster.

The protest passed Downing Street, marched through Parliament Square, and snaked past Buckingham palace and Scotland Yard before returning to Trafalgar Square. It was here that we semi-spontaneously gathered on the steps outside the National Gallery and Youth Fight for Jobs led a short rally.

The crowd listened to speeches from different campaigns and organisations, as well as from individuals who wanted to share why they had come to protest. Paul Callanan, speaking for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition was cheered and clapped when he attacked the so-called 'austerity consensus' supported by all the mainstream parties.

Calls for a 24-hour general strike - urgently needed to start building the kind of movement capable of ending austerity as well as new anti-union laws - were met with applause and chanting.

Other speakers included a Sweets Way housing campaigner, student activists and a public sector worker from Unison.

But it was clear the protest had not run out of steam.

After taking a vote, the demonstration continued. We marched to Oxford Street where tax avoiding companies like Boots and Vodafone were named and shamed.

There was a short sit-down protest at Piccadilly Circus before we wound our way back to Downing Street. Here, at around 8.30 in the evening and after more than three hours of marching, the protest began to wind down.

Many expressed an interest in finding out more about the Socialist Party.

Leeds

An anti-austerity protest organised by Leeds Youth Fight for Jobs on the day of the state opening of parliament - which inspired others across the country - drew 1,000 people.

The protest, in Victoria Gardens, Leeds, heard from young workers, students, anti-bedroom tax activists, asylum seeker rights campaigners and trade unionists, among others, on the savage plans to attack working class people that the new Tory government is announcing.

Ben Myers, a new member of the Socialist Party, said: "The idea that young people have no interest in politics was dispelled as myth as hundreds of young people - ineligible to vote for the government that will control our education, jobs and housing up until we are 22 years old - turned

out to protest against the Tories' assaults on the working class. They only have a slim majority of 12 which could easily crumble."

Sri Lankan students protest

End violence against women

Bharathi Subramanian, Tamil Solidarity

On 20 May, Jaffna in Sri Lanka came to a standstill, with shops being shut and black flags raised in memory of Vidya Sivaloganathan, the 17-year-old A-level student brutally gang raped and murdered. This came alongside the biggest public demonstrations in Sri Lanka's north in recent years.

Vidya's body was found in a dishevelled state with her hands and legs tied to a tree log using her school tie, and her mouth was stuffed with a rag.

Students from schools across the north and east showed their rage starting with the students from Vidya's school.

From the Kytes island, this sense of solidarity spread to Jaffna and elsewhere, including students from Muslim girls' schools, taking to the streets. They were protesting to condemn the brutal act and to demand that the culprits be brought to book.

State violence

As a consequence, nine suspects were arrested. The day that the suspects were brought before the Jaffna magistrates court saw an unprecedented number of protesters on the streets.

What began as a largely peaceful protest turned violent as state forces fired tear gas at the protesters and fired gunshots in the air. This was a huge overreaction to the throwing of stones at the court windows.

This antagonised the protesters, who defended themselves against the police. The result was that more than 120 people were arrested - protesters and bystanders. Some are still in police jails.

Demonstrations in Jaffna have now been banned, with arrest on the spot being issued to anyone protesting - a total denial of democratic rights.

The public outcry expressed the fear that the criminals will get away without prosecution.

When the crime was reported, the police initially disregarded the complaint by the parents. They said it was a family feud. However, they soon had to change their position due to the pressure they were under.

This highlights the complete lack of police accountability to the local population. In fact, they are seen as part of an occupying force, not even speaking the language of local people.

Militarisation

The objectification of women is a huge issue in Sri Lanka, as in all developing countries and around the world. The problems are further enhanced by the militarisation in the north and east and by the land grab. Tamils are treated as second-class citizens, with no real rights, and crimes against them can be committed with impunity.

The vulnerability of women to attack is also worsened by the lack of social and public services, good housing, and the lack of future prospects.

Tamil Solidarity stands in solidarity with the protesters and strongly condemns crimes of sexual violence. We welcome the mass expression of rage and strong sense of solidarity across the island.

Lewisham academy schools plans dropped by Prendergast

Teachers, school students and parents in Lewisham, south London, have won a great victory! They beat off plans to turn three schools into 'academies' which would have been a step towards privatisation. Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham NUT union secretary and Stop Academies in Lewisham activists, explains.

For several months members of NUT and other trade unions at the Prendergast Federation of schools, alongside students and parents, have mounted a tremendous campaign to oppose these damaging academy conversion proposals.

Sizeable demonstrations, strikes and meetings - and now legal challenges over government regulations - all helped to keep pressure on governors to think again. Now they have agreed to rescind the academy orders for all three schools in the Prendergast Federation.

This major breakthrough for the campaign reflects the pressure that months of our determined opposition built up. The legal challenges then left governors with little option but to pull back from their plans.

Every campaigner should be proud of standing firm and refusing to accept that the academy steamroller was unstoppable. The campaign shows how little public support there is for academies and the total lack of any evidence that academies help education.

This is not yet a final victory. The Department for Education (DfE) will want to rewrite their regulations so the Prendergast Federation can start over with their plans. However, we will keep up the pressure on Prendergast's governors to resist DfE attempts.

As parent Ned Boulting told the Guardian: "governors have created a rift [that] will raise questions with teachers as to whether they want to stay on at the school". Regrettably, he understood the dangers better than the governors.

Unless or until the governors withdraw their academy plans altogether, then the dispute still continues. For now, the proposed strike action on 3-4 June has been withdrawn. We are confident that, boosted by the latest news, staff, students and parents will be ready to continue their campaign if necessary.

Victory for Kone strikers!

The escalation of strike action across the country by around 300 engineering service workers has thwarted attempts by bosses at Kone to use a tracking system as a disciplinary tool.

The Finnish owned company was intent on using unreliable "spy in the cab" technology. In one case the data showed that an engineer was supposed to have driven over 1,000 miles in one day without refuelling!

Previously Kone management had walked away from negotiations, which had angered workers given that it was Kone who had approached ACAS in the first place.

The Unite rep from Gateshead's Team Valley Trading Estate explained: "A framework document has now been agreed that will safeguard our members and remove the possibility of managers abusing the process to victimise our engineers".

The agreement is based on the company's Swedish model and strikers are now happy to cease industrial action from midnight on 1st June.

Action brings results

Strikers on the picket line have expressed the view that stepping up industrial action has played a crucial role in concentrating the minds of their bosses. One of the strikers told us of a company locally which had threatened to use zero-hour contracts. However, when within a week 200 of its workers joined a union, the company backtracked!

As we were leaving, the Unite rep said: "May I take this opportunity to officially place on record our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all the support and contributions made to our strike fund. This was instrumental in achieving victory. We are now committed to assisting our brothers and sisters both morally and financially when the need arises".

Elaine Brunskill

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 2 June 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Homelessness caseworkers force Glasgow council to concede pay grading principle

Matt Dobson

The all-out indefinite strike by Glasgow's homelessness caseworkers for fair pay - now in its tenth week - has pushed an anti-union Labour council management to concede the principle that the caseworkers should be on pay grade six.

However the regrade offered by the council would only cover two thirds of the strikers. Socialist Party Scotland supports the argument that this current offer should be rejected and the strike should continue.

The management have been pushed back from their original position, which was that the caseworkers had no case for a regrade. The council made their first real offer on 29 May.

Management rushed to put this offer together. Days before they maintained that there would be nothing on the table until the end of June.

This achievement has been due to the strike remaining absolutely solid with the fantastic commitment of all strikers and the leadership of the Unison union branch.

Labour funding

The impact on the homeless service and the political pressure exerted by calling for all payments to the Labour Party to be suspended has pushed the council into this retreat.

With this offer the council are testing the resolve of the strike. The best way to respond to the test is to continue keeping the strike solid with full participation at the daily pickets, meetings with other social work staff and lobbying of councillors to demand all workers are regraded.

Network Rail forced to make new offer

Planned strike action on Network Rail by the RMT union has forced the employer to double its pay offer for 2015.

Network Rail has now proposed a 2% consolidated increase for 2015, backdated to 1 January, and an increase matching the November 2015 Retail Price Index inflation measure for 2016.

There would also be no compulsory redundancies before 31 January 2016.

The previous offer was 1% for 2015 and 1.4% for 2016, which was rejected by reps at a national meeting on 28 May.

The RMT had planned a 24 hour and a 48 hour strike, but action is now suspended.

A reps' meeting on 5 June will consider the offer.

PCS members rally in Trafalgar Square

The PCS nationally mobilised support on Saturday 30 May for the struggle against privatisation of its members in the National Gallery, with a demonstration of solidarity and strength in Trafalgar Square.

Not far below the steps of the gallery itself, thousands of PCS members and supporters gathered to listen to a line-up of speakers at a rally chaired by PCS president Janice Godrich.

PCS members in the gallery are in the middle of a ten-day strike, their longest yet in a dispute that will have involved 34 days of strike action by the end of this present round on 4th June.

The National Gallery - which is mostly funded by government money - is the UK's most visited tourist destination. But its management is intent on privatising it, including the jobs of 400 of the 600 staff.

PCS represents over 200 gallery assistants and other staff who have been heroically fighting this attack on the workforce and the future of the gallery as a public institution.

They are also fighting management's disgraceful decision to sack PCS representative Candy Udwin, who was part of the union's negotiating team.

Candy Udwin was accused of "breaching commercial confidentiality" by drafting questions for the union's full time negotiations officer to ask the gallery about the cost of using CIS, a private company employed in response to the dispute.

To support the PCS campaign at the National Gallery:

- [Sign the petition](#)
- Make a donation to the hardship fund via sort code 08-60-01 and a/c number 20169002. Cheques should be sent to PCS Culture Media and Sport Association c/o PCS North West Regional Centre, Jack Jones House, 1 Islington, Liverpool L3 8EG

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 31 May 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Bromley anti-privatisation action continues

Bromley local authority workers in south London will continue their campaign against the privatisation of council services with strikes on 10-20 June

The Tory-led council plans to outsource almost all services, reducing the number of direct council employees from 4,000 to 300.

The parks service was transferred to the Landscape Group on 1 June, which immediately announced redundancies. The council has also agreed to hand learning disability services to private company Certitude.

Bromley council is also withdrawing all union facilities from Unite, including the legal right to carry out trade union duties including representing individual staff. Unite offered to pay for facility time, but this was rejected by the council.

Adult services and transport workers will be striking on 10-15 June, Library staff 13-20 June, with other council workers out on 16 June. A march through Bromley will take place on 13 June, assembling 12noon at Norman Park, Bromley Common BR2 9EF.

Unite members at Veolia Bromley, which has the contract for council waste services, will be balloted for strike action after they rejected a 1.5% pay offer following years of below inflation pay increases

Workplace news in brief

Tube ballot

The RMT, Aslef, Tssa and Unite unions are to ballot London Underground workers who face a two year pay cut and imposed night working.

All four unions are saying enough is enough, as staff already working intensive shift patterns are being told they will have to work all night and work more weekends. And the reward? A real term pay cut over two years. Our reasonable demands are a decent pay offer, a shorter working week and no job cuts.

Station workers will also be balloted separately to take action against almost 900 job losses.

We are fighting not only for our members but for the public as well. We want a fully staffed tube, otherwise it will be unsafe to use. Assaults on staff are already up 44% since the beginning of the cuts.

We make no apologies for wanting to defend our members' pay. All workers in London should be on our scale of pay as a minimum. If they get away with cutting the pay of the best organised workers, they will come gunning for other workers.

John Reid, RMT executive member

DLR strike

Up to 30 RMT members were on the picket at the Poplar depot of London's Docklands Light Railway (DLR) on 27 May as the union started a 48-hour strike.

The pickets stood either side of the road in a fantastic show of strength by low-paid Interserve cleaners and security staff over pay and working conditions.

One picket told the Socialist: "This strike has been coming for a long time. This work should be all brought back in-house. Companies like Interserve bid too low for the contract and then try and take it out on us. We're not giving in."

Rob Williams

Spain: left 'popular unity' lists win key victories in local elections

Danny Byrne, CWI

On 24 May, Spain held local elections throughout the state, as well as elections to 13 of its 17 regional parliaments. The results represent a further step in Spanish capitalism's political crisis.

They were especially brutal for the ruling right-wing People's Party (PP), which lost power in all of its big city strongholds. They also lost their overall majorities in most regions, and will be forced to rely on the support of new right wing, populist party Ciudadanos, which may come at a price.

Left surge

Accompanying the fall in support for the PP - punishment for its brutal austerity agenda following four years of government for the super-rich - was a surge in support for alternative left options. In developments not seen since the fall of the Franco dictatorship, the alternative left is poised to take power in both Madrid and Barcelona. The victory of Ada Colau, public face of the anti-evictions movement, in particular made international headlines.

At the same time, regional elections - in which Podemos stood under its own banner - also registered steps forward.

Though confirming that Spain's major urban centres remain epicentres of its shift to the left, this success was also replicated in a swathe of cities and towns, both big and small, throughout the state. These are monumental steps forward for the workers and social movements, and leave them in a much stronger and more confident position from which to fight back against austerity and for a fundamental change.

Two years ago, Ada Colau, was subjected to relentless media attacks, labelling her a "terrorist", amid the establishment's fear at the growing anti-evictions movement. That she will most likely emerge from the next few weeks as mayor of Spain's second biggest city, will fill many with hope.

At the same time, this success carries with it enormous responsibilities, and will require a wide debate about how to move forward from this strengthened position.

The so-called 'popular unity' lists, had different names in different cities. Ahora Madrid (Now, Madrid) won over 30% of the vote in the capital, led by left wing judge, Manuela Carmena, while the Barcelona en Comu (Barcelona in common) list won over 20%, as the most voted list there.

These lists emerged from a process of convergence right across the movement. They included activists from the major left formations - Podemos, Izquierda Unida (IU - United Left), occasionally left nationalist formations like the CUP in Catalonia - as well as fighting trade unionists, anti-eviction fighters, anti-racist campaigners, etc.

Though associated by many with Podemos, they had a genuinely independent profile. Neither Colau nor Carmena are members of Podemos (or any other party), nor are many of the councillors elected.

Despite the ambiguous vocabulary they used, these lists were quite clearly seen as representing a left, anti-austerity position.

They generally stood on a programme which emphasised the need to democratically audit the public debt burden and an opposition to austerity cuts. They stood in solidarity with the social movements and workers' struggles and supported some of their central demands, such as a halt to evictions.

No majorities

Despite their stunning victories, even the most successful of these lists did not win overall majorities - an increasingly challenging task in such a fragmented political landscape. At least five parties entered most regional and local parliaments and councils.

These results raise the question of how the left can govern on a local level without a majority. It is also posed in a number of places (including Madrid) where, despite being the second most voted list behind the PP, the left has the potential to lead an alternative majority to the PP.

Coalition governments could be formed, with joint cabinets involving the former social democratic PSOE or other forces. Many will argue in favour of such an arrangement, based on a certain 'pragmatism', seeking to get what is possible done as soon as possible etc.

Alternatively, minority left governments could be formed. This question is currently being debated in scores of cities, and is potentially a preparation for the same question being posed on a bigger scale in the run-up to the general election in November.

Programme

Socialismo Revolucionario (SR - CWI in Spain) argues that the discussion must start with programme. How can the left, on the back of its election success, best further the struggle against austerity and facilitate an active fightback?

A basic starting point is the refusal to continue with the implementation of, and as quickly as possible work to undo, the brutal anti-worker policies already implemented.

As a party, PSOE - along with the ERC party in Catalonia, also prospective coalition partners in a 'left' coalition - is 100% committed to the implementation of austerity. It was the first party to introduce brutal cuts in the name of the current capitalist crisis, under the Zapatero government.

We think that the implementation of austerity - albeit of a more 'light' variety - does not serve the interests of either the left itself or the workers and young people enthused by its success.

The experience of the IU policy of joining coalitions with PSOE - most recently in the Andalucia region - has generally resulted in it being associated with the implementation of austerity rather than the fight against it.

A repetition of such an experience now would be a serious step backwards, with the potential to derail the current progress the left is making and to demoralise a layer of radicalised workers and youth.

SR fights for an alternative position, of minority left governments based on a 100% anti-austerity programme and the mobilisation of working people to defend it and force the hand of other parties.

A left minority government, if it takes the correct approach, can achieve far more in terms of real gains, than a cross-class 'compromise' coalition.

What drives change?

The key to understanding this is in the realisation that what drives change is not parliamentary or institutional arithmetic, but social change and struggle.

The current electoral success of the left is an expression of the real struggle which millions of workers, youth and pensioners have waged against austerity in the last period - of the three general strikes in 2012 and 2013, the mass anti-evictions movement, etc.

Rather than render such struggle redundant, success and a presence in the institutions gives it an enhanced importance and potential. A mobilised and organised working class is the key ingredient to the success of a 100% anti-austerity government.

A minority left government would announce the measures necessary to do what is possible on a local level to end the austerity nightmare - refuse to implement cuts, privatisations, evictions or any other anti-worker policies, and invest in socially useful and necessary measures to provide jobs and homes.

Such a policy, though not acceptable to the austerity parties, would electrify the working class and social movements. Serious organisation from below and mobilisations would generate an enormous social pressure in favour of such measures and in defence of the left government.

This atmosphere could force the hand of other parties, especially those of the so-called left, or at least sections of them, which could be forced to support 100% anti-austerity policies.

Liverpool

The historical example of Liverpool City Council in 1980s Britain - in which Militant (CWI, now the Socialist Party) had an important influence, but not a majority, must be studied and the necessary lessons learned. Basing themselves on the working class outside the council, our members still managed to pass radical measures in the face of the Thatcher government's austerity.

100% anti-austerity governments could link up across different cities and towns, representing a significant rebel alliance, united in resisting attempts to impose austerity from outside.

This would, as well as being effective on a local level, also serve to prepare the movement for the general elections and the task of electing a 100% anti-austerity left government. In this situation the workers and social movements would flourish on a local level, as part of a coordinated anti-austerity movement throughout the country.

The success of the popular unity lists shows the huge potential behind the model of broad united fronts, formed from below around a common anti-austerity programme.

A striking feature was the performance of these lists when compared with the performance of Podemos and IU lists in the regional elections which took place simultaneously.

Podemos came third in most regional polls, missing out on displacing PSOE as the main opposition force to the PP.

Only in the local elections, on the basis of a united left front, has this been possible. As an example, in Madrid, the 'Ahora Madrid' local election list won 400,000 more votes than the Podemos regional list in the same region.

IU forces were split going into these elections, with the right wing insisting on standing independent lists against the popular unity lists in the majority of cities, and the internal left opposition joining these lists in defiance.

Official IU lists were wiped out in many cities. The IU regional lists also suffered near-annihilation in most regions.

This will intensify the battle within the party, which is likely to split definitively in the coming period. The internal left opposition must act decisively and, around the figure of Alberto Garçon - IU's electoral leader - could play a decisive role in the re-building of a united movement.

United front

The need now is to get to work to form a united front capable of fighting for a left government in the general elections.

An all-Spain reproducing of the popular unity left lists, formed on the basis of united democratic assemblies on a local and regional level, to democratically determine an anti-austerity programme and strategy would have immense potential.

Armed with a 100% anti-austerity programme, it could lay the basis for a new, mass party for the working class and youth, essential to the success of the Spanish revolution.

Britain: end deportations - solidarity needed

Sign the petition! Release Janahan from detention now!

End deportations to Sri Lanka!

Tamil Solidarity demands the immediate release of Janahan Sivanathan from Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre where he is currently being held. Janahan is an active member of Tamil Solidarity and detention and the threat of being returned to Sri Lanka pose a serious risk to his life.

See tamilsolidarity.org for more info

Chile: 200,000 protest in Santiago

The revolt of students and young people demanding free education in Chile is continuing, with an estimated 200,000 marching on the latest demonstration in Santiago. A video of that event, with commentary in Portuguese, is available at www.socialistworld.net. See last week's Socialist for an article on the movement

Hong Kong: refugee campaign victory

Hong Kong refugees won an important victory after more than a year of protests. The hated food packages (with expired and overpriced food) have been replaced by a coupon system enabling greater choice and control. Socialist Action (CWI Hong Kong) played a key role in this struggle, seen here at a May seminar on asylum struggles together with Refugee Union members photo Socialist Action

Mental health services gutted by Labour cuts

Andrew Walton, Leicester Socialist Party

Rizwan Dodya, a mental health service user, contacted Leicester Socialist Party about cuts to local mental health services. He had been given help with confidence-building skills by a local centre called Akwaaba Ayeh.

The project has been around for over 20 years, helping some of Leicester's most vulnerable. It is a specialist service for ethnic minorities, situated in a diverse, working class area with high unemployment and poverty. Rizwan found the staff there helpful and experienced.

The nearby Adhar Project also provides mental health services for ethnic minorities. The two centres are being closed, merged and moved miles from the community. This change is driven by cuts, not service users' needs.

Stigma

The stigma surrounding mental health issues makes many reluctant to come forward about them. This is why specialist centres must be situated in the communities they serve, to make people feel welcome.

I tried to visit Akwaaba Ayeh to discuss cuts with staff and ask if the Socialist Party could help. A notice informed me it would be closing next month.

Reports are that staffing will be cut. Meal charges have increased from £2 a month to £6 a week - a huge difference for unemployed and low-paid workers.

Activities have been lost as well, including group sessions where service users could solve problems together. The new site is overcrowded - and offers only bingo and cooking.

To be effective, mental health services need to be delivered locally, in a safe and comfortable environment, with therapeutic activities. To remain stable they need direct funding from councils and the NHS, not charity or lottery handouts.

Mental health difficulties often arise from long-term unemployment, social isolation and discrimination. All of these are exacerbated by austerity. Leicester's Labour council has meekly accepted Tory cuts.

The council actually has £50 million in reserve - and is adding to this pot "for a rainy day". We say that cuts are raining down on vulnerable people now!

If councillors had the will, they could keep services running with reserves. This would buy time to build a trade union and community campaign, including strikes and occupations if necessary, to win the money back.

This is what the Socialist Party fights for, and stands for in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). This approach would give vulnerable people purpose and the confidence to fight back, as well as safeguarding the services they need to recover.

How the unemployed are targeted with payment sanctions

A Jobseeker's Allowance claimant describes how she was subjected to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) draconian sanctions regime.

"I asked my Jobcentre adviser today why I was being sanctioned for missing an appointment that had never been made. She looked at the letter, frowned, looked at something on her computer and said 'Oh, that was your worksearch review. Didn't you know about it?'"

Oh yes, I just thought I'd miss it to see what having no money at all for a month is like! I wanted to see if I could live on fresh air and felt that being homeless was an experience I couldn't afford to miss!

Of course I didn't bloody know about it! If I'd known about it I would have gone to it. Why don't you just admit you forgot to tell me about the appointment? Or is it now standard Jobcentre practice to arrange appointments by telepathy?

It came as no surprise - I had been on a Jobcentre Plus (JCP) course last week and met three other people, out of a group of eleven, who had experienced the same thing. I am not sure if the sanction will be upheld this time, but they are always finding new and inventive ways to sanction people.

I make detailed notes of all my job searching, plus my voluntary work (that I found and undertook myself, nothing to do with JCP and not in a charity shop or litter picking) on my Universal JobMatch (UJM) account.

Everything is timed, I copy and paste reference numbers from other job sites, email acknowledgements, everything, into my UJM account. I jump through every hoop they hold up. And they still found a way to sanction me. Believe me: they sanction people because they can!"

- The civil service union PCS, which represents Jobcentre workers, opposes the sanctions regime. It says the DWP's appraisal system's linked disciplinary procedure is used to enforce 'expectation levels'. In other words, staff are forced to meet targets for the numbers they sanction.

Human rights hypocrisy

Sarah Wrack

When attending a rally in Westminster on 30 May to defend the Human Rights Act (HRA), Socialist Party members found ourselves in an unexpected and unprecedented situation. We were on a Liberal Democrat protest!

The speeches were jaw-dropping in their hypocrisy. Championing human rights as an abstract concept - with no reference at all to the limits on human rights implemented by the last government. This government included the Lib Dems themselves. And of course no mention of the threatened attacks on trade union rights.

The 'right to education', for example, may be guaranteed by the HRA. But that didn't stop the Lib Dems stabbing students in the back in 2010, and voting to treble university fees after promising to scrap them.

Equally, the 'right to marry and start a family' seems rather meaningless given cuts made by the Con-Dem coalition to child benefit, Sure Start centres and working tax credits

Suffice to say most of those present were clearly not used to protesting. They didn't respond well when we tried to make these points from the crowd. But we didn't mind - we headed off to an anti-austerity demonstration, a much better way to defend real human rights!

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/20798>