

THE CON-DEM government does not only aim to bring in massive cuts in public spending controlled from Westminster. It also wants to push cuts through in the Scottish parliament and the Welsh Assembly. As with cuts in council services, they hope in this way to divert anger away from the Tory and Lib Dem parties. **Dave Reid** and **Philip Stott** call for the Con-Dems' plans to be defeated by a mass fightback similar to that fought by socialists in Liverpool council in the 1980s.

Wales: Don't accept the 'hand you have been dealt'

BILLIONS OF pounds lost from the Welsh budget; hundreds of millions stolen from the NHS, university education, further education, housing and local government with 30,000 jobs put at risk. But, shrugging their shoulders, the Labour/Plaid Cymru (PC) Welsh Assembly government meekly passed the Con-Dems' devastation of public services onto working-class people in Wales.

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales

Hundreds of firefighters and supported housing workers waited outside the Senedd (Assembly building) as the Labour/PC coalition presented the Welsh budget on 17 November. Tens of thousands of public sector workers in Wales live in fear for their jobs, worried if they will be able to keep their houses and concerned about the effects on service users.

The Welsh government is slashing spending on services by 10% and presenting it as some kind of victory. Education and local government will be cut by about 7.5%, so will the NHS in Wales where no new hospitals will be built before 2014. The Welsh Assembly elected to pass the buck for the cuts onto the Con-Dems, constantly bemoaning "the hand we have been dealt" but is very relaxed about passing the cuts onto Welsh communities.

Wales is suffering greater cuts than any of the UK nations. The Welsh economy's reliance on government jobs means that it will already be hit hard. But the Welsh Assembly is also receiving the biggest budget cuts of any of the devolved assemblies. This is on top of the £300 million underfunding of Wales identified by the Holtham Commission that looked into the Welsh Assembly's finances.

But instead of launching a campaign to demand fair funding and the return of the billions lost over the past ten years through the iniquitous Barnett formula (that allocates public services spending to governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the Welsh Assembly is passing on the cuts to Welsh communities.

The Welsh government proudly declared that funding to schools will not be cut but annual spending is already £500 per pupil lower in Wales than in England. And there was no mention of retaining EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance), a vital income for FE students. This will drive thousands of Welsh students out of education, as it will elsewhere.

A socialist leadership in the Welsh Assembly would present a budget based on the pressing needs of working class people in Wales rather than the demands of the millionaire cabinet in Westminster.

The announcement of cuts in university funding and its effect on fees, due at a later date, is widely expected to abolish the £2,000 a year student grant.

Incredibly, the Wales TUC leaders welcomed the budget that will sack thousands of their members. The PCS civil service union estimates the budget puts at risk 30,000 jobs. But TUC leaders support the Labour leadership rather than defend their own members' livelihoods.

The Tories and Liberal Democrats

criticised cuts to the NHS in Wales demanding instead "efficiency savings" and more cuts to the culture budget, as if these could fill the gap in NHS funding. These criticisms are hypocritical - their parties in Westminster cut funding to all services. But the NHS in Wales is already struggling and in desperate need of greater funding, not a 7.6% cut.

Socialist Party Wales is supporting and initiating anti-cuts campaigns across Wales to resist all the cuts, including those carried out by the Assembly coalition and by Labour-led and Plaid-led councils. For example activists brought together a new campaign after Rhondda Cynon Taff Labour council threatened to sack its entire workforce unless it accepts cuts in pay and conditions.

We call for the Assembly government to refuse to carry out any cuts on the Con-Dem government's behalf. A socialist leadership in the Welsh Assembly would present a budget based on the pressing needs of working class people in Wales rather than the demands of the millionaire cabinet in Westminster.

It would launch a mass campaign to resist the cuts and demand the return of the billions stolen from the Welsh budget by successive Westminster governments over the past years. It would work with the trade union movement across Britain to mobilise millions of public sector workers, service users and private sector workers threatened with unemployment in a mass campaign of civil disobedience to resist the cuts, including using industrial action.

Just one socialist council in Liverpool in the 1980s was able to force the brutal Thatcher government to finance significant reforms in the city. A mass campaign mobilising working people in Wales could defend jobs and services rather than meekly pass them on.



...now workers must hurt the government through mass protests and strikes.
photo SP Wales

Scotland must take 'Liverpool road'

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP) government has unveiled the biggest cuts to public spending ever seen in Scotland in its planned budget for 2011. Without even pretending to show resistance to the Con-Dem government's savage cuts, SNP ministers have proposed cuts of £1.2 billion from April 2011.

Philip Stott
Socialist Party Scotland

The impact of these cuts on public-sector workers and working-class communities is stark and severe. All pay controlled by the Scottish government is to be frozen for those earning over £21,000 a year - in effect, a pay cut. Those on less than £21,000 will get a paltry £250 rise. The local authority employers have already imposed three years of pay cuts, supported by all the main parties - including the SNP.

The SNP budget plans huge, deep cuts in higher and further education of 12% - £200 million. Transport, housing, schools, social work and civil service functions will all



On the STUC 23 October march in Edinburgh against public spending cuts in Scotland. photo Ray Smith

see major reductions in spending. On top of this the SNP also demanded, as part of their budget, a 3% efficiency savings target across the public sector in Scotland - these are nothing more than further cuts of £800 million.

Local councils across Scotland will face real term cuts of 4% from April. This will lead to deep cuts in jobs and services that working-class communities rely on.

The SNP has abandoned its so-

called 'opposition' to PFI/PPP-type privatisation schemes and will bring in £2.5 billion in private finance for building projects in schools, hospitals and other infrastructure projects. This is despite the huge burdens that these schemes put on the public sector in repayment to the already bulging pockets of the banks and private construction companies.

Even the NHS, whose workers now face a wage freeze from April,

will see cuts in spending when the costs of inflation are factored in.

While the SNP buckled and proposed these huge cuts package, Labour welcomed the pay freeze and fully accepted the need for cuts. None of the establishment parties are prepared to lift a finger to defend jobs, pay or public services.

The trade unions must respond to the attacks on their members' pay and jobs and our public services. An urgent council of war should be or-

ganised involving the public sector unions to prepare for coordinated mass action, including preparing for a one-day public sector strike as early in 2011 as practicable.

The trade unions should demand that elected councillors and MSPs (members of Scotland's parliament) refuse to make the cuts and instead set needs budgets that protect jobs and services. This should be backed up by the building of a mass campaign to demand a return of the £3.3 billion stolen from Scottish public services by the Con-Dem government in the spending review in October.

A Scottish anti-cuts alliance will be launched in January that aims to unite the local anti-cuts campaigns and trade unions to assist in building the campaign.

The vast majority of our spineless politicians will not take the 'Liverpool road' and refuse to make the cuts. That's why we need to also build a political voice for workers, communities and trade unionists. Socialist Party Scotland is taking part in discussions to prepare a left, anti-cuts coalition to challenge for the Scottish elections in May 2011.