

## the Socialist

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# NSSN anti-cuts conference

## Trade unionists to debate the way forward

IN THE last days of 2010 Vince Cable cavorted on the dance floor, George Osborne gambolled on the ski slopes and other MPs sipped champagne while working class lives burned.

By Christmas Eve 87,374 workers at 107 UK councils had been informed that their jobs were under threat. Many councils delayed sending out their notices until later. The GMB union listed social workers, school dinner ladies, meals on wheels providers, refuse collectors, youth workers, and home helps among those under threat.

The latest jobless figures showed that official unemployment reached 2.5 million in the three months to October with this increase almost entirely down to public sector job losses.

Students had a few weeks off to contemplate their futures - what options remain after millionaire MPs voted for a trebling of university fees, an extinguishing of the Education Maintenance Allowance and the jobs market shrinks further.

Public services face annihilation. Mark Thomas tweeted that "there are more UK libraries closing than there are days in the year". Hospital services are being picked off. Benefits are on the chopping board.

But this is a weak coalition. Education minister Michael Gove was forced to execute a u-turn over plans to end a book service for children after complaints flooded in. Imagine how these Con-Dem bully-boys and girls will respond when they feel the hot breath of the organised working class on their backs!

And the holiday period also showed that the cuts will not be

meekly accepted. Bin workers are fighting back in Birmingham. Over 3,000 marched against the threatened sell-off of the Forest of Dean on 3 January.

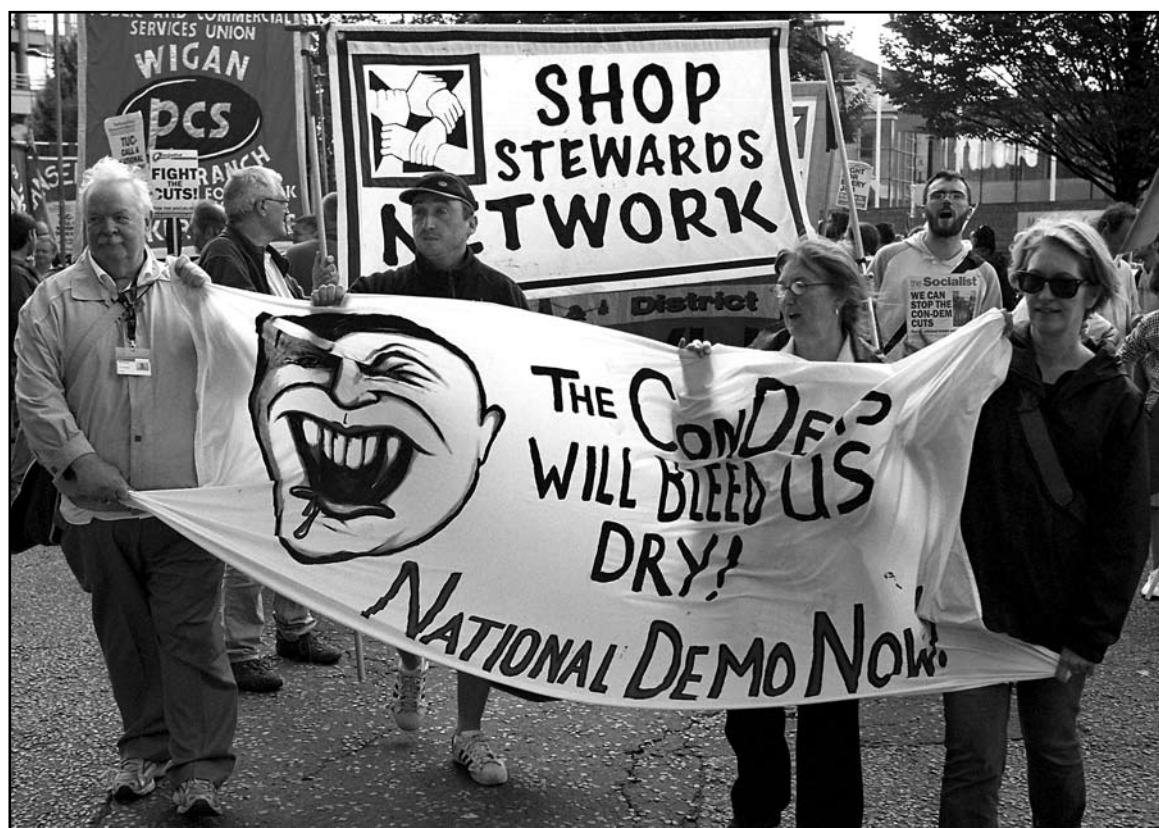
The new leader of Unite, Britain's biggest union, Len McCluskey, has called for the unions to link up with the students and the anti-cuts campaigns across the country. Unlike the leadership of unions such as public sector union Unison, it is McCluskey and the leaders of the RMT, PCS and POA who are "cutting with the grain of the real new politics" as Seumas Milne put it in the Guardian.

These unions have also lent their support to the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), the union rank and file body founded by the RMT transport union in 2007. The NSSN is active locally, regionally and nationally, pulling together workers in struggle. It has organised annual national conferences involving hundreds of trade unionists.

The NSSN, a workplace-based organisation, says not one job or one service should be cut. Never has there been a greater need for coordinated action. As workers, students and campaigners contemplate the new year, thousands will have found themselves politicised by their experiences in 2010 and asking how can we beat this government.

On Saturday 22 January many of those along with hundreds of experienced activists will attend an extraordinary conference of the NSSN to debate the best way to build the anti-cuts movement and to defeat the coalition government.

All anti-cuts campaigns, trade union branches, trades councils and workplace organisations are invited



National Shop Stewards Network members marching against the Con-Dem cuts.

photo Paul Mattsson

to send delegates and visitors.

Linda Taaffe, NSSN secretary, says: "Let's make a start in thrashing out a real strategy for action in the struggle to create a force that can defeat this vicious, cobbled-together, millionaire government. If we defeated Margaret Thatcher, the iron lady, on the poll tax, we can do the same to Tory boot boys Cameron and Clegg!"

### Fight public sector cuts! Defend public services!

**Saturday 22 January 2011 - 11.30am to 3.30pm**

South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London NW1 1RG

[www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)

email: [info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net)

# A real strategy to fight the cuts

The following open letter has been sent to Joe Anderson, leader of Liverpool City Council, by members of the 1983-87 group of 47 surcharged councillors.

Dear Joe,

We note in your declarations that you claim there is nothing the council can do other than implement the Con-Dem cuts more humanely than government commissioners.

Workers and their families will not notice the difference between you and Tory commissioners, the effect will be the same.

We would suggest that there are several steps you could take as part of a strategy to fight the cuts.

You claim that, in addition to the projected shortfall of £120 million, the government proposes to cut up to a billion pounds over the next four years.

We reject the notion that cuts of such magnitude can be managed without savaging the incomes, employment and living standards of workers.

The alternative strategy we propose is a bold campaigning one, which the city council of 1983-1987 pursued.



Liverpool 47 councillors mobilised support for socialist policies.

The first step should be to use the council's budget reserve, reported in the Echo as £80 million, to maintain current funding levels in areas which the Con-Dem alliance is cutting.

This would buy time for more decisive measures to defeat the cuts. We understand that your figures for

reserves may differ, if so then please explain the situation according to council figures.

In addition you could take Liverpool Direct back in-house thus saving a reported £29 million a year.

Then, as we did in 1983-87, you should work out how much is required to fund the existing council

services in 2011 and pass a budget in line with inflation.

This would no doubt produce a short-fall in the council's income. The amount of the shortfall could be identified, say £50 million.

A campaign could then be launched to oppose the cuts with the specific demand that £50 million be restored to the Liverpool City Council as a means of defending jobs and services.

You could issue a call for all local authorities to embrace the same strategy, and call for support from the local authority trade unions and the wider labour movement, in concert with community organisations which are planning to resist any cuts in their own localities.

If Liverpool makes a courageous stand, this could act as a beacon to other local authorities and campaigning organisations to join the campaign.

If a number of the main local authorities adopted this strategy of refusing to cut jobs and services to compensate for Tory cuts, backed up by a campaign of mass demonstrations and industrial action, the Tories would be compelled to retreat.

Already the magnificent action of the students has created chaos in the ranks of the Lib Dem wing

of the government which, let us remember, is ruling without a popular mandate.

We call on the Labour group to totally reject the cuts and to join, not with the Lib Dems, but with the trade union and labour movement in defending the mass of Liverpool's working people.

It was such a campaigning strategy which resulted in the Thatcher government releasing funds to the city worth some £60 million which allowed us to carry out our electoral promises.

The alternative is a programme of cuts which will devastate the jobs and services which thousands of working families rely on, and signal a return to the dark days which we inherited in 1983.

Those dark days resulted from a catastrophic 65% collapse in the Liverpool economy between the mid-seventies and 1983, made worse by the £30 million which the Tory government cut from Liverpool's rate support grant.

If the Con-Dem cuts are implemented in Liverpool we will see a return of those dark days which we should all campaign to avoid.

Signed: Paul Astbury, Harry Smith, Tony Mulhearn, Alan Fogg, Felicity Dowling, Frank Mills, Tony Rimmer