

Elect working class fighters!

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION



Coventry Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist speaking at a TUSC rally photo Alison Hill

Councillor Dave Nellist

Acting chair, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

On 5 May millions of voters will pass judgement on the Con-Dem coalition in elections to local councils, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. But as all three establishment parties say "cuts are inevitable," the only debate could be over the speed of cuts. Council seats being shuffled between the three main parties will not slow the axing of council jobs, which the GMB union now estimates puts over 170,000 jobs at risk.

Last month in Coventry, for example, Labour brought forward a cuts package that accepted the £38 million reduction in government grants and core funding and sought to cut 500 jobs this year alone. Coventry's Tories proposed an amendment accepting the total amount to be cut, but varying the detail by £1.5 million.

The main parties accepted 100% of the austerity, but argued about 4% of the detail.

We need councillors who refuse to implement cuts in jobs and services. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), established in 2010, with the Socialist Party's full support, (see right) is organising a challenge in many towns in May's local council elections.

That challenge will bring together socialists, trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to argue against cutting tens of thousands of jobs and massacring essential local services.

The May elections are the chance to elect councillors who could stop many of the cuts being implemented locally. 30 years ago, 20 Labour councils united in a strategy to fight the then Tory government's plans for cuts in local services. Unfortunately today there aren't even 20 Labour councillors on Labour run councils prepared to vote against cuts. So we have to find new councillors we can rely on.

Today's Labour councillors say they can do nothing until a general election in 2015. By that time, if the cuts package is not successfully challenged, councils will be spending £8

billion a year less on local services, a cut of almost 28% in four years.

But councillors do have a choice. And electing even a single radical councillor could make a difference, provided they used that position (as we try to do in Coventry) to help organise community campaigns and trade unionists to fight against the cuts.

TUSC councillors would pledge to oppose all cuts in council jobs, services, pay and conditions. We will campaign against the idea that 'some cuts' are necessary.

We refuse to allow divisions between council staff, service users and communities, which are inevitable unless we oppose all cuts. TUSC councillors would vote against privatisation of council services, or the transfer of services to 'social enterprises' or 'arm's-length' management organisations.

28 28% cuts in four years

TUSC councillors would seek to use all the legal powers open to councillors to delay or obstruct government policies which lead to cuts or the transfer of public services to private bodies. For example, councils could refer local NHS decisions for further scrutiny.

They could initiate referenda, public consultations (for example of parents over the creation of divisive academy schools) and commissions as part of a wider campaign.

Councils with housing stock, or with representatives on a social landlord's board, could refuse to use the government's proposed fixed term tenancies, oppose raising social rents up to 80% of market rents and make a policy not to evict tenants in arrears due to housing benefit cuts.

TUSC supporters will work with every anti-cuts campaign, and fight the implementation of the cuts agenda, library by library, swimming pool by swimming pool, youth club

by youth club. It's one thing to pass a budget, it's another to implement it!

We will support working class communities in those fights. But out of many such campaigns will emerge new TUSC candidates for those struggles themselves to challenge the big three parties in future elections.

Campaigners in many towns successfully challenged the main parties over issues such as PFI hospitals and the closure of comprehensive schools in favour of academy schools. In Kidderminster, Barrow in Furness, Preston, Wigan, Walsall, and Wellingborough independents, socialists and trade unionists have captured seats. In Coventry, Lewisham and Huddersfield, Socialist Party members have won seats.

These small but significant victories show the possibilities of a wider challenge. And whilst TUSC's initial results may be modest, breakthroughs cannot be ruled out.

At the very least, candidates standing on an open anti-cuts platform will pull the debate towards the left - and away from the overlapping agenda of the big three parties.

Socialist policies

TUSC was set up last year with the backing of fighting trade unionists, including RMT general secretary Bob Crow, leading national officers of the PCS civil service union, and Nina Franklin, vice president of the National Union of Teachers.

TUSC is a federal 'umbrella' coalition with an agreed core policy statement. Its core policies include opposition to public spending cuts and privatisation, student grants not fees, the repeal of the anti-trade union laws, and the clear socialist commitment to "bringing into democratic public ownership the major companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment".

• See those detailed policies on the coalition's website - www.tusc.org.uk.

Nominations to stand in May's council elections have to be submitted to your local council by 4 April.

Organisations and groups that want to be involved in the 2011 TUSC local council election challenge should urgently contact TUSC at: electioncoalition@btinternet.com

We're backing TUSC



Bob Crow photo Paul Mattsson

"The Tories, Lib Dems and Labour all support cuts, privatisation and the anti-union laws. They all want us to pay for a crisis we didn't create.

"The bankers pay themselves millions in bonuses and big business taxes go uncollected while our jobs and servic-

es are savaged. These cuts are unnecessary and can be defeated. We need to build an alternative. That's why I'm helping to build TUSC."

Bob Crow

RMT general secretary and TUSC national steering committee

Labour councillors in Cumbria hold up placards opposing the cuts on demonstrations then put the placards down, pop into county hall and vote through the cuts in an unholy alliance with... the Cumbrian Tories!

Labour in government introduced tuition fees, brought privatisation into our NHS, developed expensive and wasteful PFI schemes, extended rail privatisation and privatised Tyne and Wear Metro, pushed privatisation across our key public services, made Tory anti trade union laws even worse, pushed council housing into the hands of private landlords, handed over billions of taxpayers' money to greedy, bonus grabbing bankers and took us into an illegal war.

We need a socialist alternative to all this rubbish when it comes to the forthcoming elections - that alliance is being built now. It's called the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - it's getting my support.

Craig Johnston

RMT national executive member Manchester and North West of England

It's clear what the government's policy is on the NHS and that is complete privatisation and the biggest financial cuts for 60 years.

The consequences will be a massive reduction in NHS services, closure of wards, hospitals, and mass redundancies.

The employers also intend to launch an unprecedented attack on health

workers' wages, conditions and living standards while they seek to establish a low paid, low skilled, exploited workforce.

Unfortunately, the last Labour government also pursued policies that undermined the founding principles of the NHS, through PFI, private treatment centres and laying the foundations for a health care market.

None of the mainstream parties is willing to defend the NHS or its staff so it is vital an alternative is put in the upcoming elections.

That is why health workers should consider standing as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates; standing on a platform of opposing all NHS cuts and privatisation.

Roger Davey

Secretary, Wiltshire and Avon Health Unison branch

Suraj Shah, an 18-year old Socialist Party member is to be a TUSC candidate in Leicester's city council elections as part of the Vote Against Cuts in Leicester alliance.

Suraj's mother Reishma, who works for the council, is threatened with redundancy.

He said: "I was already considering standing, but when my mum said the council are thinking about making her redundant I knew I had to stick up for her and many like her.

"I am out there to tell the people they do not have to accept the savage cuts. Together we can make a difference and say no to this madness."



Suraj Shah (centre) photo Paul Mattsson

TUSC election campaign launch meetings

Coventry

Sunday 3 April, 3pm
Concert room, Charterhouse club,
David Road, Stoke, CV1 2BW
Speakers include:

Alex Gordon - RMT president

Dave Nellist - Coventry Socialist Party councillor

There is a canvassing/leafleting session for Rob Windsor, the Socialist

Party candidate in St Michaels ward before the rally. meeting at 11.30 at the Charterhouse club if you would like to help the campaign.

Lincoln

Tuesday 29 March, 7pm
St Mary-le-Wigford's Church, St Mary's Street, next to Lincoln train station