

London Socialist Party public meeting 'We're on the move to fight the cuts'

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

"The smiles on people's faces said it all: We're on the move - we don't have to take the cuts!" Martin Powell-Davies, a member of the national executive of the National Union of Teachers, summed up the mood of workers on the 26 March TUC demo.

120 trade unionists, campaigners and young people, inspired by the march, turned out to discuss and debate the way forward at an excellent London Socialist Party meeting on Thursday 31 March.

The first platform speaker was Joe Simpson, assistant secretary of the POA prison officers' union. Joe introduced himself by saying that he was not speaking in a 'personal capacity' but on behalf of the 34,000 members of the POA.

Battle lines are being drawn in the prison service as the Con-Dems plan to sell off public prisons, with Labour backing them up. The prison unions - POA and civil servants' PCS union - are forced to defend a public service, jobs and conditions.

Joe reported that the POA has been attacked for being one of the "unreconstructed unions that needs to join the 21st century" but made it absolutely clear that his is a fighting union. He thanked the Socialist Party for its support.

Vik Chechi from Tower Hamlets,

fresh from being elected as a Unison branch secretary, spoke (in a personal capacity) on the struggles of young people against unemployment and education cuts. Vik explained that "the country's not broke - it's awash with cash". It's just that the top 1% have got it! He invited everyone to support Youth Fight for Jobs' Jarrow anniversary march in October.

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www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, was the final platform speaker. In response to the "cold cruelty of the British ruling class", the working class has marched. Peter described how the effect of the 26 March demo on the working class, in terms of raising confidence to fight the cuts, was like a stone dropped in a huge pond with eddies still feeding out. But the question on everyone's mind is 'what now?'

The general council of the Trades Union Congress leadership must meet urgently to discuss how a 24-hour general strike, uniting public and private sector workers, can be organised. Martin had previously pointed out how the widespread



The London Socialist Party meeting discussed 'what next?' after the 26 March demonstration of over 500,000 people photo Paul Mattsson

attack on pensions provides trade unions with an issue around which coordinated strike action can be organised, despite the anti-trade union laws.

Peter added that if united strike

action is not immediately possible, then a midweek demonstration in support of action by individual unions is urgent.

Speakers from the floor in the discussion included campaigners and

trade unionists from Unison, PCS, RMT, and Unite. 40 of those attending were either new members of the Socialist Party or not yet members, with five joining and agreeing their membership dues on the night.

Successful Stafford Socialist Party launch East Midlands: building the party among women

Josie Shelley
Staffordshire Socialist Party

The newly formed Stafford branch of the Socialist Party held its first public meeting on Tuesday 29 March. The well attended 'Save the NHS' meeting included students, health workers and disabled people.

The first speaker was Dan, a student from Stafford college, who explained how the increase in tuition fees and the cuts to education would affect both school students and those in further education. He also highlighted recent reports that five secondary schools in Stafford were applying for 'academy' status to take effect in September.

Next on the platform was Staf-

ford GMB union member Rob, who had participated in the formation of 'North Staffs Against Cuts' in Stoke. He explained why the cuts were not necessary and how a socialist planned economy would work. He also gave an example of how jobs could be created through the mass building of much needed social housing.

We then heard from student nurse Matt, who is also a youth organiser in his local Unison health branch. He highlighted problems at both Stafford Hospital and University Hospital of North Staffs (UHNS). Matt explained how 'saving money' resulted in poor care and subsequent deaths at Stafford hospital that have been highlighted in local and national news.

Matt also mentioned a report at UHNS which stated that there were too many nurses and too many operations! As a consequence of this, the hospital is planning to axe almost 1,400 jobs. He said that privatisation meant the drive for profit would result, not only in poor care for the patients, but also in reduced pay and poor conditions for staff.

A lively and informative debate took place with the speakers on the platform answering many questions from the floor on such issues as the need to fight ALL cuts rather than saving one service at the expense of another. Supporting anti-cuts candidates in local elections was also discussed as well as the most effective way to help organise a Stafford anti-cuts campaign.

Yvonne Powell
Nottingham Socialist Party

East Midlands Socialist Party held a women's meeting around International Women's Day. A short film clip of women involved in the Egyptian revolution that overthrew dictator Hosni Mubarak in February made an inspiring start.

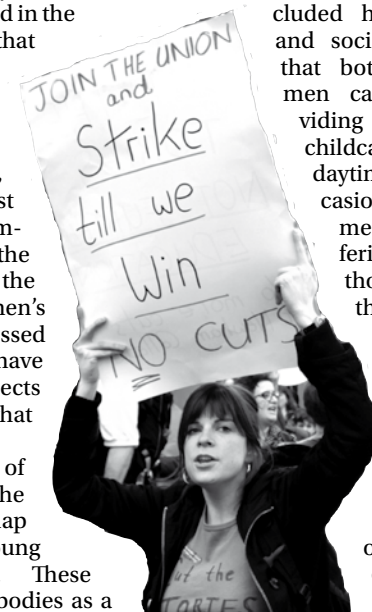
Eleanor Donne, from the Socialist Women steering committee, introduced the first session about the history of the women's movement. We discussed how women's lives have changed; what aspects had got better and what had got worse.

Among a number of issues, we looked at the detrimental effect of lap dancing clubs on young vulnerable women. These clubs treat women's bodies as a

commodity to be exploited. A survey in London showed that rape and sexual violence increased in an area where these clubs were opened.

Ways to help women join and become activists in the Socialist Party were discussed. These included holding 'women and socialism' meetings that both women and men can attend, providing support with childcare, organising daytime meetings, occasional women-only meetings and offering lifts home to those who require them.

We looked at ways to build the party in particular workplaces. The public sector, with its high proportion of female workers, was one possible focus.



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	£ target	£ received	January-March 2011	Deadline: 8 April
Eastern	1,200	2,346	█	█
Southern	1,200	2,134	█	█
East Midlands	1,550	2,308	█	█
Wales	2,300	3,019	█	█
West Midlands	2,100	2,664	█	█
North West	1,200	1,443	█	█
South West	1,400	1,574	█	█
London	6,100	6,725	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	3,004	█	█
Northern	600	621	█	█
South East	1,000	636	█	█
England & Wales	3,450	1,032	█	█
TOTAL	25,000	27,511	█	█