

Jobs crisis - 'We can't afford capitalism'!

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

"Decent jobs and decent pay!" That was the modest demand of the young people on the Jarrow Youth March for Jobs. But that is exactly what the Con-Dems and their profit system are incapable of providing.

November's unemployment figures will see a further damning increase to the already terrible situation – more than one million young people unemployed, more than one million women unemployed.

A new report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development predicts "a slow, painful contraction in the jobs market". The Con-Dems' promise that the private sector would take up the slack of public sector job cuts lies in tatters.

But this is far from inevitable. The Jarrow marchers had huge support for their demand for massive investment in a programme of public works to create jobs. The Con-Dems insist there is no money. Rubbish!

Following Liam Fox's inglorious resignation there was 'relief' in big business circles when Tory multi-millionaire Philip Hammond confirmed that as the new defence secretary he would safeguard the Trident nuclear weapon replacement programme.

The submarines will cost £25 billion to design and construct. It's estimated that it would cost £18 billion to create a million climate jobs.



Youth Fight for Jobs activists on the final leg of their epic Jarrow to London jobs march photo Paul Mattsson

Big business is hoarding £60 billion rather than investing it in developing production. The PCS civil service union estimates that £120 billion a year is stolen from the public in unpaid taxes by the rich.

Enormous resources could be made available by nationalising the banking system, utilities and major corporations under working class control and management, as demanded by the Socialist Party. Of course we could pay compensation – on the basis of proven need. Then,

instead of slashing them, all our public services could be expanded – what better use is there for the wealth in society?

Of course, the Con-Dems prefer to point the finger and blame working class people for being lazy and refusing to take jobs. But the facts belie their claims.

Over 4,000 applied for 187 Tesco jobs in Hampshire; 4,500 sought 557 Primark posts in Edinburgh and 80,000 went for 8,000 Christmas postal jobs.

The public sector pension strike on 30 November will be a day of protest against all the cuts.

The Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs are calling on students and unemployed young people to strike and march alongside workers. It must also be a day to talk about how we fight for an alternative to the present system.

As a Jarrow marcher said: "if capitalism can't afford to give us a decent job, we can't afford capitalism – fight for socialism".

Riot cops assault Occupy protesters

image not available

Riot police in the USA attacked, arrested and evicted people from the anti-capitalist camps in New York, Portland and in Oakland, California.

The police claim that the clearances were forced by concerns over 'health and safety'. In reality, the protests were an increasing source of embarrassment and irritation to the fat cats – the very target of the peaceful protests.

The Occupy Wall Street encampment was established in September to protest against corporate greed, bank bailouts, widening wealth inequality, the pro-big business political parties and many other burning social issues.

The Wall Street tent protest imitated similar movements that had developed in Spain and Greece and which in turn had been inspired by the pro-democracy, anti-establishment movements in north Africa and the Middle East earlier this year.

Although the police action was not unexpected, it is bitterly ironic given Barack Obama's eventual wooing of the pro-democracy, anti-regime movements in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya – part of the so-called Arab Spring. Obama in October also expressed "sympathy" for opposition to inequality.

The organised US labour movement should rally in support of the evicted protesters and use its strength to help re-establish the camps by mass demonstrations and, where possible, strikes.

US socialist Emily McArthur spoke to a 1,000-strong audience at the Socialist Party's 'Socialism' event in London recently, where she brought greetings from the Occupy Boston protest (see video on www.socialistparty.org.uk).

See www.socialistalternative.org for updates

Also - 'We need jobs not cuts' 16-23 November week of action

Stop the government austerity juggernaut

Simon Carter

Speaking on the BBC's Politics Show business secretary Vince Cable hypocritically reiterated the government's line that "the most vulnerable people in society should be protected in these very difficult conditions." Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg had earlier said the government would "not balance the books on the backs of the poor."

Odd then that ministers are considering ending the rise in benefits linked to inflation and threatening

to cut benefits to the working poor if claimants don't work longer hours.

What the government ignores is the fact that many workers (a record 1.25 million workers) have been forced to work part-time because they cannot find full-time jobs.

Chancellor George Osborne, according to the Financial Times, is looking into only increasing benefits in line with average earnings growth (around 2.5%) instead of inflation (5.2% in September), or simply freezing payments.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies calculates that freezing all benefits and

pensions would save the government £10 billion and linking benefits to wage increases would save £5 billion.

Clearly the government is looking to hammer the poor to plug the budget deficit caused by bank bailouts and shrinking tax revenues.

In 2013, under new government rules, those working 16 hours a week who can currently claim housing and childcare benefits without further conditions, will be expected to work 35 hours a week and raise their weekly earning to £212.80 or lose benefits.

Single parents with children between five and 13 years will be forced to raise their working hours to 20 a week, with the target of earning £120.

These changes will make the current welfare regime more draconian than most countries in Europe and the USA.

Given the high levels of unemployment due to the government's cuts and the economic downturn inevitably many more vulnerable and poor people will become victims of the government's austerity juggernaut.

Fast news

Pollution ignored

According to the parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee inquiry report published last week, the government has "failed to get to grips" with the human cost of air pollution.

The latest figures suggest that air pollution contributed to the premature deaths of 200,000 people in Britain in 2008. And that treating victims of this pollution for lung and heart diseases costs up to £20 billion every year.

Studies also show that people who live near the busiest roads, typically those on lower incomes, have reduced life expectancies.

Despite these shocking statistics neither the Department of Transport nor the environment ministry, Defra, mention air quality in their business plans.

The government is also failing to meet agreed EU targets to limit pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. These two pollutants typically come from burning coal and from exhaust emissions.

Despite contravening EU laws on air pollution the government has avoided penalties by continually asking to extend the deadline for compliance. Most recently Defra has asked to extend the deadline to 2015.

Under agreed laws pollution levels of particulate matter must not exceed the legal limit by more than 35 days in a year. Yet by April this year it was reported that air pollution in London alone had exceeded this limit.

Sure Start cuts

Child poverty is likely to get worse due to cuts in Sure Start centres. Naomi Eisenstadt, former government adviser to the flagship scheme for children, has said that ministers "couldn't guarantee anything" for 3,500 centres.

The government has washed its hands of responsibility for these cuts saying that local authorities have enough cash to support Sure Start schemes.

However, some 124 children's centres have been closed since May 2010 and budgets have been slashed in 87% of local authorities in England this year. On average, real term budgets have been cut by 11% this year and are expected to be cut by 21% next year. The largest cut was in Hull where the budget was reduced by 56%. Eisenstadt reckons that the neediest and most disadvantaged families will be the hardest hit by these cuts.

Guinea pigs

Drug trials in India, funded by western pharmaceutical firms, on victims of the Bhopal disaster, have led to the deaths of 14 patients. The trials were carried out, without the patients' knowledge, at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital. This is the country's only hospital dedicated to treating the surviving 500,000 people affected by the deadly gas leak at the Union Carbide factory in December 1984 which killed up to 25,000 people. More than 1,500 drug trials involving 150,000 patients have started across India since 2009 and at least 1,730 patients died between 2007 and 2010.