

“The genie is out of the bottle”

London National Shop Stewards Network

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party

Coming straight from the fantastic 30 November public sector strike demo, the mood at the packed-out London National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) meeting was sky high after such a historic day.

The meeting was opened by Martin Powell-Davies of the NUT teachers' union NEC (personal capacity), and Rob Williams, chair of the NSSN.

Cheers greeted the many uplifting reports from picket lines and the demo. Retired public sector worker Mike Cleverley - and apparently his pension isn't very gold-plated - reported on conversations he had overheard on the tube going to the London demo: “The genie is out of the bottle.” The front page of the free Metro declared: “This is class war.” Glenn Kelly, a witch-hunted Unison trade union member, described the new generation “blooded” in the day's strike.



photo Paul Mattsson

far too fast' and a Labour rosette?"

Alex Gordon, president of the RMT transport union, moved the meeting with his report of the strike by RMT members in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary - a massive picket on the main naval dockyard, where the knot of history was tied when they were joined by veteran seafarers. To applause, he argued for united union action and for linking together public and private sector workers.

Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, raised the sights of the meeting, showing how the depth of the economic crisis means not only the necessity of a massive united fight by the trade unions, but also the need for a socialist programme and a mass working class alternative to New Labour.

The meeting pledged support for a prison worker who had joined PCS in order to join the picket line at his

prison, and was later informed he had been sacked.

Liverpool

A Liverpool National Shop Stewards Network meeting followed the city's strike rally on 30 November. The meeting attracted over 80 workers, leaving standing room only.

Chaired by Dave Walsh, Unite Liverpool city council branch secretary, the speakers were Darren Ireland, RMT North West and North Wales regional council secretary, Dermot Finn, a blacklisted construction worker, and Tony Mulhearn. Tony was a member of the 'Liverpool 47' in the 1983-87 Labour council that refused to make cuts and forced £60 million of extra funding out of the then-Tory government.

Roy Farrar
Liverpool Socialist Party

Find out more at
shopstewards.net

There was a serious discussion about the next steps the NSSN needs to fight for. This includes keeping up the pressure inside unions such as Unison, whose current leadership will need to be pushed to continue the struggle.

A mental health nurse described brilliant picket lines built by ordinary members despite the efforts of the local union bureaucracy to prevent a proper strike in her area. A Unison member described how a regional officer had told him he couldn't wear a Unison tabard and carry a Socialist Party placard! “Is it better to hold a placard saying ‘Too

Socialist MEP supports public sector strike

Socialist Party (Ireland) MEP Paul Murphy spoke at the European Parliament in support of the 30 November public sector strike in Britain:

“David Cameron described today's massive public sector strike as a damp squib. Is it any wonder that this prime minister of a cabinet of millionaires that rules for the millionaires seeks to undermine this massive display of strength by working people?”

Two million people on strike across Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, and a movement that demonstrates the power to defeat the government's austerity policies. I've visited picket lines across Belfast today, and attended a mass rally of 10,000 people. The

message from the strikers was very clear: enough is enough. They will not work longer and pay more for reduced pensions. They will not accept further attacks on wages, further attacks on conditions, and the further cutbacks on our public services that are driven by the government and the assembly. The outstanding socialist James Connolly proclaimed: ‘The great only appear great because we are on our knees, let us arise!’ Today the working class has begun to stand up and the potential power is very clear. This has to be the start of building a movement that can win. That means naming a date for further public sector strike action and striving to spread action to the private sector.”



Socialist MEP Paul Murphy

Why I joined the Socialist Party: “I am the 99%”

I was never very interested in politics. It just seemed like a waste of time, and I was certain nothing would ever change, that it didn't matter at all who won an election because the same decisions would be made either way, and the people would always lose.

So I put my head down, feigned a smile, and just got on with trying to survive being unemployed. I buried myself in fantasy. My own imagination seemed a much more appealing world than this one, than having to actually face up to how powerless I was feeling.

However, I was checking the latest memes in mid-August - mostly meaningless viral videos and ‘Photoshopped’ images online. I came across a new meme, people holding up signs where they had written all their problems and ended it with “I am the 99%”. I realised other people had the same

issues I did. The same concerns, the same problems, some of them worse than mine.

So when Occupy Wall Street started, I was feverishly checking related websites several times a day. When Occupy London Stock Exchange started, I was bemoaning that I couldn't afford to travel to London. When Occupy Leeds started, I was there.

And it was at Occupy Leeds that I started thumbing through a copy of the Socialist paper. I started talking to people who were there, who happened to be socialists as well. I was fascinated, and starting to feel a tiny glimmer of hope. So I decided to join and see what I can do to help.

I am the 99%, so it only seemed logical and natural to join the Socialist Party.

Rhiannon Wright
Leeds City Socialist Party



Manchester socialists look to action after N30

Socialist Party branches in Greater Manchester held a successful public meeting on Monday 5 December with Judy Beishon of the party's executive committee speaking on “After N30, how we can defeat the Con-Dems”.

We evaluated the strike on 30 November, its importance and the perspectives which follow from that. Discussion included how pri-

vate sector workers can be drawn into future action, and how to build a political alternative to New Labour.

The meeting raised over £80 in the fighting fund collection. Several people said at the end of the meeting that they are interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Hugh Caffrey
North West Socialist Party

Birmingham shoppers support fight against cuts

Socialist Party members in Birmingham built on the success of the 30 November strikes by holding four campaigning stalls in different areas of the city.

On one of the stalls we had to go to the local library to photocopy more petition sheets against NHS cuts.

When the librarian saw what they were for, she let us off the usual printing charge!

We sold over 100 copies of the Socialist and raised £60 for the fighting fund, including two donations of £5. All in all a successful day out!

Nick Hart
Birmingham Socialist Party

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	October-December 2011	Deadline 6 January
Eastern	1,200	2,469	█	█
East Midlands	1,550	2,390	█	█
South West	1,400	2,021	█	█
North West	1,200	1,570	█	█
South East	1,000	1,252	█	█
West Midlands	2,100	2,103	█	█
London	6,100	5,282	█	█
Wales	2,300	1,848	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	2,079	█	█
Southern	1,200	766	█	█
Northern	600	292	█	█
England & Wales	3,450	2,916	█	█
TOTAL	25,000	24,994	█	█