

## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Potty to think Ed's Red**

I was amused to read that Harry Potter actor Daniel Radcliffe has thrown his support behind Ed Miliband and New Labour, because "I think he's genuinely left-wing, and will act as such if he gets in!"

I can only assume that Daniel must have waved his magic wand to transform Miliband into a great socialist fighter. Either that or he's living on another planet, and hasn't noticed 'Red Ed' attacking teachers and government workers taking strike action against savage cuts to their pensions, or supporting the brutal Con-Dem cutbacks to benefits for the poorest in UK society.

Not that any of this would really affect Radcliffe himself, who is sitting on a £20 million fortune in any case.

A "genuinely left-wing" party would fight the government's cuts, and stand up for ordinary working class people against a capitalist class determined to make us pay for their crisis. New Labour isn't that, and we've got to build one.

**Joe Fathallah, Cardiff**

**Geeks bearing gifts**

Liverpool Labour council leader Joe Anderson's justification for his recent decision to run for mayor without a referendum is that a Con-Dem minister has promised to gift a sum of £130 million to the city providing he dispenses with the democratic process.

With apologies to Troy's Trojan Horse, Mr Anderson should beware of geeks bearing gifts (the definition of the word geek is "an obsessive enthusiast" - for cuts?). With reckless haste an array of candidates is being presented as possible contenders, including Mr Anderson, who is already being endorsed by the media as a shoo-in

No decision on the issue should take place until the principle of having a mayor is fully debated by the people of the city; and a referendum should follow.

Mr Anderson, rather than engaging in this self-deluded exercise, should direct his energies to fighting the cuts and providing a real leadership for Liverpool's working people.

However, in the event of this abuse of democracy being endorsed by a supine council and he is wafted to power, will Mr Anderson use the promised £130 million to reverse the cuts which are ravaging the community?

**Tony Mulhearn**

**Personal abuse?**

Joe Anderson has been telling lies yet again about the Liverpool 47 while meekly submitting to Tory cuts. This is somebody who shouted scum at a peaceful protester on his way to meet Tory minister Francis Maude (and not to condemn the cuts).

He also set the police on protesters outside a council meeting implementing vicious cuts because he was called a few names.

Protesters were beaten, brutalised and had police horses driven into them! Several were arrested. One woman was stripped in the cells because she was considered a suicide risk. No doctor confirmed this.

Yet Anderson thinks he's hard done by because of a few personal insults. Anderson says he was attacked outside a council meeting.

Despite video evidence showing he wasn't touched the Liverpool Echo printed his claims without verifying the story. They certainly didn't print any details about police abuse meted out to protesters.

**Mike Hegarty, Garston**

**Sibling rivalry**

I have just read an article by David Miliband in the 'New Statesman'. Everyone knows he was upset at losing to his younger brother as Labour leader and declined to serve in the shadow cabinet.

Now, 18 months later, he has resurfaced and published his vision and suggestions on where Labour should go from here, probably under him. Strange that this should happen when there are many questions being asked about his brother's leadership.



**Miliband the elder - but who's wiser?**

If David M wishes to become Labour leader then perhaps he should challenge for the position through the normal channels, ie put up or shut up. I am sure most Labour supporters don't want to see infighting between Ed M and David M which would only harm their party's chances, and more importantly, be to the detriment of the working class.

If Labour can't sort themselves out, then perhaps its members and voters should start supporting a genuine working class party.

**Lin Black, Swansea**

**Are you content?**

The Chief Executive of the Foundation Trust hospital I work in has sent out a February Team Brief for all staff. After telling us of some interesting new developments, progress on targets and the voluntary redundancy scheme for senior



staff and doctors, it ends: "Imagine...a hospital service designed around you... February will be an intensive month of content enhancement - then an external sales drive begins.

"Priority actions: Be ambitious for 2012."

I've no idea what 'content enhancement' is (but I don't think it means making patients or staff happier). The 'external sales drive' sounds like a bank selling dodgy insurance policies.

Labour and Con-Dem changes are not only removing the N but also the S from the NHS. What will happen to the H? My ambition for 2012 is to build the movement to stop us becoming an even more commercial hospital industry. It needs to be 'priority actions' for all of us.

**A hospital worker**

**Dearer student loans**

Prospective students applying for a university place in 2012/13 will face a new

student loan interest rate of inflation plus 3%. This is in effect another loan increase that flew in under the radar and means we might soon see rates of 8-9%.

I wondered how Ed Lester, head of the Student Loans Company, could sleep at night but when it emerged he stole £40,000 in avoided tax I get the impression that this is business as usual.

There is no apology. The government is only "embarrassed" that it got caught, pointing out that unlike tax evasion, tax avoidance is technically legal.

They claim that if Lester had paid tax, his wage bill would have been increased accordingly!

Clearly protecting their bloated salaries is more important than the £120 billion in evaded and avoided tax that could instead be used to fund free education, jobs and services.

**Ben Golightly**

**Tory hypocrisy...again!**

Last year Lawrence Robertson, Tory MP for Tewkesbury, raised a question in parliament about the £113 million he says is paid to union reps in the public sector and thus falls on the taxpayer.

This figure is now put into perspective by the £500 million which will be paid in bonuses to top managers at RBS, also at taxpayers' expense as we own 80% of it. RBS chief executive Stephen Hester has been paid an estimated £34 million since 2008.

Over the same time only £22 million has been spent ensuring that the minimum wage is enforced. One fat cat has more taxpayers' money than the protection for millions of low paid workers.

Union reps play an invaluable role in making sure laws on pay, conditions, health and safety, by-passed by greedy employers, are enforced.

Obviously Robertson wants to remove workers' protections by taking away the paid time that union reps are entitled to.

The Tories allow massively inflated rewards to their friends and funding cronies. This government cares little about the well-being of working families while allowing the disgusting excesses of rampant market capitalism to continue unabated.

**Shaun Shute, CWU rep, Gloucester**

**Real public transport**

It was good to see the debate on HS2 in the Socialist, especially with short pieces explaining the experience in other countries.

As someone who lives in Leeds, when the present plans are completed I would have three competing methods of travelling to London - using coaches, the existing east coast mainline or the new high speed rail link.

Although I would want to use the high speed rail link, I'm likely to be priced out of doing so.

Therefore it is correct for those such as Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, to argue that such schemes should be brought into public ownership and shouldn't come at the expense of other improvements in public transport.

Rather than allowing public transport to be developed by particular business interests, trade unionists and socialists should develop their own plan for developing transport, including haulage, that takes into account the needs and concerns of working people.

But it should be done under public ownership and democratic workers' control, with affordable fares for all services.

**Iain Dalton, Leeds**

# Readers' comment

## Tory policies hit women hardest

**Helen Ridett**

**L**ouise Mensch, a rich, privileged Tory MP, is trying desperately to reinvent her party as supporters of feminism. But put the microscope on her party's policies and you can see how they create barriers to equal opportunities, especially for working class women.

A big barrier to women's freedom is low income levels leading to poverty. The public sector pay freeze and planned pay cap will impact worst on women as the majority of public sector workers are women.

Ms Mensch expects us to applaud the fact that 80% of the low-est earners, exempted from the pay freeze, are women. But if the Con-Dem government really cared about women's welfare they wouldn't condemn them to poverty pay.

Many public sector workers, again primarily women, are already being displaced or made redundant as the Tories implement their agenda to shrink the welfare state and brutally attack public services.

**Socialist agenda**

Socialists have an agenda of supporting and strengthening the 'welfare state' which not only employs many women, but offers financial safety nets for working class women and our children.

Working class women have no trust funds or rich parents to fall back on in a period of rising unemployment. Tories also attack state provision of health and education that working class people rely on the most.

Tory child support agency reforms propose to charge single parents a fee for arranging support payments. This regressive idea is a blatant attack that will hit single mothers hard.

The ability to control our fertility, also crucial to women's liberation, came under attack by Tory MP Na-



**Mensch - nothing to be smug about**

dine Dorries who campaigned to reduce the legal time limit for abortion. Dorries also proposed that 'independent' abortion providers provide counseling to women seeking a termination. This would have let pro-life and religious backed groups flood the 'market'.

When the Tories talk about 'sustainable funding cycles' for women's services, they want to farm out state provision of services to other sectors including faith groups with an abysmal track record.

This government's accelerated public service cuts also hit working class women and our children with the closure of one o'clock clubs and play schemes which all help to ease the daily task of childcare.

A new report shows that 31% of funding for domestic and sexual violence services has been scrapped by Tory cuts over the last year. So now some women in abusive relationships will remain trapped and may even end up badly injured or dead.

Already these cuts have led to hundreds of vulnerable women being turned away from emergency shelter accommodation and directed to sleep in the Occupy camps, on night buses or in accident and emergency units.

Some Tory MPs talk positively about women's rights but their policies expose the lie that they are feminists.

## Review

## Borgen - politics and crime in Denmark

**Derek McMillan**

The Killing, a Danish TV series interweaving crime drama with political drama was a great success on BBC 4. In the Borgen series, the same producers concentrate on political shenanigans in the Danish parliament.

While not written from a socialist perspective it shows the political elite and the media in bed with each other (quite literally in one strand of the story). The media and political elite seem to live in a comfortable incestuous environment and the one group not heard in this political democracy is... the people.

One episode shows a female prime minister trying to implement a modest reform - a bill calling for 50% of all boardroom appointments to be female. The government would carry out punitive taxation measures against any firm which did not go along with it. Ostensibly feminist, this measure would not benefit the overwhelming majority of Danish women.

If you watch the show, look out



**The 'nice' prime minister**

for media smears used to discredit a minister proposing this measure; a strike of capital aimed at letting big business dictate to the government and more than one rotten compromise.

The Danish Labour Party are present as a comic turn responding to advances by the far right by trying to prove they can be every bit as racist, misogynist and Islamophobic as the fascists!

It is alternately political and personal; sardoniously serious and hilariously funny; foreign and all too familiar! Watch it.