



WE WON'T WORK FOR FREE!

- A day's pay for a day's work – no exceptions
- A mass trade union-led campaign to scrap slave labour schemes

Becci Heagney
East Midlands Youth Fight for Jobs

Workfare? Fair it's certainly not! The bankers help cause the biggest economic crisis in generations and get rewarded with billions. Yet ordinary people, who've already had to pay with cuts, cuts and more cuts, are now being told to work for free.

There are 2.67 million people unemployed and hardly any vacancies. But instead of creating jobs, the government is giving another reward to big business in the form of slave labour.

Massive companies such as McDonald's, Boots and Primark are offering unemployed people the 'opportunity' to work for their benefits. The government assures us that it is voluntary - unless you pull out, in which case, you'll lose your dole!

But the government isn't finding it as easy to exploit us as it would have liked! Tesco, Burger King, Poundland, Matalan, TX Maxx, Waterstones and Sainsbury's have all withdrawn as a wave of protests and occupations spread across the country.

Nearly every day another private

company or charity backs off as the scheme starts to crumble. This campaign was sparked by a Tesco job advert promising a permanent night shift worker pay of 'JSA + expenses'.

Jobseeker's Allowance for under-25s is a measly £53.45 a week. That means nothing to millionaire ministers such as Iain Duncan Smith, who had the audacity to describe those protesting as a "commentating elite" who "belittle and downgrade any opportunity for young people". Isn't that a description of the Tories?

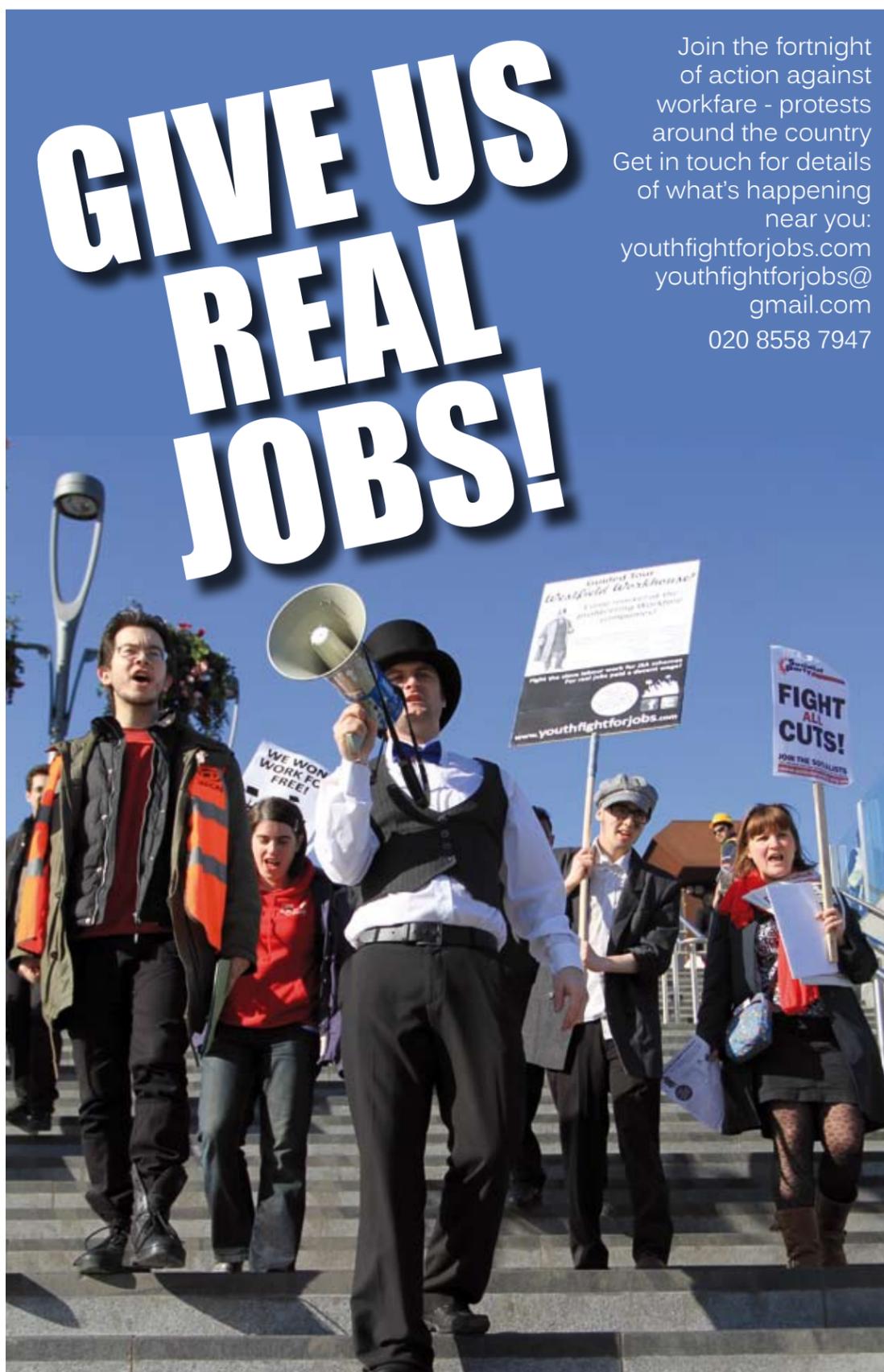
What proof of how rotten capitalism is that in 2012 young people have to demand 'a day's pay for a day's work'? It's not like these companies can't afford it. McDonald's Corporation reported profits of \$1.38 billion last year!

If people want work experience, it should be fully paid with a guaranteed job at the end and it should provide useful experience. The Work Programme is nothing more than providing free labour to increase the profits of big business.

The Con-Dems have been forced onto the back foot already. We demand decent jobs with decent pay. Protests, linked with the trade unions, need to be stepped up until the whole Work Programme is scrapped!

Youth Fight for Jobs calls for:

- Keep up the pressure to force all remaining companies out of the Work Programme
- All unemployed people currently on a placement to be employed in the position on a proper wage
- Scrap the Work Programme entirely
- A minimum wage of £8 an hour, regardless of age
- Mass investment into a programme of public works to create socially useful jobs and real apprenticeships with guaranteed jobs at the end



Join the fortnight of action against workfare - protests around the country
Get in touch for details of what's happening near you:
youthfightforjobs.com
youthfightforjobs@gmail.com
020 8558 7947

The 'Westfield Workhouse' tour of shops that signed-up to the Con-Dems' slave labour scheme - see page 3
photo Senan



Working class needs real political opposition to Con-Dem millionaires

Over the last week the Socialist Party has been hysterically attacked in the right-wing capitalist press for our opposition to slave labour workfare schemes. We are proud to be at the forefront of opposition to these 'work for your dole' schemes. In the last year 83,000 retail workers have lost their jobs, the biggest increase in unemployment in any sector. The government's 'solution' is to force the unemployed to work for free for the major high-street retailers, most of whom are still making mega-profits.

Overwhelming public opposition to workfare has forced company after company to distance itself from the government's scheme. In the houses of parliament however, the silence has been deafening. The so-called 'opposition', New Labour, is silent for a reason; it introduced most of the elements of workfare when it was in power.

It was Labour that first contracted out large parts of workfare to the private contractor A4e, whose former chair, Emma Harrison, gave herself £8.6 million last year alone. It wasn't quite 'all 4 emma' though, as the Labour ex-home secretary, David Blunkett, also gets £30,000 a year as a 'consultant'.

When Youth Fight for Jobs national organiser Paul Callanan appeared on BBC's Newsnight it gave a taste of what public debate would look like if there was a real opposition. Instead

of Labour's silence Paul explained how workfare exploits the unemployed in the interest of profit and gave a taste of a programme that could create socially useful jobs.

It is not only on workfare that Labour policies are virtually indistinguishable from those of the Con-Dem government. Both Ed Balls and Ed Miliband have stated clearly that they support the public sector pay freeze and that a Labour government would not reverse any of the Con-Dem cuts in public spending. Those cuts, less than 10% of which have so far been implemented, would mean misery on a Greek scale for workers in Britain.

The health service, pensions, benefits, social services and education are all facing destruction over the coming years. At local level Labour councils are all implementing government cuts; at national level Labour is saying it would do nothing to reverse the devastation being wreaked by the Con-Dems.

Big business parties

The Tory party is a party of big business, of the 1%, with a cabinet of millionaires, funded to the hilt by the City of London. Working class people desperately need a mass party that stands up in the interests of their class. New Labour is not such a party, on the contrary, it is today another capitalist party, with policies driven by the desire to please the

markets rather than meet the needs of the population.

This is becoming clear to increasing numbers of workers. This year at the conferences of those unions that are still affiliated to the Labour Party there will be unprecedented pressure to discuss why members money is being used to fund a party that is attacking their pay, pensions and public services. At the GMB conference, for example, an unprecedented 25% of resolutions submitted are questioning the link with Labour.

Break the link

The Socialist Party calls on the affiliated trade unions to break the link with Labour. However, we do not favour non-political trade unionism. In 2011 workers showed their industrial might, above all with the magnificent two million-strong public sector strike on 30 November. But the trade union movement also needs a political voice, otherwise we are fighting with one hand tied behind our backs.

The Trade Unionists and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which brings together socialists and trade unionists to stand anti-cuts candidates in elections is, in our view, a step in the direction of such a party. The list TUSC is putting forward in the London Assembly elections is an important step forward. It is headed by

This is a taste of what Paul Callanan argued on Newsnight: "These companies that are on the schemes are still making millions or billions of pounds worth of profit.

"There is no reason that you couldn't give these people the experience at the same time as taking home a decent wage for a decent day's work.

"The motive is simply about profit. These companies want to increase their profit - they have no real interest in the future of these young people..."

"If you want to provide people with skills the government should be investing in socially useful jobs. They could unroll a programme of public works, house-building for example..."

"They have got the money for it. They bailed out the banks for example. Why not use that to provide jobs for young people?"

See page 5 for more

Alex Gordon, President of the RMT, and also includes prominent trade unionists from FBU, PCS, CWU, POA and others. In addition TUSC is encouraging trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to stand in as many local authority seats as possible.

Why I'm standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the London Assembly election

Alex Gordon
RMT President (personal capacity)

I am pleased to be leading the excellent list of candidates standing as TUSC in elections for the Greater London Assembly (GLA) in May 2012.

It may not be an original observation, but nonetheless it's true - this election is an historic opportunity to gain a voice for ordinary working people fighting against the crisis of the capitalist system.

The most right-wing British government since the 1930s is punishing young people and pensioners, the unemployed and those in work, with a poisonous policy cocktail of job cuts, pay freezes and compulsory workfare schemes, while sharp-eyed lobbyists from private health companies and firms specialising in privatisation and 'out-sourcing' urge them to ramp up attacks on the NHS, the welfare state and public services - the great social achievements of the labour movement.

Labour Party leaders, scandalously, have chosen this precise moment to declare in Ed Balls' words, 'we are going to have to keep all these cuts'.

Local authorities of all political persuasions have not so much fallen into line, as fallen over each other in their eagerness to implement cuts and prove their fitness for office by attacking the workers and services that our communities rely on. And we have only just begun to feel the impact of the £81 billion of public spending cuts promised by chancellor George Osborne in October 2010. The full force of austerity will

fall between now and the general election in 2015.

In every country in Europe attacks on workers' rights and the welfare state - policies enshrined in the European Union (EU) - are carried out by national governments. But in every country working people are rejecting these policies.

The dictatorship of bankers and finance capitalists, which the EU embodies, is nowhere more evident than in London, a city dominated by global financial institutions. The failed policies of global finance capitalism - austerity for us and bailouts for the bankers - demand a clear and uncompromising voice of opposition in the GLA.

Fightback

One key voice challenging the race to the bottom has come from our trade union movement. On 26 March last year we took over the streets of London in the largest demonstration in living memory against spending cuts and austerity with the TUC's "March for the Alternative".

On 30 November we took part in the largest mass strike in Britain since 1926 in defence of public sector workers' pensions and for fair pensions for all. Huge marches and demonstrations took place in hundreds of towns and cities across Britain and Northern Ireland.

These were highlights of the fightback by ordinary people against government austerity policies, but we have also seen significant direct action by workers and local communities taking on greedy bosses and the destructive policies of local



RMT transport union president Alex Gordon photo Paul Mattsson

and national politicians.

The successful campaign waged by electricians against plans by the Electrical Contractors' Association to cut wages by 34% across the construction sector has shown there is a new mood of resistance among workers to 'almighty' bosses.

At the bottom end of the pay scale, sub-contracted cleaning workers at St Pancras railway station took 48-hours of strike action against the refusal of their skinflint employers to award them a pay rise for the last four years!

That hundreds turned out to support their picket lines is a sure sign that ordinary people have had

enough of low pay, attacks on working conditions, increasing job insecurity, bullying bosses and the politicians who back them up.

Alternative

There is a tangible sense of anger and a will for real change among working people in Britain. What there is not is an electoral platform to speak up unashamedly and unambiguously for the people who are fighting back against the waves of attacks on working class living standards and the welfare state.

Diligent and hard-working socialists remain in the Labour Party and

a stalwart minority of Labour MPs continue to demonstrate solidarity with striking workers, claimants fighting attacks on benefits and communities and families fighting racism and injustice. However, the sneering and pompous condemnations by Labour leaders of public

Join the electoral
opposition to cuts:
www.tusc.org.uk

sector workers fighting to defend their hard-earned pensions undermine these efforts.

TUSC is a coalition of socialists (some in political organisations and others not) together with prominent trade union activists and elected officials who understand the need for a voice in the GLA to speak up for ordinary working people in their struggles.

TUSC is standing candidates in the London-wide list section of the GLA election. We need to reach the 5% threshold to be in with a chance of winning one seat. If we are able to achieve this, one added bonus will be that the party most likely to be bumped out of the GLA is the far-right BNP.

The next two months offer an opportunity for all socialists and trade unionists to put the socialist arguments for an alternative to cuts in pay and jobs, unemployment, privatisation and destruction of public services.

I hope that you will help us strike a blow for socialism by assisting TUSC's election campaign. See you on the doorstep.

A4e: workfare vultures in crisis

Ian Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

On Friday 24 February, as a storm of public anger grew around the Con-Dem government's cheap slave labour workfare schemes, Youth Fight for Jobs protested outside the office of A4e in Westminster armed with chants of "A, A, A4e, tell them we won't work for free!"

A4e is the private company that has won more than £200 million worth of contracts from the government since 2010. It gets young unemployed people to do unpaid work, boosting the fat profits of big business, no more than modern day slave traders. A4e is a poisonous private vulture that has made hundreds of millions exploiting young people.

Fraud allegations

Under pressure, Emma Harrison, now former head of A4e has been forced to resign from her positions as back-to-work-tsar and boss of the company. Harrison paid herself £8.6 million last year.

Harrison made an extra £1.7 million over two years by leasing out numerous properties she already owned, including her family's own stately home for A4e to use, all at the taxpayers' expense.

It's been reported that A4e has been investigated nine times since 2005 and four former employees were arrested recently on suspicion of fraud. The company still has £438 million of contracts with the government.

It has also been revealed that A4e used young unemployed people on the schemes to work for free in their own offices. We need to kick these private vultures out of the public sector and scrap the entire workfare scheme.



Youth Fight for Jobs campaigners led a protest tour of 'Westfield Workhouse' on 25 February. Many of the companies with stores inside Westfield, the biggest shopping centre in Europe, are involved in the government's slave labour workfare schemes. We went round all of these pointing out how much profit they make every year and asking why they can't afford to pay a real wage to their workers. Protests have also taken place at McDonalds in Wakefield, Leytonstone, Whitehall, Lewisham and Sheffield and Burton in Cardiff. See www.youthfightforjobs.com and www.socialistparty.org.uk for reports and photos. photo Senan

At the RMT's young members conference last weekend we agreed to send a message of solidarity to Youth Fight for Jobs' anti-workfare protest and two delegates to the Westfield Workhouse Tour.

"The tenth annual national RMT young members' conference unanimously sends solidarity greetings to the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign and fully supports and wishes you every success with your demonstration."

Emma Linacre
RMT young members vice-chair

...meanwhile its bonuses for bankers...

Ross Saunders
Wales Socialist Party

Bankers are now facing a fresh wave of anger as Lloyds has announced that, despite netting a £3.5 billion loss last year, a handful of executives will collect £375 million in bonuses. After several rounds of government bailout money, the bank is 41% owned by the state but Cameron's coalition refuses to intervene.

Those in line for rewards include four former executives responsible for the bank's part in the Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) swindle, which cost Lloyds £3.2 billion. They stand to pocket £2.2 million this year. Do these millionaires really deserve these bonuses?

The bonuses announced last week apparently reward executives for completing the merger between Lloyds and HBOS in 2009.

But that decision landed Lloyds, already in receipt of £20 billion of government money, in need of a second bailout, as it emerged that HBOS was sitting on losses of over

£10 billion. This period also saw 30,000 jobs lost at the merged companies. Not a job well done.

Banks are desperately trying to wriggle out of restrictions on high pay. It emerged last week that, although RBS had cut bonuses, the bank just increased fixed salaries to compensate - pay was almost back to normal. Some banks had as much as doubled pay for executives overnight.

In a mess

We're told that billionaire bankers are essential - that they have to be paid obscenely high pay or they'd abandon us and the economy would be in a mess.

Well, so far these chancers have left us with £30 billion of losses from RBS and Lloyds alone, and billions more has been spent propping up the industry they've wrecked. They haven't earned these bonuses - they've rigged the system so that heads they win, tails we lose.

While these people are in charge of society's wealth our problems will never be solved. Enormous poten-

tial is being wasted chasing short-term profits, distorting the economy for the benefit of the few. Investment must be controlled democratically by ordinary working class people - so should the banks' pay policies.

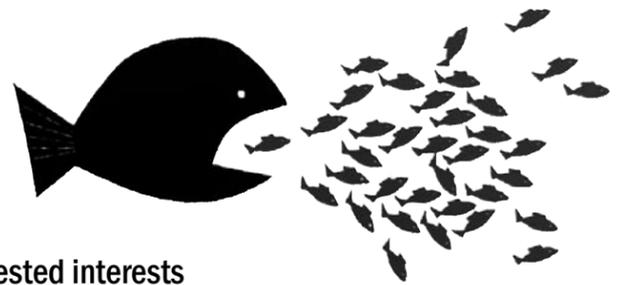
The reason more concessions haven't been wrung out of these parasites is that the enormous public anger isn't being transmitted by a weak political opposition to the Con-Dems.

And no wonder - Labour, now as linked to big business as the other main parties, is the architect of the no-strings-attached banking bailout that left bankers with their hands free to continue to pay huge bonuses.

Ed Miliband reassured bankers recently that any measures Labour proposes in parliament on capping their pay "would not be binding, and would not be legislation" - in other words, would not be serious.

The working class needs to build our own mass independent political organisation to force an alternative to rotten capitalism onto the agenda.

Them...



Vested interests

Sometimes it seems strange that the government continues to railroad its most unpopular policies - like the move towards NHS privatisation - through. Why can't they see things like we do? Well, because their interests, quite literally, don't lie with the rest of us. For most of us, for example, privatisation of our health service means closures of wards, cuts to staff numbers, pay and conditions and price over quality. But for many Lords, it means more zeros on the end of their annual income. 40 peers have a direct vested interest in private healthcare. This includes Virginia Bottomley, director of Bupa. So we don't have much faith in the Lords to stop the Health and Social Care Bill - trade unionists and activists will have to do that ourselves.

handing money to big business with no questions asked about where it goes isn't quite what the campaign had in mind. An investigation by the Sunday Mirror has revealed that McDonald's has been given £10 million by the Skills Funding Agency. This money was supposedly earmarked for apprenticeships to help get the one million unemployed young people back to work. But McDonald's hasn't created a single job with the money!

And it's not alone. £20 million has been given to the biggest ten companies involved and only 2,559 jobs have been created. McDonald's aren't doing too badly - this £10 million is on top of their profits of billions every year and of course the cash they scrimp on by using free labour in the government's workfare schemes.

Value for money?

Welfare: £5 billion over seven years
Schools: £7.2 billion
Health: £24.2 billion
Prisons: £4 billion
Higher education: £33 million

This is how much each of these vital public services is worth to the private sector. Yet again, money from our pockets to theirs. And the government wonders why they can't "get people investing". Why would big business invest the £130 billion sitting in British banks if they get handed this from the government?

Illusion

Policy Exchange, a conservative think tank, has recommended that schools be run as 'social enterprises'. Under the plans private companies would set up schools and teachers would be given shares. The profits would be divided 50/50 between being re-invested and going to shareholders (the biggest of which would be the private company, of course). This is good for teachers, we're told, as they can make extra money and good for schools because teachers will work harder when they have a stake in results.

But the only way to make a profit would be to cut corners in services and resources and to lower staff wages. Plus, taxpayers' money (including that of teachers) will be siphoned straight into the pockets of big business. Not such a good deal after all then.

Quick fix

Barclays must be a little red in the face after being asked to re-pay £500 million for tax that the company avoided through a loophole that has now been closed. This is just one small part of the estimated £120 billion that is avoided, evaded and uncollected every year. But we'll be glad to get it back. And we're looking forward to hearing what it will be spent on. The PCS union points out that £500 million could fund jobs for all 34,000 young people who have been placed on the government's slave labour Work Experience scheme and pay more than the £8 an hour living wage. Surely the government will listen - if they really want jobs for young people and have now found some extra money 'down the back of the sofa' - problem solved... unless it's not about finding jobs for young people after all...

Horsing around

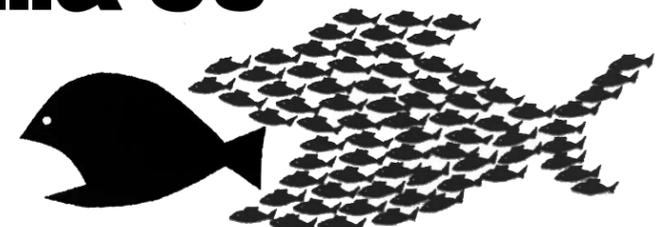
All you keen equestrians out there, listen up, we've found a great deal for you. Turns out, you can borrow a horse from the Metropolitan Police. Or at least, you can if you know the right people - like Rebecca Brooks for example. The former chief executive of News International, who was forced to resign over the company's dodgy dealings in the phone hacking scandal, was loaned a horse by the Met in 2008. Apparently this is common practice for horses nearing the end of their working life.

But seeing as we've never heard anything about this before, it's a bit of a coincidence that the person concerned is Rebecca Brooks, whose dealings with the Met get more and more intricate by the day. 'It's who you know, not what you know' springs to mind.

Something for nothing

The government promises that it is taking steps towards Youth Fight for Jobs' demand for job creation. But

...& Us



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk • Phone 020 8988 8777 • Text 07761 818206

Defend the 4: Unison leadership's "unjustifiable discipline"

Once again, the Unison leadership has been found guilty of "unjustifiable" disciplinary action against four activists for producing a leaflet protesting about the exclusion of resolutions from the 2007 Unison conference.

On 22 February an Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) upheld the unanimous judgment of an earlier Employment Tribunal (ET).

That ET judgment last year rejected false allegations of racism against the four and found that the real reason for disciplinary action was that they had issued a leaflet criticising the conference standing orders committee (SOC) and the union leadership for preventing discussion on the issue of union democracy.

The EAT rejects all five grounds on which the Unison leadership appealed against last year's ET judgment.

Banned

The four activists who were disciplined by Unison were banned from holding any union office for up to three years.

The four are Glenn Kelly (formerly Bromley branch secretary and national executive member), Onay Kasab (formerly Greenwich branch secretary), Brian Debus (formerly Hackney branch chairperson), and Suzanne Muna (formerly Housing



One of the many lobbies of Unison HQ photo Paul Mattsson

Corporation branch secretary).

The judgments of the ET and the EAT completely vindicate the four's struggle to defend union democracy.

The unjustified sanctions against the four are part of a wider witch-hunt being carried out by the Unison leadership against activists fighting for union democracy and effective action to defend public services, jobs, pay and conditions.

There is now a rising tide of discontent within the union at the ineffective policies of the leadership when faced with a tsunami of attacks on the public sector.

The Unison leadership unscrupulously tried to bolster their disciplinary charges with allegations of racism.

This related to a cartoon on the leaflet protesting about the SOC's suppression of over 50 resolutions that used the well-known image of three wise monkeys who see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.

The ET judgment forcefully rejected the allegation of racism: "All four claimants are committed anti-racists and have fought against racism.

"They quite reasonably assumed that anyone who saw the leaflet would understand the cartoon to be saying

that the SOC was out of touch in closing its minds to and ignoring issues that concern the membership."

"Looking at the context in which the cartoon was used (ie to depict the attitude of the SOC towards controversial motions) it cannot be said that any reasonable person would or should have realised that it would cause racial offence, and that not doing so was somehow 'careless'.

"That is reinforced by the fact that [it] never occurred to many people who saw the cartoon before its publication. These individuals included an Equalities and Diversity officer and black members."

Incredibly, during the case, it was discovered that Unison's own lawyers had used a cartoon of the three wise monkeys.

The tribunal found that the main reason for disciplinary action against the four was that they produced a leaflet criticising the SOC for rejecting a large number of branch resolutions.

It is estimated that the Unison leadership must have spent at least £100,000 on the disciplinary hearings and tribunal cases.

Glenn Kelly, one of the four, is demanding that the witch-hunts must stop, and the four branches be taken out of regional administration so that the members can run their branches. Also that the bans on the four should be rescinded and the latest charge against Glenn should be withdrawn.

In brief

Teachers' strike



photo Bob Severn

NUT union members at sixth form colleges across London walked out at lunchtime on 23 February for a half-day's strike over pay and college funding.

Pippa Dowswell, a teacher at Monoux College in Waltham Forest, spoke to the Socialist: "We were promised by the Sixth Form Forum that we would be getting our pay in line with school teachers, which they've completely reneged on and it's fallen way behind with our pay being frozen this year.

"The second thing is about funding. We're getting 3% cuts every year for four years, which is going to have terrible implications for our students, particularly with tutorials being cut back."

With most areas outside London on half-term, the half-day strike took place to keep the strike ballot live.

Action could now escalate to national, full day strikes.

Bob Severn

Continuing the pensions battle

PCS consultative ballot

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) are voting in a consultation over the next steps in fighting the government's assault on public sector pensions. Over 250,000 workers will be voting in a ballot which closes on 16 March, asking whether they reject the government's pensions proposals and whether they support the joint union campaign for fair pen-

sions for all.

The result will be considered at a special meeting of the union's national executive on 19 March.

The union's executive has unanimously rejected the government's latest offer and is discussing with unions representing members of the civil service, education and health pension schemes about taking joint strike action on 28 March.



N30 showed how action can get results photo Paul Mattsson

Ivan Bonsell

University worker, personal capacity

University workers face cuts, privatisation and outsourcing as the government seeks to turn universities into profit-generating units for their rich friends. Support staff at newer, post 1992 universities still retain their membership of the local government pension scheme. They played a full role in the 30 November strike (N30), alongside millions of other public sector workers.

As Unison members, we're angry that the Higher Education service group executive (HESGE) signed up to the government's 'heads of agreement', albeit with a narrow majority.

We feel this shows how out of touch many of the SGE members are. N30 showed how the government could be forced to make concessions when faced with united, determined action.

The Unison leadership appears to be obsessed with negotiating over virtually nothing that wasn't there

before. This will be met with confusion and potentially demoralisation if we can't turn around the union strategy of capitulation. We must force the HESGE to lead the way in opposing the attack on our pension rights.

Unison activists in HE will be given the chance to show their verdict on the leadership at the HE conference on 2 March. The left has flooded the HESGE with emergency motions aimed at democratically forcing a u-turn on the pension strategy while members in local government are calling for a special conference to allow the members to decide.

The imminent elections to the Unison service groups will, for many members act as a referendum on the battle over pensions. We demand the right to hear all the tactical arguments debated and then the members must decide.

Socialist Party members within Unison HE think the best strategy would be to continue the campaign with our brothers and sisters in PCS, NUT and UCU and we will continue to fight for that option.

Three-year pay freeze hits hard

Over 1.6 million council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are to have their pay frozen for a third year in a row.

Bosses in local government have again used the argument that if pay is not frozen, there will be more cuts and more job losses. Yet there has been a haemorrhaging of jobs and services in local government in the last two years while the pay freeze has been in place.

Across the wider public sector, staff face either pay freezes or minimal pay rises with a 1% pay cap for many from 2012 to 2015.

The latest local government pay freeze was announced by the employers only one day after Unison published a hard-hitting report on the pay of local government workers - 'Living on the Edge'.

The report reveals that the value of local government earnings has fallen by 13% in the last three years alone and that in 2011, 38% of part-time and 8% of full-time workers earned less than the £7.20 an hour target of the Living Wage

Campaign.

Living on the Edge sums up the huge levels of poverty faced by many council workers who face the unbearable strain of a pay freeze, alongside high inflation in food, fuel and transport costs. On top of this, many councils have frozen pay locally. Where I work, Nottingham city council, staff are in their second year of a local increment freeze.

While public sector workers are, like everyone else, desperately worried about their jobs, pay is becoming a massive issue. Sooner or later, there will be a massive explosion of anger about these pay freezes.

It is not sufficient for trade union leaders in local government, to lodge pay claims with no campaign to try and win them. The campaign against pay cuts, (because this is what pay freezes are), has to be linked to the struggle to defend pensions, jobs and services.

Jean Thorpe
Nottingham Socialist Party
and Unison executive, personal capacity

Walkout at EHRC

Cameron and Co know you have rights, but they don't want you to be able to use them! The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) advises people on issues such as equal pay or discrimination over maternity, disability, or race.

Yet its funding is being cut by nearly two-thirds. 72% of staff face redundancy, with the possibility that management may resort to compulsory redundancies.

On 23 February, offices in Manchester, London, Birmingham, Cardiff and Glasgow all mounted picket lines in a half-day strike.

PCS members were joined by Unite members and others against these devastating cuts.

In Cardiff, 100% of staff were out. "If the cuts go ahead, it will mean an end to casework - we'll have no contact with any members of the public," said one worker.

Members were angry not just at the loss of jobs when employment is so high, but also at the damage done to an important service.

The next step is preparing for the 28 March action against pension cuts. Cardiff trades council is holding a rally on 20 March to build support for the strike.

Hugh Caffrey and Ross Saunders

Website

For more on these and other industrial reports, go to www.socialistparty.org.uk

'We want jobs - not slave labour!'

Youth Fight for Jobs is one of the key organisations fighting the government's workfare schemes. As the name suggests the campaign demands investment in real jobs not the government's slave labour schemes. Here Paul Callanan, YFJ national organiser, spoke to the Socialist about why young people find themselves in this situation.

Why does unemployment hit young people in particular?

First off this has nothing to do with young people not being willing to work! Young people were in a precarious situation before the current crisis.

Even when the economy was relatively stable young people worked mostly in the retail or service sector, quite often being paid less than the measly minimum wage, with insecure contracts that could see them hired and fired on a whim.

Now that the crisis has hit the high streets, increasing numbers of youth are being put out of work, with no other jobs to go to. Many employers pass over young people's CVs - they want workers with experience.

And since the 1980s big business has massively reduced its investment in manufacturing, increasing its profits from super-exploitation in countries where workers' rights are minimal.

This was accelerated by the Thatcher government's deliberate drive to destroy Britain's manufacturing base. One result is that apprenticeships and training-on-the-job schemes have dried up.

Today big business has an estimated £130 billion stashed away but it faces restricted opportunities to invest profitably in Britain's depleted manufacturing sector. Business investment fell by £1.7 billion at the end of 2011, a drop of over 5% on the previous quarter.

Going into education can be seen as a way of avoiding the dole queue but with cuts and privatisation, tuition fee hikes and the scrapping of EMA student payments, increasing numbers of young people, especial-

ly working class youth, are denied access to education.

Why is the government pursuing its workfare policy if it's so unpopular?

Workfare is hated because people see it for what it is - super-exploitation. Look at the figures: 600 people applied for 35 Tesco jobs in Leicester. People are desperate for work but the government is forcing the unemployed to work for companies like Tesco for their dole.

Despite this widespread opposition the government appears to be ploughing on. It doesn't act in the interest of the majority of people, but in the interests of capitalism and big business. One of the ways in which the government will help out big business is to provide cheap, even free labour for them. Another is privatisation.

Why should people in work care about workfare?

Because if bosses can use the unemployed as free labour then why would they want to carry on paying their present staff? Why would they take on any more at the going rate?

What we call for is a movement of workers and youth to stop this race to the bottom and fight for decent jobs, terms and conditions for workers and the unemployed alike.

Can we really win job creation?

We can certainly win victories. Look at what we've already achieved with so many companies forced to pull out of the scheme.

But the best way of fighting unemployment is preventing it. It's possible for workers to stop the bosses' at-



Youth Fight for Jobs marched from Jarrow to London in October demanding job creation photo Paul Mattsson

tacks if they organise and fight back. Just look at what happened with the tremendous victory of the construction workers who have successfully defended a national agreement that protects jobs, terms and conditions (see pages 6 and 7).

And we can win job creation. Look at the example of Liverpool council in the 1980s. They refused to implement cuts and actually set a 'needs budget', based on local need for housing, welfare, etc. They were able to win the money from the Thatcher government because they gave a fighting lead and mobilised trade unions and working class communities to support their stand.

And, until the battles of last year, mainly over public sector pensions, there has been a low level of trade

union struggle in recent decades. Young people haven't had experience of defeating the bosses. But we are learning fast!

What can be done to help young people into work?

Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party call for investment in jobs and training. We also think that the existing work should be shared out but with no loss of pay.

Why should some have to work all the hours in the week while others cannot get a job? But there are other measures that would help - like ending the attacks on pensions that will force people to work till they drop.

There should be a programme of socially useful public works. For

example we have huge levels of unemployment in the construction industry and a massive council house waiting list.

A programme of house building would give young people the opportunity to train in construction trades and provide millions of families with affordable social housing.

We call for the banking system to be nationalised under democratic control of elected committees with representatives of trade unions, communities and so on as a way of funding this.

We say that the top monopolies should be nationalised as part of a democratic plan of production. Then the vast wealth and resources in the hands of the 1% could be used to meet the needs of the 99%.

Interview with a jobcentre worker What workfare really means

What are the government's workfare schemes?

Workfare is a catch-all term used to describe the various unpaid work schemes the government operates through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Some are specific for different groups of claimants, for example the Work Experience scheme only applies to 18 to 24 year olds. The £1 billion Youth Contract, launched by the government in November, meant an increase in Work Experience and Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) funding.

Will workfare reduce unemployment or bring down the unemployment figures, as the government claims?

The government says that adding labour market experience to a CV will benefit jobseekers. This could be true if they had never worked before, perhaps, or if the experience was in useful skills.

The reality is the work experience is not vetted for quality (what really is to be gained from stacking shelves?). Claimants often already have employment history and it is not the lack of experience that is holding them back from working, but the lack of vacancies out there.

If the businesses supporting the

initiative truly wanted to give young people experience then they could just as easily give them paid employment - it would give the jobseekers a real confidence boost to find a proper job.

We know that it is often easier to find a new job when you are already in employment. And, let's face it, the companies involved can well afford to pay the staff they have taken on for free.

The government says the schemes are voluntary, is this true?

No. Work Programme activity and MWA (the clue is in the name) are mandatory. Work Experience is supposed to be on the basis of a voluntary agreement between the benefit claimant and DWP adviser.

However, any adviser can make a 'jobseekers direction' which means the claimant can be mandated to undertake whatever action the adviser wishes to make in relation to their claim.

DWP said from the outset that there would be a mixture of voluntary and mandatory referrals when they introduced Work Experience last year. If the claimant drops out of the placement after a few days their benefit will be referred to a 'decision maker' to have it stopped.

Advisers are also put under pres-

sure to make referrals to Work Experience and MWA through 'profiles' the job centres are supposed to hit. This means that individual advisers are given monthly or weekly targets.

How do PCS members, like yourself, feel about workfare?

We can see that while many jobseekers do require skills and employment experience, forced (or coerced) free labour will not solve the unemployment crisis.

Many advisers feel forced into making referrals to MWA and Work Experience; we don't want to be benefit bullies, we want to help people who are in a very difficult and vulnerable position.

We can also see that the Work Programme is ineffective, and the most vulnerable - for example those with learning disabilities or health problems - will face the biggest difficulties under that regime.

What can the PCS do to organise to make sure workfare is scrapped?

We can make sure that we are not pressured into breaching benefit legislation, and ensure claimants are aware of their rights. As fellow workers, we need to be publicly on the side of claimants.

Trade union members gener-



Protesting against workfare in Wakefield photo Yorkshire Socialist Party

ally can work with campaign groups such as Boycott Workfare and Youth Fight for Jobs to show solidarity with claimants. We also support YFJ's demand for job creation. And PCS

is pushing for further strike action against attacks on pensions to make sure workers aren't forced to work longer which has a knock on effect on vacancies.

Construction electricians score a victory

Sparks 1 Bosses 0

The tremendous victory of the construction electricians against the multinational Balfour Beatty and the other six electrical contractors, confirmed on 23 February, is a hugely significant moment for these workers. It is also an important victory for the rest of the trade union movement, particularly in the private sector. These highly profitable building companies were hell-bent on slashing the wages and working conditions of the skilled workers they rely on, while blocking trade union organisation and continuing the blacklisting and other anti-working class practices which are rife in the construction industry. The Socialist Party sends its congratulations to Unite and the rank and file electricians, as has the National Shop Stewards Network. Rob Williams, the chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, which played an important supportive role in this dispute, explains its significance. This article is based on one printed in the March issue of Socialism Today, monthly magazine of the Socialist Party, see page 11.

In the wake of this victory, Unite, the main trade union involved, should launch a massive union organising campaign on the construction sites nationally, led by the electricians who have been at the heart of this dispute.

2011 ushered in a new period of struggle for workers in Britain: the huge 26 March TUC demonstration in London, the 30 June strike of civil servants, teachers and lecturers, and the massive two million-strong strike of public sector workers on 30 November (N30) in defence of their pensions.

While the outcome of the public sector pension struggle, as with the battle against the cuts, has still to be determined, the sight and sounds of millions of workers out on strike and hundreds and thousands on rallies and demonstrations with union placards and banners has undoubtedly raised the profile of trade unions. It has once again legitimised the idea of workers struggling to defend their jobs, terms and conditions and pensions from the employers' assault.

It must be more than coincidental that from the end of 2011 through to the opening months of 2012, we've also seen a rash of private sector disputes from Unilever to the Wincanton oil tanker drivers and the Stagecoach bus drivers.

Boost from public sector

This isn't to say that these battles have appeared out of thin air. As with many workplaces, particularly in the private sector, the numerous grievances can burst out into an open dispute depending on the confidence of the workforce. But this has been given a boost by the public sector strikes.

Of these struggles, perhaps the most resilient, tenacious and at times openly combative has been that of the construction electricians over the last six months, who come under the Joint Industry Board (JIB) national agreement (explained in issue 702).

Initially, eight of the biggest contractors (NG Bailey, Balfour Beatty, Tommy Clarke, Crown House Technologies, Grate Brothers, MJN Colston, SES and SPIE Matthew Hall) signalled their intention to withdraw from this agreement and impose a new set of terms and conditions called the Building Engineering Services National Agreement (Besna).

However, at an early stage, one of the companies, MJN Colston, pulled back under the pressure of the workers' opposition.

The remaining Big (or 'Dirty') Seven wanted to use Besna to attack electricians and other skilled workers. They wanted to break up their trade by having different rates of pay depending on the exact skills set used on a particular job.

This would have seen some workers having their pay reduced by up to 35% if they had been given a job with the minimum skill level.

In fact it would have opened the door



Protesting outside Morrison's HQ in Bradford photo Iain Dalton

to employers reducing the number of fully trained 'expensive' workers and instead backfilling with lower-paid semi-skilled workers.

Quite apart from the monetary aspect, it raised health and safety concerns, particularly as these workers are employed on a whole range of sites, including oil refineries, renovating London Underground stations, and at nuclear power stations. Meanwhile the government has stripped bare the budget of the Health and Safety Executive through cuts of up to 35%!

This is the familiar 'race to the bottom' that the employers in all sectors have been engaged in over the last decade or so.

The prize for the bosses is to increase their profits as successive governments have been forced to update Britain's under-invested infrastructure.

The Telegraph recently reported that Balfour Beatty alone has an order book of £15 billion and made almost £100 million profit for the first six months of 2011.

Other disputes

The successful Lindsey Oil Refinery struggle in 2009 was against the construction employers trying to break the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (Naeci), which covers sites such as power stations and oil refineries and processing plants.

The employers have continued this offensive since then with lockouts at Fawley in Hampshire and Saltend in Humberside in 2011.

Socialist Party member Keith Gibson played a key role in both the Lindsey and Saltend disputes. In the latter, while the workers were eventually unable to get their jobs back, they were able to win an enhanced redundancy package.

It has been noticeable that the employers and their friends in the right-wing media have also learned lessons from

...it would have opened the door to employers reducing the number of fully trained 'expensive' workers and instead backfilling with lower-paid semi-skilled workers



At one of the Blackfriars protests photo Paul Mattsson

where hundreds of workers pushed the police off the road and then held an impromptu march through the City of London! However, later in the day the police kettled 200 of the sparks when they tried to join up with a student protest to show solidarity.

Seeing the need to link up with other workers was also shown on 30 November when the electricians marched to a number of public sector picket lines to show support.

The campaign of the rank and file has pushed Unite into playing a far more leading role. Before Christmas a strike ballot was organised in Balfours and was won with an 82% majority.

Unfortunately, Unite agreed to re-ballot after the company threatened an injunction. It would have been better to force Balfours to at least go to court so that even if it was successful with its action, it would have clearly shown workers that there was no alternative but to take unofficial action.

Correctly, this has been the union's approach when Balfours challenged the re-ballot which still saw a 67% vote for strike action in early February.

This time, Balfours' legal injunction was defeated in court and they capitulated the next day.

The Socialist had previously raised this possibility. Even the Tory courts can occasionally rule against the employers, particularly where there is a militant campaign that will continue even if legally blocked.

As with the RMT on the Docklands Light Railway last year, courts continually ruling out strike ballots on minor technicalities can expose the class nature of the legal process and legitimise unofficial

strikes. Victory in the courts proved to be a decisive turning point in Unite's electricians' dispute. An official strike would have raised the dispute to a new level.

For example in Grangemouth, the Balfours sparks, standing on an official Unite picket line, appealing to the directly employed workforce could have shut down this oil refinery, potentially costing millions of pounds.

A national appeal for solidarity action, even unofficially could have stopped the whole of the construction industry.

This prospect terrified Balfours and their clients. The whole experience of the action taken over the last six months would have left Balfours and the other employers in no doubt that national action was possible.

Anti-union laws

Correctly the electricians have refused to be contained by the anti-union laws. They called for unofficial action on the original planned strike date of 7 December, when no Balfours' sparks worked in Blackfriars and others walked out on other sites.

Police dogs were used at Blackfriars to break up the protest. A week later over 5,000 construction workers took unofficial strike action when the electricians were joined by workers fighting a pay freeze under the 'Blue Book' agreement on Naeci sites.

This showed the potential power of these workers when they take action together. If necessary, they could have linked up with the directly employed workers at the oil refineries and power stations and those who service them such as the Wincanton oil tanker drivers.

The involvement of Unite's organising department was also a major turning point. They produced a 'leverage' dossier which showed Balfour that it would face a war of attrition that would include its clients being targeted as well.

The campaign of the rank and file breathed life into this document. To emphasise this, the 200-strong protest outside the electrical contractors' ECA awards dinner the day before the result of the legal action, showed the employers that the strategy of the union would be backed up by the troops on the ground.

The emergence of the rank and file, with regular meetings between the leading electrician activists and the union officers and national meetings of the sparks acted as a check on the officials and a lever on the official structure of Unite.

It has shown that the union officialdom isn't a homogeneous block of conservatism that can't be moved in a positive direction. The cynicism and pessimism of many union officers, a result of the last few decades of defeats has been pushed aside by the energy and determination of the sparks.

This pressure will be needed to ensure that any talks with the employers improves the JIB rather than agreeing a 'Besna 2'.

Democracy

As with the running of the dispute, any such negotiations need to be transparent and democratically controlled by the rank and file.

The rank and file electricians' campaign has forced Unite belatedly to take the dispute seriously. But the union's involvement has revealed how the official union structure can play a positive role, particularly when married to a militant and active membership.

Coming after the successful reinstatement of Paddy Brennan, the Unite convenor in the Swindon Honda car plant last year, and the forcing of Unilever and Wincanton back to the negotiating table in recent weeks, it shows that the potential power of Unite in particular, and private sector workers in general, can be realised.

It should inspire the union to ask its members in the NHS and local govern-

May Day Greetings in the Socialist

Support the paper that fights all cuts with a 2012 May Day (international workers' day) greeting in the Socialist.

The Socialist asks trade union branches, workplace and community groups, anti-cuts campaigns, Youth Fight for Jobs groups, student societies and Socialist Party branches to send in May Day greetings. Why not take the May Day greeting appeal sheet round your workplace, community group or campaign to get donations towards a greeting? Or, if you are at a university or college, pass it around fellow students. The Socialist is funded only by its readers and supporters. May Day greetings provide essential money to support the production of the Socialist, while helping to show the range of support the paper has. The Socialist fights all spending cuts. We say, make the 'banksters' pay for the capitalist crisis! The Socialist reports the strikes and protests against cuts and for decent pay, pensions, and working conditions. We show there is an electoral alternative to Con-Dem, New Labour and Green Party cuts by reporting the work of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

We report on how young people are fighting back for jobs and education through the work of Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Jobs. But the Socialist also makes the case for a socialist alternative to the crisis-ridden capitalist system. We stand for the millions not the millionaires and billionaires.

Phone Bob on 020 8988 8781 or email bobsevern@socialistparty.org.uk for appeal sheets and for prices. Greetings deadline: 19 April.

ment to join with PCS, NUT and others in the next pension strike on 28 March.

While it's true that workers learn from setbacks, victories are priceless. This one will give confidence to a new layer of activists across all the trades in the industry. They will see the need to become active in Unite on the sites, to defend workers from the rapacious bosses in the many battles to come. In particular to rid the industry of scourges such as agency working and the blacklist.

We have been proud to support and assist with their campaign. This struggle has exposed the short-termism of the big construction companies and the inability of capitalism to properly plan the development of the infrastructure needed for a modern economy.

We argue that only nationalising these companies under democratic workers' control and management, along with the other major industrial and financial levers, would allow a real socialist plan of production and construction.

This would open the way to a rational and safe infrastructure and construction industry with decent pay and conditions for the workforce and proper training and apprenticeships for young people.

In the meantime, the pressure to maximise their profits will force the employers to look again at attacking construction workers' jobs, pay and conditions. Next time, however, they will face a workforce buoyed by success.

Student walkout - build mass action

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national
organiser

The National Union of Students (NUS) has called a walkout against cuts and privatisation for 14 March. With the government's plans to dismantle and privatise higher education, on top of tripled fees and the scrapping of EMA, this is an overdue and absolutely necessary step.

The walkout is less than two weeks away. However, so far, the NUS has failed to build for a day of mass action across the country.

Socialist Students members should contact student union officers to find out what the union is planning - if anything - and how they intend to build for it.

Where a student union refuses to build for the walkout, then Socialist Students could put an emergency motion to the student union council to mandate the officers to take action.

But this shouldn't be a substitute for building for the walkout ourselves. Mass poster and leafletting around campus can help raise the profile of the strike.

Socialist Students members could organise for their own course-mates to take part in the walkout. This could act as an example for other students to follow.

Socialist Students groups could also call meetings open to all stu-



Socialist Students on the last national NUS demo in November 2010 photo S Wrack

dents and groups who are willing to organise action. These 'action committees' could then help organise the strike as well as any protests and rallies.

Socialist Students is calling for the student strike to be spread to colleges and schools. In some towns, central meeting points for demonstrations could help link up university students with school and college students for a march. In other

areas, on-campus protests might be the best option.

Liam Burns, NUS president, has said: "...let's clear out the lecture theatres, the seminar rooms, the ITC suites and the libraries and demonstrate clearly that without students, universities are just empty buildings.

"Let's work hard together to show that students care and make the national walkout count."

These are fine words, but words alone are not enough.

We need democratic, fighting student unions to defend education. We say no to cuts, fees and privatisation - bring back EMA. Strike back on 14 March!

Then, for 28 March, plan for coordinating follow-up action with lecturers as they take action alongside teachers and civil servants in defence of pensions.

Party news

Truth of 'English Riviera'

A Torbay Citizens Advice Bureau report has exposed the conditions under which local workers have to exist in the main conurbation of the 'English Riviera'. Torbay has the highest level of personal bankruptcies in the country with the third lowest wages as workers experience rising unemployment, inflation and wage cuts. Five of the 15 wards in this unitary authority have child poverty rates above 20% according to the End Child Poverty website, with one ward, Watcombe, topping 37%. The bosses want to keep these facts under cover so they can continue making profits out of low wages and renting out property. But there is increasing interest in socialist ideas in South Devon. Socialist Party members are taking steps to expose the reality of living in Torbay.

Sean Brogan
South Devon Socialist Party

Winchester protests

Winchester saw two noisy demonstrations on 23 February. Socialist Students 'welcomed' Tory schools minister Nick Gibb to the university with placards, whistles, party poppers and some awkward questions.

Outrageously, Gibb has said he'd rather see an Oxbridge graduate with no teaching qualifications at a school than a qualified teacher from a 'rubbish' university.

Socialist Party members and trade unionists also lobbied the council, with whistles, banners, drums and chants, against savage and unnecessary cuts to public services outlined in its latest budget.

Prudence Caric
Hampshire Socialist Party

Northamptonshire cuts

On 23 February, Northamptonshire county council voted to cut £28 million from its budget. This will mean almost 300 job losses, increased charges for adult social care, £500,000 cut from children centres and, despite election pledges, funding cuts for Police Community Support Officers.

The council's own consultation has shown mass opposition to the cuts, and support was given to the protest outside the council meeting by council workers and the general public.

Nick Doyle
Northampton Socialist Party

South East day school

26 people attended the South East Socialist Party's day school in February. Discussions included Marxist economics, the role of the state and the Marxist view of history, as well as developing the party's work in the region.

Jon Redford

• What's happening near you? See www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Stop North East NHS childcare cuts

Elaine Brunskill

Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland's primary care trusts (PCTs) are now working under a single management team, NHS South of Tyne and Wear, which is threatening to end all children's inpatient services in Gateshead and South Tyneside for cases where over 23 hours of care is needed.

The consultation document proposes just one single dedicated paediatric unit at Sunderland Royal Hospital.

Their website boasts: "We use your views to help improve, design and shape local NHS services." Yet Dr David Hambleton, at a recent consultation meeting, admitted that even two million negative responses wouldn't guarantee that the proposals would be scrapped.

In Gateshead there is growing anger over these savage plans. Activities by Socialist Party members and the Public Service Alliance campaigning against the proposals have been overwhelmed with support. Parents are fearful of the impact of these changes.

The PCTs argue that illnesses such as asthma and diabetes can be dealt with in the child's home with support from healthcare staff. However,

their glossy brochure points out that the children's community nursing team will only be available "from early until late each day during the week and for reduced hours on Saturday and Sunday". What should parents do if their child is ill outside these hours?

Join the protest on 7 March, 12.30pm, QE Hospital's Main Entrance, Queen Elizabeth Avenue, Gateshead

Voluntary sector cuts expose Big Society lies

Becci Heagney

Around 30 people gathered outside Derby city council's meeting to determine the fate of charity and voluntary groups.

After a so-called 'consultation', the council voted to cut £1 million from the funding of groups including Derby and Derbyshire Race Equality Commission, Women's Centre and Furniture Project.

Volunteers and service users held a noisy and angry protest before the meeting.

Many councillors went through the back door instead of facing the

people their cuts will be affecting! Protesters held placards saying "We are all Greek" and "Women and children last".

Volunteers from the Furniture Project, who provide second-hand furniture to vulnerable families and individuals who cannot afford it, covered the street outside with lamps, chairs and tables which will all go to waste now that this project is being cut.

Voluntary groups and charities that rely on local authority funding are being hit hard by the cuts. They often provide specialist services that people rely on and cannot get elsewhere.

Sheffield housing - failed by privatisation

Wyllie Hume

26,465 (88.2%) Sheffield city council tenants have voted in favour of returning council housing management to the council from the independent company Sheffield Homes.

But Sheffield council has not taken council housing back in house because they now 'reject' outsourcing, but to save £1.2 million in a series of cuts including the closure of dementia care homes, attacks to youth services and reduced bin collections.

Residents are seriously concerned about possible rent increases and

have no faith that needed renovation work, that wasn't done by Sheffield Homes, will be done by the council. Questions also remain over job losses.

Sheffield Socialist Party demands no job losses, all former Sheffield Homes workers to be given jobs with decent pay; mass renovation of homes to a good standard; no increases in rents and for a mass building of council homes to solve the city's housing crisis.

Ken Loach at the BBC DVD box set raffle - £1 a ticket. Phone 020 8988 8771. The draw will take place on 10 March. Includes Cathy Come Home

Get involved I'd like to join the Socialist Party I'd like more information about the Socialist Party

Donate I'd like to donate £ _____ to the Socialist Party **please make cheques payable to Socialist Party**

Subscribe 12 issues £9 6 months £18 1 year £36 **please make cheques payable to Socialist Publications Ltd**

Western Europe: 12 issues £16, half year £32, year £50 **Rest of world:** 12 issues £25, half year £50, year £90

Return slip or pay at www.socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

Name _____
Address and postcode _____
tel/email _____

Return to: Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD or phone 020 8988 8777 to pay by card, to arrange a direct debit, or to join.

Credit card No: _____
Name: _____ Start Date: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Security Code: _____ Issue No: _____

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2012				Deadline 30 March
South West	1,400	1,007	■	■	■	■	■
Northern	600	371	■	■	■	■	■
North West	1,200	704	■	■	■	■	■
Wales	2,300	1,290	■	■	■	■	■
Yorkshire	2,900	1,582	■	■	■	■	■
East Midlands	1,550	788	■	■	■	■	■
London	6,100	2,344	■	■	■	■	■
Southern	1,200	446	■	■	■	■	■
Eastern	1,200	440	■	■	■	■	■
West Midlands	2,100	723	■	■	■	■	■
South East	1,000	34	■	■	■	■	■
England & Wales	3,450	197	■	■	■	■	■
TOTAL	25,000	9,931	■	■	■	■	■

Iran: Tensions with the US and its allies are ratcheted-up

Workers and poor must rely on their own strength to resist

Niall Mulholland

War clouds are gathering, once again, over the Middle East. Heightening tensions over the last months between the US and its allies and Iran have seen covert assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, cyber warfare, attacks on Iranian military and missile installations, and a build-up of Western forces in the region and speculation of military preparations for air attacks on Iran.

All this is centred on Western claims that Iran is rapidly trying to acquire nuclear bombs, which the mass media faithfully repeats. Under this pretext, the US has imposed financial sanctions against Iranian oil exports, alongside a European Union oil embargo.

It is not Tehran's ruling elite but working people and the poor in Iran who suffer the burden of the sanctions, which have already had a devastating effect through massive price hikes.

Nuclear proliferation

It is against these mounting tensions that the Guardian newspaper (25/02/12) leaked a confidential report by the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that claims Iran has "dramatically accelerated its production" of enriched uranium, while refusing to cooperate with an investigation of evidence that it "may have worked on designing a bomb".

The IAEA report could lead to yet more sanctions against Tehran and increased military threats by the US and its allies.

The US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta warned that there is "a strong likelihood" Israel's military will attack Iran between April and June.

In response, the Iranian regime denies it has ever carried out research or development on nuclear

Iran is not a 'united' country: a few rich people benefit from the exploitation of the majority

weapons and insists its programme is for entirely peaceful purposes.

Surrounded by the nuclear-armed Israel and Pakistan, hostile Gulf States and by US army bases, from the Iranian regime's point of view there are some compelling reasons to want to acquire nuclear weapons.

It will not be lost on Tehran's rulers that Gaddafi was overthrown in a Western-led attack on Libya, after giving up his nuclear programme in 2003. Afghanistan and Iraq, neither of which had nuclear weapons, were both invaded by the US and its allies. Yet Pakistan, which did harbour the Taliban and holds nuclear arms, was declared an "ally" in the US-led 'war on terror'.

The people of Iran have the right, of course, to defend themselves from imperialist attacks. Socialists call for international solidarity, based on the workers' movement worldwide, to stop imperialist ag-

image not available

gression against Iran. A renewal of the revolutionary movements in North Africa and the Middle East, including possible revolts of the oppressed Palestinian masses, would be a powerful counterweight to Israeli and imperialist aggression and military interventions.

At the same time, socialists are also opposed to nuclear weapons, which ultimately can only guarantee 'mutually assured destruction', and campaign for the scrapping of all nuclear weapons, starting with those awesome arsenals held by the hypocritical big powers, like the US, Britain and France.

Israel too holds hundreds of nuclear weapons and refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or allow the IAEA to monitor its nuclear programme.

In their more candid moments, leading US officials admit that a nuclear armed Iran is not immediately pending. When recently asked: "Are they trying to develop a nuclear weapon?" Defence secretary Panetta bluntly replied: "No".

The main motive behind the Western aggression towards Iran is the change in the balance of forces since the 2003 Iraq war and US-led invasion. The collapse of the Saddam regime saw Shia-based parties come to power in Iraq, which are influenced by Shia-majority Iran, as well as the strengthening of Iran's position throughout the region.

The mass revolutionary movements that overthrew Western allies, Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt, last year, were further setbacks for the US and its allies in the region. In the view of the US and other imperialist powers, Iran, like its ally Syria, acts as an obstacle to vital Western imperialist economic and strategic interests in the energy-rich Middle East.

Combustible situation

Although Washington seeks 'regime change' in Tehran, Barack Obama appears to want to avoid a military attack on Iran, at least until this year's US presidential elections are over.

The US has already had to withdraw its forces from Iraq and is bogged down in another deeply unpopular, costly and unwinnable

war in Afghanistan. Another open-ended war against Iran would be met with mass opposition in the US and across the globe.

But the US is not the only factor in this highly combustible situation. Israel is a vital ally of the US in the Middle East but the Israeli ruling class and military tops also have their own interests to pursue. Israel bombed similar civilian nuclear energy facilities in Iraq in 1981 and in Syria in 2007. The autocratic ruling elites of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states – some of which have large, poor and restive Shia populations – are also pressing for military action against Iran.

The US's growing and provocative military presence in the Persian Gulf and the escalation of tensions between the West and Iran risk triggering war, most likely starting with an Israeli bombing raid on Iran's nuclear facilities. Iranian retaliation against Israel would see US and European powers conduct air and naval attacks against Iran.

In reply, Iran has threatened to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, through which over 30% of the globe's crude oil passes. The conflict could spread, drawing in the pro-Western Gulf States.

Iranian masses

An attack on Iran would cause outrage among the masses of the region. Huge protest demonstrations against Western imperialism, Israel and the reactionary Gulf rulers would sweep the capitals. Such mass street protests would also act as a spur to the revolutionary movements in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Iranian ruling elite is attempting to exploit the Western powers' sanctions and threats of a military attack to 'unite' the Iranian 'nation' behind it, to divert the masses from high unemployment, falling living standards and autocratic rule, and to paper over the deep cracks within the regime, which March's parliamentary elections may further expose.

In the first instance, the masses will rally to defend the 'nation' against imperialist aggression. But Iran is not a 'united' country: a few rich people benefit from the exploi-

tation of the majority. The regime has carried out attacks on workers and the poor, including cutting sub-

The main motive behind the Western aggression towards Iran is the change in the balance of forces since the 2003 Iraq war

sidies on essential goods. This is on top of a repressive, stultifying state that dictates every aspect of people's lives.

Class issues and democratic demands will increasingly come to the fore, as well as open opposition to the regime.

In preparation for such mass movements, it is vital that the working class learns the lessons of the 2009 opposition protests that rocked Iran.

The limited appeal of the pro-capitalist, neoliberal leadership of the 'Green' movement, along with the lack of independent action by the working class, gave the regime space to brutally crack down on the protests.

The working class must rely on its own strength, as was seen in recent strikes and in the struggles to build independent unions. Neither the regime nor the pro-capitalist 'reformist' opposition leaders can guarantee jobs, housing, education, a living wage and lasting democratic rights or conduct a real struggle against imperialism.

Only a resurgence of mass opposition protests, led this time by the organised working class, can successfully struggle for democratic rights and fundamental social and economic change.

The working class needs to build its own independent mass party to struggle to overthrow the reactionary Mullahs and to fight for a workers' and poor people's government, which would take the huge oil wealth and other key parts of the economy into democratic public ownership and begin the social transformation of the country.

The Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:

image not available

Greece: Paul Murphy solidarity visit

Workers in struggle and discussions with the Greek left.

Paul Murphy, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) member of the European parliament

image not available

China: The Wukan uprising and its lessons

Workers' strikes and new local rebellions use the slogan "Learn from Wukan"

Vincent Kolo and Zhang Shujie, Chinaworker.info

image not available

Tunisia: Hands off the UGTT trade union

For a one-day general strike against the attacks on the trade unions and for the full implementation of the revolution's objectives

CWI statement

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.

Our map shows Utopia!

"Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day" was the unions' slogan in the 1926 general strike. It is just as relevant today - we are expected to work longer and harder for less pay. Sadly all the big political parties are more concerned about looking after millionaires rather than the millions of working class people.

"It's a poor map that doesn't have Utopia on it" is a variation on Oscar Wilde's famous old quote, and it could easily apply to the UK as its people face attacks on their jobs, pay, pensions, dignity and self respect.

Hard-pressed voters should help in forming a new mass workers' party which would strive for a genuine socialist agenda and manifesto. An important step towards it would be standing candidates for TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) in May's council elections.

Lin Black

Forever blowing bubbles

Capitalism seems incapable of learning. One survey carried out for construction companies in Germany recently found that banks are offering more loans now, than at any time in the last 20 years, including before the recession (FT 21 February).

When the house-price bubble burst, investors sought refuge in "safe havens", including government bonds in Southern Europe. Now Greece is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, capital is fleeing to "strong" economies like Germany inflating, some say, another unsustainable bubble - this time right at the heart of Europe. This is at a time when German banks lie exposed to billions of Euros of dodgy debt in Greece.

Capitalism is a rabid animal, driven mad by its insatiable thirst for profits. There's no place to hide from it: we've got to put it down.

Ross Saunders

Nationalise energy firms

Centrica, the energy giant that owns British Gas, reported £2.41 billion profit in 2011. Centrica's chairman, Old Etonian Sam Laidlaw, is now expected to receive a seven-figure bonus payment having received a £900,000 bonus on top of his £941,000 salary last year. British Gas chief, Phil Bentley, will have

image not available

to settle for a mere £700,000 bonus (up from £621,000 last year) after BG recorded profits falling to £522 million. BG, one of the UK's 'Big Six' energy companies, is ripping off hard-pressed customers to make mega-profits. 5.5 million people in Britain suffer from 'fuel poverty', ie they spend more than

10% of household income on energy. Yet in 2011, British Gas increased its charges for consumers, raising gas and electricity prices by 18% and 16% respectively. The only solution is that these energy companies are nationalised so that prices are slashed and investment in green energy is vastly increased.

Simon Carter, east London

Who killed Scroogle?

'Google killed off Scroogle' sounds like a children's TV story - but the big bad Google search engine has been annoyed for some years with an independent non-profit web service called Scroogle.

Scroogle's crime was to offer Google searches without the ads and without Google getting all your personal details on file as they are wont to do. Google tried dirty tricks against Scroogle, seeking for the US courts to declare it

image not available

illegal but even their million-dollar lawyers weren't up to that trick. They then blocked all the Scroogle computers from using Google!

Not long ago, Google changed its privacy policy to give itself more liberties with user data. Consequently search volume increased on Scroogle.

Google and Microsoft are supposedly rival corporations but Microsoft even blocked anybody using the word "scroogle.org" from MSN messenger. The final straw was a series of "denial of service attacks" on Scroogle by person or persons unknown.

This is a good object lesson for anyone who thinks capitalism equates with freedom of choice.

Derek McMillan

U-turn Anderson

Liverpool council leader Joe Anderson has done a complete u-turn on the city's directly elected mayor. He now favours it and intends to see himself installed into the position without a referendum. He justifies this by saying he has been promised a cheque for £130 million.

The city council is already run by a handful of councillors called the cabinet. The mayoral position will continue this anti-democratic process, concentrating power into one person's hands.

But things are not as Joe Anderson pretends. The money is spread over five years with strings attached. One string is that it cannot be used to restore the savage cuts Anderson has implemented, with more to follow.

Electing a mayor won't improve the lives of those already blighted by cuts. What is needed is a leadership, accountable to an elected council, that's prepared to fight for resources to benefit all Liverpool citizens.

Frank Bowen, Liverpool

Solidarity with Occupy London protesters



Last stand of the occupiers photo Paul Mattsson (see photo gallery on www.socialistparty.org.uk)

Just after midnight on Tuesday 28 February riot police brutally evicted the peaceful Occupy London protesters from their camp outside St Paul's Cathedral, which had been set up on 15 October last year.

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) expresses its full solidarity to all those involved and stands firmly against all attacks on the right to protest.

The occupy camp, while relatively small in numbers, was able to have a big impact. The slogan 'we are the 99%' chimed with millions of people in the country who are facing brutal

austerity, while greedy bankers and big business continue to get bigger and bigger rewards.

Alongside other protests, including last year's YFJ Jarrow March for Jobs, this movement has contributed to forcing the government to try to defend the capitalist system - a system for the '1%'.

But David Cameron and others' talk of 'moral' or 'responsible' capitalism doesn't wash, especially when it comes from one of the most brutal, nasty, 'slash and burn' governments in history.

Capitalism is a system built on

exploitation and is necessarily 'irresponsible'. That's why we need to change the system if we are to have a society organised to meet the needs of the majority, not the greed of the minority.

YFJ says: "Take the wealth off the 1% - nationalise the banks and use the vast sums held in the vaults of the super rich to create jobs, build houses and provide services for the 99%. Going forwards, we hope to work with those involved in the occupy movement to help fight for a better society - one run for the millions not the millionaires."

Last week three senior judges decided in favour of the City of London Corporation's removal of the 'Occupy' protesters from outside St Paul's Cathedral. Barrister Michael Paget, having spoken for them in three court hearings on their right to protest in this manner, told the media:

"Throughout this process, the seriousness of Occupy's message was never questioned. It was recognised by the trial judge and the court of appeal... The Occupy message raised issues of extreme public importance. This dysfunctional sys-

tem needs to be called to account.

"Britain has a highly successful car industry, and yet the engineers are not given a new sports car as a Christmas bonus! In contrast, bankers seem divorced from the remaining 99% of the country... (They) plunder the coffers to grant themselves unjustified, unwarranted... bonuses that are grotesque. The Occupy message has made a difference and will continue to do so."

This barrister clearly had great sympathy with the protesters, for whom he gave his services pro

bono. He said that St Paul himself was supposed to have been a humble tent-maker (before falling off his donkey and changing his name from Saul to Paul).

Michael said in an earlier hearing that he was confident that St Paul would naturally have supported the anti-capitalist protesters who live in tents, rather than the arch-defenders of the system - the big-wigs of the Cathedral, the Stock Exchange and the Corporation of London - said to be one of the richest entities in Europe.

Clare Doyle

Sun launch can't hide corrupt practices

Last week News International media mogul Rupert Murdoch happily posed with a copy of the new 'squeaky clean' Sunday Sun. But the day after the Sunday Sun's launch fanfare a senior police officer revealed to the ongoing Leveson media inquiry that the Sun, over a period of years, had bribed officials in government, police, military, prisons and health service. These illegal bribes amounted to hundreds of thousands of pounds and, according to police, were openly discussed at the Sun. If this corruption was part of the Sun's culture it begs the question, how far up the News International hierarchy did it go? Ben Norman updates readers on the murky world of Murdoch's empire.

Rupert Murdoch boasts that his new Sun on Sunday sold three million copies. But the Leveson inquiry, launched following phone hacking at its predecessor the News of the World, continues to reveal criminality throughout his media empire.

Seven months ago the News of the World was shut down, the result of public revulsion as the paper's phone hacking practices began to be revealed. Then, Murdoch made an act of appearing repentant and humbled in front of a Parliamentary committee while his bid to take over BSkyB failed.

The speed of the new paper's launch shows that this repentant side of Murdoch's PR campaign is

over. It is also an attempt to seize the initiative before more damaging revelations at Leveson make the launch impossible.

Only nine days followed Murdoch's announcement and the paper's launch, but in that time new evidence kept highlighting corruption across News International (NI). Two days before the launch the police 'watchdog', the Independent Police Complaints Commission, announced an inquiry into claims that a senior figure at NI was given a leaked report into the original phone-hacking investigation.

That same day it was revealed that News of the World investigator Glenn Mulcaire had hacked the

phone of Alice Sheridan, the mother of former Socialist MSP [Scottish member of parliament] Tommy Sheridan, when she was suffering from cancer. New court documents also revealed that senior NI management deliberately deleted emails related to phone hacking.

This week the Leveson inquiry enters its second phase, an examination of the relationship between the press and the police. Senior Met Police figures including Andy Hayman, who led the original investigation, and former Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson are to be recalled as the inquiry considers allegations including bribery.

Despite Murdoch's PR offensive, the web of corruption between Britain's most powerful police force and his media empire will continue to be exposed.

Shadowy connections between the establishment and media corporations are deeply ingrained in the capitalist system. Only a fully open and publicly accountable inquiry, with representation from trade unions (including journalists), could challenge them.

The battle against internet censorship

US copyright law threatens UK student

Dawn Hunt
Socialist Party, Sheffield

On 21 January I organised a 'Rally of the 99%: Voice of the Voiceless'. The rally was part of the third national Occupy conference, held in Sheffield - a coming together of the Occupy movement within the UK and Ireland.

Speakers ranged from the unemployed, people with additional needs, those suffering in the housing crisis and people affected by cuts in Surestart services. Particular emphasis was on cuts to benefits through the welfare reform bill.

The unions are organising for another day of strike action to defend pensions, jobs and pay. The rest of the 99%, those of us who have no pensions to fight for, let alone access to the job market, must link up with this action so we are all standing shoulder to shoulder, in the fight to live with dignity.

Julia O'Dwyer spoke about the case of her son Richard, a 23 year old Hallam University student, who faces extradition to the US, having set up the TVShack website which US authorities say hosts links to pirated copyrighted films and television programmes. Richard has not been charged with breaking the law in the UK.

Speaking to Sam Morecroft for the Socialist, Julia told us that when police first called Richard in for questioning on 29 November 2010: "two American men were present throughout the proceedings". But her son was not informed of any possibility he could be extradited, and chose not to request legal representation.

It was not until 23 May 2011 that Richard was told that all charges brought against him by UK police would be dropped, but he would be subjected to an extradition hearing. Julia said Richard's extradition hearing had felt like a "conveyor belt" where around 30 individuals were waiting to be rubber-stamped for extradition.

Following the hearing on 13 January, Julia and Richard must wait for up to three months for a letter confirming the extradition from the home secretary Theresa May. Then Richard will have two weeks to appeal.

●For updates on the campaign and details of how to support Richard O'Dwyer in his fight against extradition, please visit Julia's blog at www.juliasblog-the-fight-of-our-lives.blogspot.com or follow Julia on Twitter on @jrodwyer. For details of the 'Friends Extradited' campaign, please visit www.friends-extradited.org

image not available

Who gains from internet censorship?

In these times when the mainstream media tries to spoon-feed us our views, the internet is letting us all express ourselves. Between pictures of cats and toddlers playing table tennis, police brutality has been exposed, protests organised, voices heard and government spin shattered.

Big business detractors argue that such freedom of information is hurting their astronomical profits. But file sharing has levelled the playing field for many small artists and independent film studios, letting creativity flourish.

Recently the US government fronted the Stop Online Piracy and Protect IP Acts (SOPA and PIPA respectively) under the guise of protecting intellectual property rights. The EU is seeking to do similar with the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).

These proposals would mean any website accused of copyright infringement or association with accused websites could be censored. This call to censor the internet does not come from impoverished artists. It is made in their name by corporations and businesses, who cream a large chunk from their earnings.

But only the top 25% lose out from file-sharing. The other 75%, the artists who probably do deserve more funding, benefit. Instead of having Jonathan Ross or Chris Moyles tell you what you like, you can use Grooveshark or Moviedatacenter to suggest new artists and films. Even big-name money-making artists like South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone agree that file sharing actually benefits artists. It gives smaller names an audience and encourages fresh ideas.

This will mean that any association with elements of copyright in-

fringement on the internet will see you censored, deported and imprisoned. Imagine somebody posts a link on a website you run.

If this link is deemed to be an infringement of copyright, your website can be taken down and you could be prosecuted. That is why such huge protests took place over SOPA and PIPA in the USA and are now taking place against ACTA in most major European cities.

Reddit, Wikipedia and many other websites ceased operation for a day in protest against the US government's proposals, giving a glimpse of what the internet will become if these laws are passed.

Nial Vivian

Socialism Today



The Socialist Party's magazine
March 2011 issue:

Out now!

£2.50 including postage from:
Socialism Today PO Box 24697,
London E11 1YD.

socialismtoday.org
[@socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)
www.socialismtoday.org
020 8988 8773

Europe - Young people fight ACTA

Sebastian Kugler
SLP (CWI in Austria) and
Michael Koschitzki
SAV (CWI Germany)

Thousands of young people across Europe have joined protests against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). In Germany, the federal government tried to limit protests by publicly announcing, just before the 11 February day of action, that they will not sign the ACTA agreement and will 're-examine' it. But young people did not believe their promises and came out to show their opposition to internet restrictions.

The ACTA wants more limits to internet usage. If ratified, it will force internet providers to control users and check their data, based on so-called copyright laws.

Users infringing copyright can be cut off from the internet, so copyright owners could stop normal sharing and content-using and possibly end services such as Youtube and Facebook.

Internet usage is being criminalised - in 2011, over 200,000 people in Germany were warned or penalised for downloading music, films, etc. Dresden's state attorney announced plans to impeach users of movie-streaming - previously only providers of movie-streaming were brought to court.

This infuriates young people. On 11 February it provoked the biggest protests in Poland since the mass movement against Stalinist rule. The online-petition against ACTA already had over two million supporters. Demonstrations in Eastern Europe were especially big.

In Germany, there were protests in over 55 cities with around 20,000 participants in Munich. In Austria, protests took place in all the bigger cities. The participants were overwhelmingly teenagers and young

students, many of them on their first demonstration.

Many people were mobilised by announcements on file-sharing and movie-streaming websites, although the 'Pirate Party' in Germany and Austria helped popularise the demonstrations by launching an ACTA campaign website. This party got 8.9% in the Berlin state elections and now has up to 9% in national polls.

In Vienna, the right-wing BZO (a split from the FPÖ) tried to capitalise on the protests. Members of the SLP (CWI members in Austria) confronted the nationalists and handed out leaflets explaining that a fight against ACTA has to be international and anti-racist.

The protests forced the Austrian Conservative Party (ÖVP) to withdraw support for ACTA. At present it is unclear whether governments will cling to ACTA. The ratification process is already halted in some countries.

However, the "German content alliance", a lobby group of private media companies and even public media, calls for ratification of ACTA and will put pressure on the government.

The EU Commission is reportedly trying to renegotiate an agreement called IPRED (Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive), containing basically the same attacks. If they continue, there will be massive protests.

Young people on these protests also opposed increasing surveillance, and supported internet privacy. Banners mentioned the banning of YouTube videos because of copyright restrictions.

Internet usage plays a big role in many young people's lives and its criminalisation and restrictions could provoke radicalisation and further protests.

Members of the SAV and SLP in Germany and Austria produced

leaflets taking up the question of the big entertainment companies' profiteering and demanding nationalisation of them.

It is significant that young people chose the way of mass protest. They have now taken part in a united demonstration, mobilising their friends and fellow school students to take a stand on an issue - and now with evidence of some success.

This will provide important lessons for the battles ahead. As the capitalist crisis steals the prospect of a decent future from even more people, many will seek a way out based on mass resistance.

image not available

Stop Press:

The protests have forced the European Commission to suspend its efforts to ratify ACTA and instead refer it to the European Court to see whether it "violates any fundamental EU rights". However, this slight and possibly temporary climbdown should not stop the protests.

We can save our public services!

STOP THE HEALTH BILL

National demo now!

A London hospital worker

Tory Andrew Lansley's infamous Health and Social Care bill has been described as a "great mistake", "a mess", "unnecessary in many ways" and "setting the NHS back". Not the words of a militant trade unionist, but of Lord Crisp, the former chief executive of the NHS. But it is far from just Lords lining up in opposition to this hated bill.

After being heckled by health campaigners outside Downing Street, Lansley claimed the bill had the support of "doctors and nurses across the country". Surprising then that a poll has shown 92.5% of Royal College of Physicians members want the bill withdrawn. The RCP is holding an extraordinary general meeting to decide whether to ballot its members on outright rejection of the bill.

The Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health balloted their members on the same question. 79% said the bill should be withdrawn in its entirety.

This result is particularly significant as the RCPCH was one of the few health professional bodies hand picked to attend the Downing Street meeting on the bill, which excluded known opponents including the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, and health unions Unison, Unite, and the GMB.

RCPCH president Professor Stephenson said the meeting included no real consultation as "the prime minister made it clear the government will press ahead with the bill" despite the "dissatisfaction amongst the people delivering these changes on the ground".

An Observer feature on privatisation revealed why the Con-Dems are so determined to push the bill through; it showed that the "cur-

rent value to the private sector" of health is "around £24.2 billion".

Big business is eyeing up the health service as a source of profit at a time when the crisis of capitalism means restricted opportunities to invest profitably elsewhere. This poses a major threat to health workers' pay and working conditions as well as to the service.

But the mass opposition by the public and health workers to the bill means there is a very real chance it can be defeated. Lansley is looking more desperate by the day, shown by his refusal to let the public see the results of a recent risk assessment on the bill.

We call on the health trade unions to take a lead on this opposition. They must plan mass action, including balloting for strike action, and immediately call a national weekend demonstration to galvanise the huge public anger at the government's plans to dismantle our NHS.

Kirklees Sure Start children centres



Lobbying Kirklees council's budget meeting photo Huddersfield SP

Jackie Grunsell Huddersfield Socialist Party

"Kirklees council looks set for U-turn on proposal to downgrade children's centres" proclaimed the headline in Huddersfield's local paper.

This comes after several weeks of intensive campaigning to save the Sure Start centres from plans to dramatically reduce the services they provide.

The council's so-called consultation process, now at an end, means a decision will be made in March. The campaign organised public meetings of many angry parents and staff. 5,000 petition signatures forced a full council debate on the issue.

The press has been bombarded as have our local elected representatives, leading to

support from three MPs and enough councillors to hold up the cuts and hopefully stop them altogether.

Protesters lobbied the council's budget-setting meeting to make their voices heard. The leader of the council has been forced to state an intention that "the range of acute, intermediate and universal services will be available in each area".

However, the campaign is waiting to see the details of new proposals and isn't taking anything for granted. We have to keep the pressure up but we clearly stand a chance of winning.

The next step is a demonstration through the streets of Huddersfield. We urge anyone who can to attend.

Assemble 12.30pm, Saturday 3 March, St George's Square, outside Huddersfield railway station

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include: PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education,

available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'Free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting

trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!