



TORIES STAND FOR THE 1%...



WE NEED A VOICE FOR THE 99%!

Only one week after the government's budget of new, swingeing cuts in jobs and services, accompanied by huge tax breaks for the rich and big business, it's been revealed that super-rich Tory party donors had earlier wined and dined with the prime minister, David Cameron. This 'cash for access' expose is just another example of the rottenness of the capitalist political system and how the establishment parties are completely intertwined with big business, as Coventry Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist explains.

'**C**am dine with me' is secret influence. Millions of pounds change hands and, I have no doubt, favours for millionaires ensue. Just look at the cut in the top rate of income tax and the cut in corporation tax for example.

I'm not surprised it still goes on - capitalist politics is not about organising society and its resources to benefit the majority; it's about a thin privileged layer - the 1% - buying individual influence for measures to benefit individuals, a tiny minority -

and done at the expense of the 99%.

But four dinners in Downing Street, or even one at Chequers, isn't only what is really rotten in politics.

There's a thousand more ties from the playing fields of Eton, via Oxbridge, to the Bar and the boardroom, where the tiny minority who rule the country mix and form allegiances. As David Cameron said: "I have known most of those attending for many years".

That layer of capitalist politicians have a loyalty to a system that brings wealth and security to a tiny fraction

of the country - at the expense of poverty and insecurity for millions. That's what needs challenging.

And Labour, with its ties to business interests, involving so many ex-Cabinet ministers in directorships and lobbying firms, is little different.

Trade unions should break with Labour and instead discuss funding a radical socialist alternative - the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - that condemns the corruption and patronage in parliament and big business.

He who pays the piper...

A handful of the guests at four dinner parties at Number 10 had given £18 million to the Tory party - and also, apparently, money to climate change deniers and eurosceptics. They included hedge fund traders, oil traders and the odd billionaire city businessman.

According to Tory MP Andrew Tyrie: "Prior to 1997 about 6% of public companies made donations to the Conservative party, but 50% of knight-hoods and peerages went to the directors of companies who made such donations. A coincidence? I doubt it."

But was it much different under Labour? As the party progressively embraced Tory and big business policies, particularly in the 1990s, so did it ape their fundraising methods.

Labour Party conference stopped being 'a parliament for the labour and trade union movement' and filled up with corporate sponsors paying thousands of pounds for seats at dinner tables with Labour leaders in what used to be called "a specially designed commercial package for business visitors to conference".

One such company donating £36,000 for dinner tickets and conference tables, was Enron - the company involved in the world's largest securities fraud!

the **Socialist**

The paper of the Socialist Party. Issue 711.

The Socialist, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Published by Socialist Publications, printed by Newsfax International. ISSN 1366-9621

what we think

Budget for the 1% must be fought

The blatantly pro-rich budget of Chancellor George Osborne was met by a wave of outrage. There was incredulity that the top 1% had been made significantly better off, while pushing on with austerity for everyone else. Even some of the right-wing newspapers were incensed that the income of pensioners was attacked.

Inflaming anger further, Osborne had tried outright trickery, framing the changes in the guise of 'simplifying' tax for pensioners, removing a 'pointless' 50% tax on the rich and pretending to introduce more punitive measures against them.

Another attempt to con was his 'generosity' in raising the income tax starting threshold to £9,205 in April 2013. This was condemned as an "empty gesture" by the head of Citizens Advice, whose organisation estimated that poorer working families would only be £33 a year better off after their benefits are reduced to take into account the slightly higher net income.

£33 certainly won't cover the increased cost of petrol, fares, household bills, and so on. And what about the millions of people whose income is already below the present tax threshold?

At the same time, someone 'earning' £500,000 a year gains at least £17,000 a year from the reduction in the top rate of income tax. In addition, shareholders and directors of large companies were whooping with delight at the extra cut in corporation tax.

Other attacks included ending universal child benefit; forcing 300,000 more workers into the 40p tax band from April 2013; reducing planning regulations; and starting a path to regional public sector pay bargaining and increasing further the retirement age.

The biggest initial backlash however

was over the shocking withdrawal of tax allowances for pensioners, adding to the anger already burning among public sector workers at being forced to pay more, work longer and receive less pension. Osborne insultingly boasted that pensioners would though receive the "biggest cash increase in the state pension ever" - a miserable £5.30 a week.

Naked class interests

"Cowardly" for giving into the interests of the rich, said some commentators about the budget. But Osborne isn't trying to be an independent arbitrator between the classes in society; he's overtly looking after his own.

Tory and Lib Dem front benchers sat stony faced when Labour leader Ed Miliband demanded to know if they would personally gain from the abolition of the 50p tax band, as many of them will, including Cameron.

Have these millionaire ministers gone too far for the Tories' own good? Their tax gifts for the rich, attack on pensioners, threats of a further £10 billion in benefit cuts and other policies have led to speculation on the electoral damage being done to the coalition parties.

"Osborne has re-toxified the Tory brand" assessed John Rentoul in the Independent on Sunday, who went on to say that now, only one-fifth of the way into the spending cuts, "cannot be the time to announce" the ditching of the 50p tax rate.

Economic stimulus?

Times writer Philip Collins summarised a view of many capitalist economists when he dismissed as "absurd" the "idea that an income tax cut from 50p to 45p is a stimulus package ... especially so because Mr Osborne bragged

How about ending more of the tax avoidance loopholes that the rich use?

Or helping small businesses to secure the loans they need?

Or a levy on the piles of cash lying idle in company coffers?

that his budget meant that the super-rich will pay five times more tax than before".

The corporation tax cut will ensure Britain has one of the lowest rates of this tax in the G20; but low tax rates don't automatically attract investment.

For instance, Britain's top companies are estimated to have over £700 billion in cash reserves sitting idle, which isn't being used productively because of lack of a strong consumer market, not because of the rate of tax.

Reducing corporation tax and the top rate of income tax cuts the spending power of consumers further, by raising less money for the public sector and so fuelling the Con-Dems' crazy driving down of public sector wages and other public spending.

In February public sector net borrowing was a record high for a February; cuts and more cuts are not digging a way out of the crisis. Regionally imposed pay freezes would cut consumer spending further, as would the threatened 880,000 public sector job losses by 2017. For the 2.8 million unemployed, a

million of them young, there was nothing in the budget, and no prospect of economic recovery in sight.

It is not that there were no other options; far from it. Even some of the articles by pro-capitalist commentators suggested measures that could seriously raise money from the rich to use to boost the public sector and the economy as a whole.

For instance, rather than increased one-off stamp duty when a £2 million property is bought, how about an annual council tax charge on such properties that better reflects the proportion of income paid in council tax by the poorest in society?

Or ending more of the tax avoidance loopholes that the rich use? Or helping small businesses to secure the loans they need? And how about a levy on the piles of cash lying idle in company coffers?

The Socialist advocates going much further in order to fully transform the lives of the 99%

**CAPITALISM
IS CRISIS**

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- including nationalisation, under democratic workers' control and management, of the key sectors of the economy with compensation paid on the basis of proven need.

But even a cursory look at some of the limited measures that could be taken shows that workers don't have to tolerate the austerity being imposed.

Pressure will inevitably build up again on the trade union leaders - as it did last year - to mobilise the strength of the millions-strong workers' movement to fight back.

Toasting the cuts - councils show no remorse

Linda Taaffe

David Blanchflower, a former member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, pointed out in the Independent: "The latest labour market release last week showed that since June 2010, public sector employment is down by 350,000. Education is down by 94,000, police by 25,000, health and social work by 27,000 and the NHS... by 35,000".

You would think that those who are directly responsible for this state of affairs, carrying out the dictates of the coalition government, would hang their heads in shame and seek to hide from the public gaze. Not a bit of it.

The Daily Telegraph under the headline, "Council chiefs' five-star dinner for handling cuts", reported that 1,200 senior council officials "celebrated" their achievements in the Great Room of London's Grosvenor House Hotel.

Redundancies awards

It was reported that: "The awards, run by the Local Government Chronicle, were hosted by John Culshaw, the impressionist. He is understood to charge around £10,000 per appearance." Furthermore: "After a networking reception, guests dined

on a salad of Serrano ham, asparagus, rocket and Parmesan. This was followed by tournedos of beef in a smoked garlic and red wine sauce with pancetta, celeriac..." etc.

In a masterly understatement,

the Telegraph reported that those present "had overseen redundancies and cuts to services". Among them were six staff sent by Sheffield council, who stayed overnight in London hotels, amassing a bill of

£2,825. This council eliminated 870 jobs last year and is intending to cut a further 690 in order "to balance the books".

Warrington, which unbelievably was nominated "for most improved council after receiving three red flags from the Audit Commission for financial mismanagement and child protection failings, spent £1,700 on tickets and £1,550 on hotel rooms".

East Lothian council, which was also censored by Audit Scotland five years ago, nevertheless was cited as "most improved council". The council's provost travelled to the awards by train from Scotland, staying overnight. The bill came to £3,605.30! Brent council which did not have far to go, "dipped into its youth services budget to pay for one of its three £270 tickets".

The most expensive tickets for this event cost £7,200 for a table of ten, which entitled guests to bottles of champagne, followed by port and a cheese board. Afterwards, delegates danced at the disco, and played roulette until 2am at a charity casino set up on the balcony!

Unbelievably, this obscene event was "justified", according to a spokesman for the Local Government Association on the grounds that "these awards recognise and celebrate the hard work and dedication of those individuals who continue to deliver vital services to

communities at a time when budgets are severely stretched".

In the Alice in Wonderland world inhabited by these butchers of jobs and services, closing libraries, health centres, slashing jobs in social services and introducing a reign of terror in the workplace are "delivering vital services".

Workers' representatives

The Telegraph, with its right-wing agenda of discrediting the 'state', including local government, which they hope will pave the way for more privatisation, has an interest in publicising events like this.

For us, the working class and the labour movement, corruption of this character - for this is what it is - provides a further example of the rottenness of local government when it is in the hands of capitalist parties, which includes the Labour Party.

It provides further ammunition for raising the necessity for incorruptible representatives of working people - in a new mass workers' party - to fight the cuts and campaign for control of local councils so that they can be used in the interests of the working class.

Perhaps anti-cuts campaigners could ask questions of their own council - did they send a delegation to this obscene junket, and how much was spent on it?



World warming even faster than thought

Socialist plan needed

If further proof were needed to show that the Tories' election pledge to be the "greenest government ever" was a lie it has now been provided. One of those exposed as a 'dining donor' is hedge-fund manager Michael Hintze who, as well as handing £1.5 billion to the Tories, backs Tory grandee Lord Lawson's misnamed climate disinformation 'thinktank', the Global Warming Policy Foundation. It seems his cash is money well-spent. The Financial Times reports that the government is considering removing any requirement on big business to report their poisonous CO2 emissions. Here Pete Mason explains the threat posed by escalating emissions.

2010 is now thought to be the warmest year on record. Previously, the accelerated warming of the arctic was insufficiently taken into account by one of the main global temperature records.

Now, new data paints a dramatic picture of our warming planet: due to a sharp rise in carbon dioxide output from industrial activity over the last two decades, the world is warming faster than we thought. Yet

What's the alternative?

A socialist plan of production could both remove the private profit motive which prevents capitalist industry from abandoning fossil fuels, and at the same time construct the necessary infrastructure to cope with our destabilised climate. Under capitalism, as always, the most vulnerable on the planet are left to suffer and die.

dire warnings and conclusive scientific evidence has had no effect on capitalist governments wedded to their paymasters, in particular the major oil companies.

Today the effects of global warming are manifest in deadly floods and droughts of previously unimaginable proportions. Global emissions of CO2 increased by nearly 50% between 1990 and 2010, with a record breaking 5.8% increase in global CO2 emissions between 2009 and 2010.

So much heat was added to the globe that in 2010, sea levels, normally rising three millimetres a year as a result of thermal expansion and extra melt water, actually fell by five millimetres, as our hotter atmosphere draws up more moisture from the earth and releases it as a flood.

As a result, over 2010 and 2011, Pakistan, Australia, the USA and Thailand saw unprecedented flooding. Only last month the BBC report-

2010 was the warmest year on record

ed that in Pakistan, where 18 million people were affected by two years of record floods, millions are still in dire need and facing the danger of malnutrition.

Meanwhile the drought and hose-pipe ban in southern and eastern England is just a pale reflection of that faced by many in the neocolonial world.

The Somali famine has thankfully been declared over, although more than two million people are still at a high risk of malnutrition and food insecurity.

Severe droughts in Mexico, Syria, Argentina and Portugal are the most recent, while an on-going drought in Texas, which experienced the

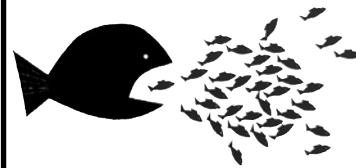
lowest rainfall since 1917 in 2011, has hit food production badly.

The birthplace and resting home of climate change denial, the USA has suffered so much extreme weather, such as the March 2012 tornadoes which killed 39, that four out of five people live in an area that has been affected by weather-related disasters since 2006, a recent study found.

Not surprisingly then, despite the denialist propaganda of Fox News and other US TV channels, a growing majority in the USA now believe global warming is real, and a majority reject the oil-rich deniers' claims that global warming is part of some as yet undiscovered natural cycle.



Them...



'Ring-fenced'?

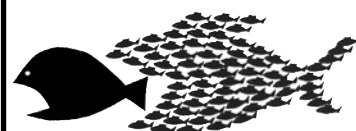
As it stands, the NHS - supposedly 'ringfenced' from austerity - has to find £50 billion of so-called efficiency savings by the end of the decade. The government claims to be protecting frontline services but the number of nurses working in the NHS has decreased by 3,500 over the last year. And according to the chief of finance of the NHS, there is no shining light at the end of the tunnel. He said "It's really important that the service gets used to operating in this resource climate... It's not a question of just doing it for a year or two and then getting out of the woods; this is it as far as I can see ahead."

Healthy eating

Ever wondered why the government doesn't take health seriously? Perhaps who it takes its advice from might give an idea. For example to write policy on obesity, alcohol and diet-related disease, the government asks for help from companies including PepsiCo, Kellogg's, Mars, McDonald's and KFC. Hmm...

Election strategy

Tony Blair recently told Labour MPs: "We can't go into another election without the support of a single chief executive, as we did at the last election." What Labour MPs should really be remembering is that there are millions of working class people angry about jobs and services being cut, and only a handful of chief executives sniffing around for 'business-friendly' policies. But will they?



...& Us

Budget 2012: reject regional pay

One of the many attacks on workers in the budget is the proposal to introduce regional pay in the public sector, including the civil service. Katrine Williams, the chair of PCS Wales, said: "Holding down public sector pay in Wales will damage pay rates across the board. Poverty is the problem here which won't be solved by the Con-Dems stealing £1.25 billion out of public sector workers' pay packets."

In 2004, when this idea was last proposed, by a Labour government, the PCS civil service union commissioned a report by the thinktank the Bevan Foundation. This outlined the "complexity, inefficiency and likely disproportionate effect any move to regional pay would have on public sector workers, particularly women who comprise the majority of the public sector workforce."

"The private sector, in general, has abandoned the concept of local/regional pay. Tesco tried it a few years back but have reverted back to a zonal system of pay."

"If the government does want greater efficiency then it should return to national bargaining as an efficiency measure."

"PCS does not agree with any form of localised regional pay for two basic reasons:

"It is fundamentally unfair to pay two employees, working for the same employer on the same grade and doing the same duties, differing pay rates on the basis of the location of their workplace."

"There is no evidence that such a scheme would benefit local job-markets. It is more likely to have a detrimental effect on the local

economies, in already disadvantaged areas and would simply result in a deepening of the inequality that exists between London/South East and the rest of the UK."

Katrine Williams said "PCS members in the Department for Work and Pensions haven't had

It is fundamentally unfair to pay two employees, working for the same employer on the same grade and doing the same duties, differing pay rates

an inflation proofed pay rise for five years and making ends meet has become increasingly difficult with soaring costs of the essentials - rent, food and bills. It won't help the Welsh economy to drive our wages down further - we'll just have even less to spend in our local communities."

"Now is the time for trade unionists from the public and private sectors to all stand together against the Con-Dem government's attacks on pay, pensions, services and the welfare state."

This is underlined by a worker in the licensing department (DVLA) in Swansea: "Unofficially, DVLA already has regional pay. Our pay

is substantially lower than the rest of the transport department (our parent department). Management tries to justify this on 'recruit and retain' principles. In other words, in a low pay/high unemployment area like Swansea they don't need to pay much to get people to work for them."

"The new measures in the Budg-

et make this official and could make things worse. This is pure exploitation. We are not second class citizens and we deserve pay parity with colleagues throughout the UK."

The TUC has warned that reducing public sector wages by 1% would hit local economies by at least £1.7 billion a year.



3,000 people came from all over Ireland to a rally in Dublin on 24 March against the introduction of the regressive household tax, which is a set rate for every household. Only 2,000 could fit inside so speakers were sent to speak at the overflow rally outside. The Socialist Party's sister organisation in Ireland is playing a leading role in the campaign against the tax and calling for a strategy of mass non-payment. With less than a week to go until the government's deadline 85% of people have not registered to pay the tax photo Socialist Party Ireland

National action needed to stop the pensions robbery

Last week's issue of the Socialist carried an explanation of why the PCS civil service union had decided not to call action on 28 March. This was a direct consequence of the teachers' union NUT decision not to call national action on that day but instead to call a strike across London. This was in spite of Martin Powell-Davies, a Socialist Party member, arguing at the NUT national executive for national action on 28 March.

The following is an extract from the Socialist Party leaflet distributed to striking teachers on 28 March, which explains how the pensions battle can go forward.

After the massive show of trade union strength and unity on 30 November, this government could not have believed its luck when, just a few weeks later, the leaders of unions like ATL and Unison shamefully retreated and accepted the unacceptable terms of the 'Heads of Agreement' pensions offer, which would still mean paying more, working longer and getting less.

Weakness has only invited further attacks. While giving even more handouts to the wealthy top 1%,

Osborne announced in the Budget that pension ages will be rising even faster. A teacher in their 30s would not now have to work until 68 to get their full pension - but maybe to 70!

Faced with these attacks, union leaders can't afford to hesitate. Unions need to be fighting just as hard for their members, and for the millions that rely on schools and services, as the Con-Dems are for the millionaires.

While others ran for cover, unions including the NUT, UCU and PCS stood firm and regrouped, preparing their members for further national action on 28 March. But even the NUT leadership hesitated at the last minute and opted for a strike only across the London region.

Next phase

28 March must be the start of the next phase of the campaign, not the end. But isolated regional action can't put the government under pressure in the same way that united national strike action can.

NUT members in London, and across the country, have been asking why only London members were asked to strike. The fact is that,



photo Paul Mattsson

under pressure, and left isolated by others holding back from action like the NASUWT, a majority on the NUT executive lost faith that members would take more action. It has been left to the London NUT membership, and the hard work of local officers and school reps, to show that, given a lead, teachers will stand together.

But now how do we build from here? Delegates at the NUT annual conference over Easter have the responsibility to decide on the next stage of the campaign. The NUT executive agreed a flexible formula of "bringing all other regions and Wales, in turn or together, into pensions action". But no dates have yet been set for calling out other regions on strike.

If NUT conference votes to support regional action, then a clear and speedy calendar of rolling strikes needs to be announced so that the government, and trade unionists, know we are serious.

But Socialist Party Teachers believes that it would be better to call out everyone together in a national strike, supported by other unions. United national action is our most effective weapon. National strikes are also far easier to coordinate with other fighting unions, like the PCS, than regional activities.

Socialist Party Teachers believes we should consider a two-day strike to escalate pressure on ministers. 28 March has taught ministers that trade unionists will fight their cuts. It's also taught trade unionists that they need to elect fighting trade union leaderships.

In brief

NHS pensions vote



photo Paul Mattsson

Unison members working in the health service will be voting on whether to accept new pensions proposals, in a ballot running from 11–27 April. It is a consultation exercise, not a strike ballot. Unison head of health Christina McAnea has warned that: "the ballot papers will also recognise that rejecting the offer would require members to take further industrial action." Hardly a call for action to defend hard-won pension rights.

MMP workers attacked

The long-running dispute at MMP packaging in Bootle has escalated with the sacking of four workers. The four are part of the 149 workers who have been locked out of the factory over a dispute over redundancies. They were sacked by a kangaroo court which did not allow them to call witnesses to the accusations of using foul and abusive language. Their union Unite is investigating an appeal.

- Please send messages of support to: mayrsmerspeople@gmail.com.

Police strike ballot



photo Paul Mattsson

The Police Federation has announced a ballot on the right to strike "as soon as possible". They will also be holding a protest march on Westminster, sometime before their annual conference in May. The protest march is over cuts to police budgets and the "unprecedented attack on policing by this government". The question of annual fitness tests is a particular concern.

In January 2008 more than 20,000 police marched on Westminster against Labour's refusal to backdate a pay increase. That year, 87% voted to demand full industrial rights for the Police Federation.

- For more workplace and industrial stories, see the Socialist Party's website: www.socialistparty.org.uk

National Shop Stewards Network
6th annual conference:
Saturday 9 June 11am - 4pm
Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Speakers include:

- **Bob Crow, transport union RMT general secretary**
- **Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary**
- **A leading Rank and File construction electrician**
- **Kevin Courtney, NUT deputy general secretary**

Conference fee: £15

For more information see: www.shopstewards.net

Contact the NSSN at: info@shopstewards.net or PO Box 54498, London, E10 9DE

Tanker drivers vote to strike

Tanker drivers working for five major fuel distribution firms and members of Unite, have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over health and safety issues. Up until a few years ago the major fuel companies tended to have their own distribution fleet, with their own drivers.

Thanks to good trade union organisation, safety and training standards were upheld and drivers had reasonably secure employment. But when the oil companies were looking to increase their already mega-profits, they discovered the benefits of outsourcing.

Experienced drivers left, to be replaced by contractors. And the contracting companies started looking

for ways to cut corners to save money, at the expense of the drivers' working conditions and pensions. Now those workers are fighting back, with large majorities for strike action (see below).

Across the seven companies 61.1% voted for strike action.

The government is not looking forward to the sight of queues at petrol stations, so is allegedly training troops to scab on any strikes. Unite must take any attempts to train up a scab army seriously and make the necessary preparations.

But the government's fear of these workers' action says everything about the potential power of united strike action against their austerity plans.

Company	% In favour of strike	% turnout
Turners	94.4%	81.8%
Norbert Dentressangle	74.8%	71.3%
Wincanton	68.4%	71.9%
BP	60.2%	85.8%
Hoyer	59.7%	79.7%

Workers in DHL narrowly voted against strike action but voted in favour of action short of a strike, while Unite members in Suckling voted against strike action.

Save the Remploy factories - not for sale or closure at any price

Les Woodward
Remploy trade union national convenor

The closure of 54 Remploy factories potentially can affect everyone in the UK. Disability can strike anyone in any socio-economic group, at any time. The difference is not the disability but the available resources to deal with it.

If someone has a big bank balance, a Bupa account and plenty of time for rest and recuperation, the effects of disability will be less damaging than those felt by someone who is on the breadline, on benefits and struggling to make ends meet.

This attack on the most vulnerable workers in society will do nothing

to help get disabled people out of poverty and into work, it will do nothing to improve the economic stability of the country. It will do nothing for the 'inclusion' agenda that most disabled workers, including those in Remploy, aspire to.

What this act of barbarism will achieve will be misery, poverty and possibly an early grave for the vast majority of Remploy workers. These workers will be paying the ultimate price with their jobs for the economic crisis.

This is unlike the multi-millionaire bankers and their very good multi-millionaire friends in the cabinet who are doing very nicely out of this crisis.

Remploy factories are not for closure and not for sale at any price.



Protesting outside Parliament photo the Socialist

FOR THE MILLIONS, NOT THE MILLIONAIRES

**Elections
3 May 2012
Fight the
Cuts**

The latest fashion among all the parties in Westminster is to steal the Socialist Party's slogan and claim they are introducing policies that help 'the millions not the millionaires'. Nothing could be further from the truth! If you are a millionaire the government believes you need to be encouraged with incentives; anyone else needs to be punished with pay freezes and cuts in public services and benefits. The cut in the 50p tax rate in the latest Con-Dem budget has saved 14,000

millionaires £40,000 each. Their numbers include David Cameron and other members of the cabinet! New Labour rightly attacked the government for producing a budget 'by the rich for the rich'. Unfortunately Labour's policies are not fundamentally different to those of the government parties. Labour says it will not reverse the vast majority of the cuts implemented by the Con-Dems and will maintain the public sector pay freeze and cutting of public

sector pensions. It is happy to promise to maintain this government's misery for the millions, but refuses point blank to promise to restore the 50p tax rate. At local level every single Labour council has so far done the government's bidding and implemented vicious cuts. There is therefore an urgent need for a party that stands in the interests of the majority – that really does stand for the millions not the millionaires.

More austerity – unless we stop it!

In 2011 millions of trade unionists took action against the government's cuts, particularly in defence of their pensions. An escalation of the action is clearly necessary; terrible as the cuts have been, they represent less than 10% of the government's plans!

Demonstrations, strikes and occupations are an essential part of the fight against austerity, but it is also necessary to have an electoral alternative that is genuinely anti-cuts.

This is increasingly being discussed in the Labour-affiliated trade unions. A quarter of the motions for this year's GMB conference are questioning why the union is continuing to use members' money to fund New Labour.

We argue for all trade unions to stop funding Labour and to begin to build a party that genuinely stands in their interests. We support all steps towards such a party.

That is one reason the Socialist Party takes part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which will be standing as many anti-cuts candidates as possible in the 3 May elections.



Candidate Nancy Taaffe, library worker made redundant
photo Paul Mattson

The candidates include many leading trade unionists: Alex Gordon, president of the RMT transport union; Steve Hedley, London regional secretary of the RMT; Ian Leahair, London regional secretary of the firefighters union FBU; Tony Mulhearn, deputy leader of Liverpool City Council when it defied the Tories during the 1980s; Dave Nellist, Coventry Socialist Party councillor; and many others.

For councils that fight the cuts!

New Labour and Green councils say that have 'no choice' but to implement the cuts – but that just isn't true. If any council was to stop acting as collaborators with the Tory axe wielders, and instead was to stand up and fight, they would discover there are a thousand ways to defy the cuts.

To name a few, councils could:

- Stop homelessness rocketing: by refusing to evict council tenants who fall into arrears because of housing benefit cuts. They could also use their legal powers to threaten compulsory purchase orders against big landlords who evict tenants suffering from housing benefit cuts.

- Halt the destruction of state education: by using councils' 'schools monitoring powers' to build a campaign against academies and free schools by organising, for example, parents' ballots on the issue.

- Stop 16+17 year olds being thrown out of education: by continuing to pay EMA to local students, as the Welsh Assembly and Tower Hamlets and Southwark councils have done. Any council which continued to pay it would win the support of a whole generation.

All of these measures, and many more, could be carried out by using councils' legal powers. By themselves

legal powers are not enough – councils need to set budgets that do not include any cuts in jobs and services.

A 'needs budget' means setting a budget based on the needs of the local population, not the constraints of central government.

We are told that doing this – following the example of Poplar in the 1920s or of Liverpool and Lambeth in the 1980s – is 'impossible' and will inevitably lead to defeat.

But the real history is different. Poplar council won a campaign to equalise the rates across London and were able to introduce a programme of financial assistance for the poor, equal pay for women and a minimum wage for council workers.

Liverpool

In the 1980s Liverpool City Council, in which Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) played a leading role, forced Thatcher to hand over an extra £60 million to Liverpool.

That was used to build 5,000 council houses (more than were built nationally the whole time New Labour was in office!), plus new leisure centres and nurseries and to create tens of thousands of jobs.

Liverpool's inspiring struggle was

conducted in the teeth of massive opposition – not only from the Tories, but sadly from the right-wing leadership of Labour. If more Labour councils had followed the Liverpool road Thatcher would have been finished.

Liverpool's councillors were only able to be removed and surcharged after the betrayal of Labour leader Neil Kinnock and Co.

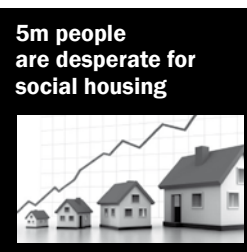
Mass campaign

Today councillors can no longer be surcharged unless they are found guilty of financial crime for personal gain. But it is still true that any council that refused to carry out cuts or introduce hikes in council tax would – at a certain stage – come into conflict with the legal system.

Trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners would be able to mobilise tens of thousands in support of such a stand. In these circumstances – as in Liverpool – it would be very difficult for the law to be used against such councils.

However, most councils can prepare themselves before taking this road. By using their reserves and borrowing powers to avoid making cuts, councils could gain time to build a mass movement in their support.

In 'Them and Us' Britain there is an urgent need for a party that stands for the majority - not the millionaires



If you want to stand as a TUSC candidate in local elections in your area this May, to donate or find out more - check out the TUSC website at www.tusc.org.uk

All TUSC local authority candidates sign up to a simple five point pledge:

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

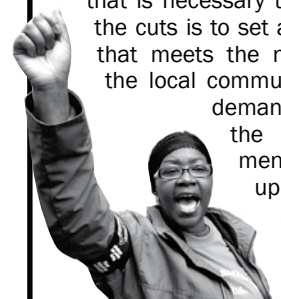
- Oppose all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions - we reject the claim that 'some cuts' are necessary to our services

- Reject increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts

- Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations, which are first steps to privatisation

- Use all the legal powers available to councils, including powers to refer local NHS decisions, initiate referenda and organise public commissions and consultations, to oppose both the cuts and government policies which centrally impose the transfer of public services to private bodies

- When faced with government cuts to council funding, councils should refuse to implement the cuts. We will support councils which in the first instance use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid passing them on - while arguing that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defeat the cuts is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demands that the government makes up the shortfall



TUSC AGAINST CUTS

Can even a few Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) representatives make a difference?

Many workers who are considering voting TUSC this year may ask if it is worthwhile to do so, given that TUSC is a new force. But even one or two fighting councillors, or members of the Greater London Assembly, can make a difference by using their position as democratically elected local representatives to give confidence to and help organise community campaigns and trade unionists to fight.

TUSC councillors would pledge to oppose all cuts in council jobs, services, pay and conditions. We will campaign against the idea that 'some cuts' are necessary.

We would refuse to allow divisions between council staff, service users and communities, which are inevitable unless we oppose all cuts. TUSC councillors would vote against privatisation of council services, or the transfer of services to 'social enterprises' or 'arm's-length' management organisations.

TUSC councillors would seek to use all the legal powers open to councillors to delay or obstruct government policies which lead to cuts or the transfer of public services to private bodies. For example, councils could refer local NHS decisions for further scrutiny.

They could initiate referenda, public consultations (for example of parents over the creation of divisive academy schools) and commissions as part of a wider campaign.

TUSC supporters will work with every anti-cuts campaign, and fight the implementation of the cuts agenda, library by library, swimming pool by swimming pool, youth club by youth club. It's one thing to pass a budget, it's another to execute it!

TUSC elected representatives can help by acting as a voice for the anti-cuts movement. Out of many such campaigns there will emerge new anti-cuts and trade union candidates to challenge the big three parties in future elections.



photo Paul Mattsson

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE - SOCIALISM!

**Elections
3 May 2012
Fight the
Cuts**

For the Socialist Party another important reason for taking part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is to raise the profile of socialist ideas. We do not accept the endless mantra that 'there is no alternative' to austerity.

Capitalism has created enormous wealth, science and technique. We have technology today that was unimaginable a generation ago. The world economy is 17 times the size it was a century ago. In Britain the major corporations are hoarding an incredible £750 billion, which they are not investing because they do not consider they would make sufficient profit from it. Yet we are told that the most basic public services – a national health service, the right to retire at a reasonable age, a job with a living wage, the right to a secure affordable home – cannot be afforded by capitalism.

The current crisis is not caused by a 'bloated' public sector but by the worst crisis of capitalism in 70 years. Yet all the major capitalist parties – Tories, Lib Dems and New Labour – agree that it should be the 99%, the working class and public services that pay for it.

But it doesn't have to be like this. At the moment it is just accepted that the rich 1% can't be expected to pay 'too much'. Osborne's justification for cutting the 50p tax rate was that the super-rich would find ways to avoid paying it anyway, and so cutting it would only cost £100 million a year!

What a society, if you are poor and are caught claiming a few more pounds in benefit than you are legally entitled to you face opprobrium and being sent to prison. If you are a rich individual or a big corporation and avoid paying tax, the chancellor just accepts it and changes the tax system accordingly!

Make the 1% pay

To start with socialists argue that a major campaign should be launched for the 1% to pay their taxes. As the civil servants' (including tax collectors) trade union, the PCS, points out, there is about £120 billion in taxes that goes uncollected every year, almost enough to wipe out the deficit at a stroke.

Socialists argue that the rich should be the ones who pay for the crisis, via dramatically increased taxes for the super-rich and the big corporations. For most of the 1970s the tax rate for the highest band of income was 83%. Likewise, for most of the 1970s, big corporations paid 52% of their profits in tax. But that percentage has been reduced to just 28% now.

We also demand the immediate reversal of all privatisation of public services, including the NHS. Public services should be run to meet the needs of the population, not to make profits for big business.

The major corporations that dominate the British economy should open their books to representatives of their workforce and the trade unions. Up and down the country corporations are slashing pensions, cutting jobs and holding down pay, claiming that they cannot afford to do otherwise, despite the £750 billion sitting in their accounts.

We demand they open the books and let the workers see the reality of their finances. We also argue for an immediate levy – of at least 50% – of the un-invested funds of the

big corporations, in order that it can be used in developing socially useful production, jobs and services.

While we favour taxing the rich and big corporations, we also recognise that the 'markets' – that is capitalism – will never meekly accept dramatically increased regulation and taxation. Capitalism is an economic system driven solely by the capitalists' need to maximise their profits, increasing exploitation of the working class, the majority in society, in order to do so.

Nationalisation

So what is the alternative to this market madness? For a start we call for the nationalisation of the big banking and finance companies. Compensation should be paid on the basis of proven need. Not one penny should go to the speculators who bear responsibility while demanding that the working class pays for the crisis.

It would then be necessary to introduce full government control of all incoming and outgoing foreign trade. That would enable a democratically elected government and the working class – not the market – to control imports and exports including capital.

A socialist nationalised banking sector would be democratically run by representatives of banking workers and trade unions, the wider working class, as well as the government. Decisions would be made to meet the needs of the majority – for example, offering cheap loans and mortgages for housing and for the planned development of industry and services, and ending all repossessions of peoples' homes.

That would only be the start. Capitalism has led to enormous economic destruction. In Britain around 10% of wealth has already been lost as a result of the recession, due to factories and workplaces closing, resulting in over 2.5 million officially unemployed with the number rising.

No growth prospects

There is no prospect of a return to growth. This is the real difference between now and, for example, the end of the second world war when the total national debt was far higher than it is today – over 200% of GDP compared to around 60% now. Then, however, Britain entered a period of significant economic growth, thereby shrinking the national debt. Today, the economy has only staggered

into technical growth as a result of massive state intervention. The best prospect that can be hoped for under capitalism is a prolonged period of economic stagnation.

That is why a crucial step towards solving the economic crisis would be to take the big corporations that dominate Britain's economy into democratic public ownership. This would allow for production to be planned for need and not for profit.

A democratic, socialist plan of production would make it possible to very quickly transform the lives of millions of people.

Just to give a few examples of what a socialist programme would mean:

Unemployment & long hours

As unemployment soars Britain still has one of the longest working weeks in the European Union. New Labour consistently fought for the right to opt out of EU laws limiting the working week to a maximum of 48 hours.

More than four million workers in Britain work longer than that each week in order to make ends meet. At the same time workers are being told they have to retire later and later.

This is the lunacy of capitalism – millions thrown on the unemployment scrapheap while others work their fingers to the bone.

By introducing a 35-hour week with no loss of pay – in other words sharing out the work – it would be possible to dramatically reduce the number of unemployed while simultaneously improving the quality of life of working class people.

If this was combined with, not only an immediate halt in cuts to public services, but a massive expansion of services it would be possible to eliminate unemployment.

This would allow us to develop a vastly better public transport system, build more housing, and train and hire more teachers, doctors and nursing staff.



Housing

Meanwhile there are five million people, two million households, who are on the housing list and desperate for social housing. The pipe dream propagated by Thatcher of a 'home owning democracy' lies in ruins.

In London the average deposit required to take out a mortgage on a house is £85,000, while the median wage is just £24,500. More and more people are being forced into the private rented sector, sometimes substandard, and almost always expensive and insecure.

The million families in private rented accommodation are ten times more likely to be forced to move than those in other forms of accommodation. And homelessness is soaring – with an 18% increase in the number of officially registered homeless in the last year alone.

A socialist government would immediately institute a mass programme of renovating and building high-quality, affordable council houses. This would not only provide work for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed building workers, but would also immediately cut the amount of money paid to private landlords in housing benefit.

Environment

Of course, a socialist government would have to take the protection of the environment into account when building housing. At the moment the big construction companies build purely for profit. A mass house-building programme would mean careful planning to ensure the protection of green spaces. In many cases, it would be possible to build on fully decontaminated brownfield sites (land formerly used for industrial purposes).

Moreover, pleasant and safe homes for all forms a crucial part of a decent environment.

Young people

Half a million young people were unemployed even before economic crisis hit. Now over a million young people are jobless. Student fees have gone through the roof, while EMA student payments have been abolished.



A socialist programme for young people would start with the right to high quality training, and a job and/or college place for every school leaver. It would also include the abolition of tuition fees and the immediate introduction of a living grant.

To do this for all students would cost a maximum of £15 billion a year. It would also mean introducing a living minimum wage of at least £8 an hour, with no exemptions on the grounds of age, or any other basis.

Pensions



The capitalists increasingly expect us to 'work 'til we drop'. A socialist pension policy would allow workers to start drawing a decent state pension at 55. Those who want to continue work could do so.

Part-time work with part-pension could bridge the gap between work and retirement for those who want it.

State pensioners should receive an immediate 50% increase, and this should be extended to all state benefits.

The link between pensions and earnings or inflation, whichever is higher, should be restored.

These measures would cost around £560 million a year. This may sound a lot, but the big pension companies get more than half this amount in tax relief every year!

In addition, pensioners, having contributed to society all their lives, should be entitled to free housing, heating, telephone and travel.

Join the Socialist Party

If you agree with this manifesto, then join the fight for socialism – join the Socialist Party. The struggle for socialism needs your talents and abilities. Our struggle does not stop at the shores of Britain. Capitalism is an international economic system. Multinational companies exploit the entire world in the pursuit of profit. The struggle for socialism is an international struggle.

That's why the Socialist Party is affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International, which is struggling for socialism in over 40 countries worldwide.

See www.socialistworld.net

To find out about joining the Socialist Party visit our website: www.socialistparty.org.uk or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode



[illegible]

French presidential election

An emerging left challenge

The first round of the French presidential election will be held on 22 April. The UK mass media has concentrated its coverage on the conservative candidate and incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy, his main opponent – the social democrat François Hollande – and the far-right outsider, Marine Le Pen of the National Front. However, the radical Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who opposes the government’s austerity measures, is gaining ground as Cedric Gerome reports.

In November of last year, a poll by the newspaper ‘Le Point’ stated that 83% of the French population think the politicians do not care about them, 69% think they are ‘rather corrupt’, and 60% think that the functioning of French democracy is ‘not satisfying’.

France could rapidly become the political centrepiece of Europe. Although forecasts indicate a certain economic growth for this year, the unemployment rate is still expected to climb. Household consumption continues to nosedive, and the French banking sector remains substantially exposed to the debt of the crisis-ridden ‘peripheral’ economies.

The social class divide within French society has widened considerably during the deeply unpopular presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy; which has been marked by massive tax breaks for the rich, a full frontal attack on pension rights, a public sector jobs massacre, and the closure of around 900 factories within the last three years.

Meanwhile the profits of French multinationals and executive bosses’ pay have broken new records. The next Republic’s president, in any case, will face increasing pressures from the financial markets to push on with bitter structural austerity recipes. All these factors are preparing the ground for social convulsions on an unprecedented scale.

Recent killings

The recent shootings in the south of the country, with the murder of three children and a teacher outside their Jewish school in Toulouse and the killing of three paratroopers in Montauban by a young man of Algerian origin, have given an unexpected turn to the presidential campaign, with all establishment candidates cynically exploiting this tragedy for their own electoral purposes.

This includes the far-right National Front (FN) candidate Marine Le Pen – daughter of the notoriously anti-Semitic Jean-Marie Le Pen – posing as the defender of France’s Christian and Jewish communities and arguing for a war against ‘Islamist extremism’.

Sarkozy hypocritically argues for ‘national unity’, after having used blatant racist provocations as part of his presidency (notably his anti-Roma measures of last year or, more recently, his polemics against Halal meat).

While surveys show clearly that unemployment, pensions, housing shortages and wages are voters’ main concerns; this new, provoked climate of fear is a convenient way for Sarkozy to shift the debate towards ‘law-and-order’ issues, pushing the major concerns of the majority of the population into the background.

Furthermore, proposals for new anti-terrorist legislation have been put forward. If implemented, the broad definition of these measures opens the door to crack down on all oppositionist currents in society.

One poll taken after the shootings gives Sarkozy 30% and the Socialist Party (PS) candidate François Hollande 28% for the first round, taking place on 22 April.

However, in the projections for the second round (on 6 May), Sarkozy remains far behind. Indeed, hatred at the ‘president of the rich’ is embedded in the minds of many working class people. In early February, only 12% of manual workers declared they would vote for him.

The fact, though improbable but not impossible, that he could still win the elections, says a lot about the inconsistency and scepticism which surrounds the campaign of

his main challenger. It also reflects the profound general volatility in the country.

The deep unpopularity of the French political elite offers the ‘anti-establishment’ FN a fertile ground to develop among the most neglected sections of the population. But significantly, even Le Pen has had to put more emphasis at criticising the banks and the financial system, targeting, as she says, “the law of the banks as well as the law of the gangs”.

This shows that the economic crisis has contributed to polarising the electoral landscape in a sharper way than previous elections in the country’s recent history. To the extent that in recent months the impression was given that suddenly all politicians were ‘re-discovering’ the existence of the industrial working class and the factories.

It is within such a context that François Hollande, presenting himself as the candidate of “real change”, came out with a few electoral proposals that try to surf the wave of hatred of the super wealthy, notably through a 75% tax on millionaires.

This has however nothing to do with a serious commitment to reverse the capitalist policies of the right wing, as Hollande’s recent visit to London to reassure City bankers of his pro-market view clearly illustrates.

If Hollande benefits from a certain electoral support, it is mainly because of the desire by large sections of workers, young people and poor suburbs inhabitants to ‘exorcise’ the nightmare of the past ten years of right-wing UMP (Sarkozy’s Union for a Popular Movement) rule – made up of lies, contempt, corruption and authoritarianism.

The sharp rise, in the recent weeks, of electoral support for Jean-

Luc Mélenchon, the candidate of the Left Front (an electoral alliance between the French Communist Party and the smaller Left Party) is highly significant.

Electoral support

A recent opinion poll gives Mélenchon 14%, becoming the ‘third candidate’ in these elections, and even eclipsing Marine Le Pen (who he ridiculed in a TV debate by displaying the pro-rich character of the FN’s programme).

Despite the crisis faced by the New Anti-Capitalist (NPA) of Olivier Besancenot – whose popularity and membership have dropped dramatically because of the false methods of its leadership – the search for a radical voice that can express working class grievances against the rich elite and their system remains more than ever the order of the day.

Mélenchon’s slogan “take the power” appeals to all those who are enraged at the diktat of the banks and the markets over their lives.

His rhetorical skills, his references to France’s revolutionary history, the success of his well-attended meetings and of his recent call to demonstrate and occupy the Bastille square in Paris – when tens of thousands of people rallied – all have contributed to create a real dynamic behind his campaign.

Although the programme of Mélenchon remains essentially limited to the idea of reforming the existing institutions, it nevertheless offers a platform on which future mass mobilisations can be built, and opens up, once again, the debate on the necessity for a new mass party to the left of the PS, and for a socialist alternative to the capitalist system.

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image not available

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:

Québec: Over 200,000 demonstrate against tuition fees hike

Government austerity, police repression... the students’ struggle is everyone’s struggle.

Alternative Socialiste (CWI in Québec) leaflet

image not available

Kazakhstan: 100 day anniversary of Zhanaozen massacre

Successful demonstrations across Kazakhstan (also international solidarity protests).

socialistworld.net

image not available

Spain: Workers gear up for general strike

The right-wing People’s Party prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, has provoked a 24-hour general strike on 29 March by Spain’s trade unions, by making it easier for employers to sack workers. Collective bargaining will also be undermined and severance pay will be capped at two years’ pay and slashed. Many Spaniards are outraged that this measure will increase unemployment (currently over five million) – which, at 23% of the workforce, is the highest unemployment rate in the European Union. Danny Byrne reports from Spain.

Less than 100 days since the formation of the People’s Party government, which was meant to bring ‘stability’ to crisis-ridden Spain, the country has been convulsed by an intense period of protests and mo-

bilisations. On Sunday 11 March, up to 1.5 million people marched in 60 cities, with unions claiming attendances of 500,000 in Madrid and 450,000 in Barcelona. In the region of Andalusia alone, over 220,000 are

said to have turned out.

These marches followed a massive day of protest on 19 February and the spontaneous explosion of solidarity with the ‘Valencian spring’, which saw tens of thousands protest around the country. These mobilisations represent the build up to the general strike.

The focal point in this upturn in struggle is the recently announced ‘labour reform’, which represents an historic attack on the gains of the Spanish working class.

Members of Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI in Spain) participat-

ed in the mass demonstrations, emphasising the need for a sustained programme of action, democratically discussed and decided upon by workplace and community assemblies and strike committees and open to members of all unions and none.

The naming of a date for a 48-hour strike to follow 29 March, with the threat of further strikes if even longer duration if necessary, could be the basis to begin a movement capable of facing down the government’s cuts and counter-reforms.

Hong Kong: ‘Long Hair’ sentenced to two months in prison - parliamentary seat under threat

Outrageous anti-democratic sentence as establishment seeks to criminalise protests.

Socialist Action (CWI) reporters in Hong Kong

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.

Keep fighting Lansley's plans

The Con-Dems have passed Andrew Lansley's Health and Social Care Bill. I organised a protest recently outside the constituency office of my local MP, John Hemming, who voted for the bill. Our press release of this was reprinted on the Birmingham Against the Cuts website. John Hemming posted saying



that a protest would frighten his constituents!

As we finished our good natured and peaceful protest Hemming blustered out and said, wrongly, that since we turned up only three people had come in. He then blustered off to a meeting. Hemming's response was typical of the Con-Dem response to dissent. These MPs will find out that there are millions of people who will defend the NHS from the government. The working class fought hard for the NHS, and will fight again to stop us suffering the fear that you would impoverish your family if you fell ill, a fear that is very real in America today.

Ben Rubery

Con-Dems hit Maggie

One of the people to suffer under the Con-Dems' new property taxes is Margaret, Baroness Thatcher. Under new laws, supposedly to make up cash lost by abolishing the 50p tax rate for the well-off, she will have to pay stamp duty on her multi-million pound townhouse in London. Well, Maggie, at least it's not the poll tax.



The mini-clampdown will also hit Cameron's stepfather in law, Viscount Ashtree, who will face an annual levy on his 18,700 acre estate on the island of Jura. The extra cost for the Baroness and Viscount is due to new cosmetic attacks on their properties that are registered in offshore tax havens, the British Virgin Islands and Bahamas. There's no suggestion that they gained any tax advantage from these deals – what beastly cad would say such a thing? But, among all the budget attacks on the rest of us, it's pleasant to report that paying these charges will cause momentary anguish to these super-rich.

Keith White

Abortion - defend and extend the right to choose

Shona McCulloch looks at the tactics of right-wing opponents of abortion rights and of choice, and how best to safeguard women's hard-won gains.

Direct action tactics by anti-choice zealots in the USA have produced horrific tales of vicious attacks including the cold-blooded murder of abortion clinic staff. Anti-choice methods have also shifted from lobbying Republican politicians for outright bans on abortion to fighting for piecemeal legislation to reach the same outcome.

Recent horrific proposals by right-wing politicians in various US states under this onslaught include forcing women to carry dead fetuses to full term; removing the choice to terminate even where the mother's life is at risk and treating miscarriages or suicide attempts as "suspected murder" or "attempted murder".

Their plans also include allowing doctors to lie to parents about birth defects so even a severely deformed foetus will not be aborted. They would also let employers refuse to cover medical insurance for birth control and fire women if they discover they use contraception.

Virginia will soon become the eighth US state requiring women to receive ultrasound scans if they ask for a termination. The Catholic Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Keith O'Brien, is now advocating such measures in Britain.

In Britain

Some anti-choice campaign groups in Britain are modelled on US examples, often with direct links and funding. In London and Brighton, British Pregnancy Advisory Service (Bpas) clinics were targeted by groups taking part in the abhorrent

'40 days for life' campaign in the Lent run-up to Easter where deluded zealots harassed service users trying to access the clinics.

In Brighton a group, harboured and supported by a church in Worthing, charmingly named themselves 'Abort67'. They displayed graphic imagery of aborted fetuses outside a Brighton clinic entrance, gave out misinformation and tried physical encircling to stop people entering the clinic.

Brighton Pro-Choice has been set up by local feminists, socialists and anarchists. An important agreement, based on advice, experience and evidence from the USA pro-choice movement, decided not to make the clinic the site of a pitched battle between ourselves and anti-choice advocates.

A vital secondary objective of our campaign is to empower those who use the clinic. Casting service-users as helpless victims, who we need to storm in and save, is actively disempowering.

Tactics

However traditional strategies used to give power to targets of the right wing and help them build and lead their own campaigns, such as supporting black minority ethnic communities to see off the racist BNP or EDL, are not appropriate for trying to empower people who are going through an acutely difficult period in their lives which they may want to pass through quickly.

In Brighton activists offered an 'escort service' to those wanting to use the clinic so they can do so without harassment. They are also giving support to clinics for every day of the '40 days for life' campaign. Supporters are bringing in baked goods for clinic staff and service users.

An international campaign also encourages people to donate to family planning clinics for every



photo Sarah Wrack

Book: It doesn't have to be like this, women and the struggle for socialism **£5.99**

Pamphlet: Women - fighting austerity, fighting for equality **£1**

Both from Socialist Books (see page 11)

day of the campaign. Socialist Party members have built links between the campaign and local trade unions.

Several protests are planned to oppose Abort67 in a way that does not create a pitched battle near the clinic. On 15 April a 'Carnival for Choice' protest and march is planned in Worthing, to build opposition to Abort67.

The leader of Abort67 is seemingly due in court in September for his previous anti-choice activities and

we will organise a lobby of this. We must oppose these reactionaries at every turn.

We should not take for granted that the gains of the past, secured by struggle, have somehow become inalienable rights – our rights only exist when they are accessible to all and, under capitalism, remain only as long as we can defend them.

London protest – Friday 30 March, 7pm to 8.30pm, Bedford Square, London WC1.

Review: We must look - the photographs of Don McCullin

The life's work of one of the world's greatest living photographers, Don McCullin is on show until 15 April at London's Imperial War Museum. This exhibition is shocking but essential viewing for socialists. Don McCullin spoke to Dave Beale.

Born in 1935, Don McCullin grew up in a damp basement in North London, where he watched his father die in dire poverty. He recalls the anger he felt. Conscripted to the air force in the 1950s, he learnt about photography.

On returning he says, unlike Cecil Beaton and Lord Snowdon: "I wanted to photograph poor people... because nobody else was interested in photographing poverty but I was, because I understood it."

The Observer published one of his photographs and decided to employ him. In the 1960s and 1970s, he travelled from one war zone to another, as well as photographing poverty in Britain. Don McCullin points to a photograph in the exhibition, of a grief-stricken Cypriot woman whose husband has just been killed. He

does not talk about the photograph but about what actually happened.

McCullin's approach is sincere and compassionate. Typically, he says of his war photographs: "This is what I've made a name from, which doesn't particularly please me."

He describes his more recent landscape photography, as a man who witnessed countless scenes of brutality, as "... a clean-up job of me trying to get rid of all this stuff", to come to terms with his dreadful war experiences.

He puts the environmental case and criticises government development plans. "I'm not saying that landscape is as important as human beings but it plays a major part in their happiness and existence... And we also need places to escape from the cities too..."

In 1983 Murdoch's newly appointed editor, Andrew Neill, dismissed McCullin from his then post at the Sunday Times. He recalls Neill: "came in one day and said 'I am going to make this [the Sunday Times supplement - Eds] a leisure and life magazine and there will be no more dead children in this magazine, no more African dead children.'"

Don McCullin emphasises the importance of his working class



US soldier, Hue, Vietnam, 1968 photo Don McCullin

background, which will always be with him and which make him who he is. A small collection of Don Mc-

Cullin's other work (though not his war photographs) is also on display at Tate Britain until 6 May.

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine
April 2012 issue includes:

- **New revolutionaries?**
Hannah Sell questions the conclusions of Paul Mason's latest book.
- **State of the unions**
Rob Williams draws up a balance sheet of the trade unions' response to austerity.
- **The Euro patient**
Lynn Walsh reports on the second Greek bailout and conflict within the EU

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Former Liverpool 47 councillor to give socialist challenge for mayor

"If elected I would use all the powers at my disposal to fight for everyone suffering under this relentless assault masterminded by the Con-Dem government and unfortunately carried out by Labour and the Lib Dems in the council chamber. I will seek to take back in house the vital council services that have been handed out to the privateers."

Tony Mulhearn, veteran socialist and trade unionist, former District Labour Party president, and one of the leaders of the 1983-87 socialist council, has entered the race to be Liverpool's first elected mayor.

The elected mayor will hold greater powers than those held by the current council leader. Tony who is standing on a clear anti-cuts platform, on behalf of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), has said:

"There is no need for these cuts. There is a £120 billion tax gap of evaded, avoided and uncollected tax. The UK holds £850 billion in banking assets. There is some £731 billion lying in the banks uninvested by big business.

The bankers continue to gorge themselves with obscene bonuses. Then there is the latest smash-and-grab raid orchestrated by George Osborne against our pensioners to fund tax-cuts for his millionaire friends. The money is there and none of these cuts need to be made.

Liverpool's public services face obliteration until we stand up to this government and demand they return the £120 million they have stolen from our city's funding so far.

I will propose the immediate lifting of threats to services for our children and young people and some of the most vulnerable people in our city, contained in the latest council budget.

I will propose the reversal of all the cuts made so far.

I will seek to use any new funds coming into the city to support our young people at college who are suffering the loss of their Educa-

tion Maintenance Allowance, and to create real jobs.

'There is no need for cuts. There is a £120 billion of tax evaded, avoided and uncollected...

I propose the immediate lifting of threats to services for children, young people and the most vulnerable, contained in the latest council budget.

I propose reversing all cuts made so far'

I will demand that Liverpool's councillors abandon their policy of implementing the cuts demanded by the Con-Dem millionaires' government which represents the bankers, hedge fund managers and others who leech on society.

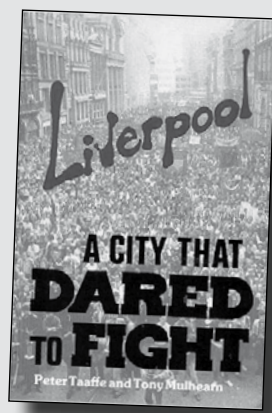
I will call for a broad city-wide campaign to defend our libraries, our hospitals, nurses and the NHS now at grave risk from a government determined to open it up to private health companies whose first priority will be to maximise profits for its shareholders."

Tony has invited the other mayoral candidates, including the current Labour council leader Joe Anderson, to have a public debate in April. TUSC is standing candidates for the council election, also on 3 May.

TUSC election campaign meeting: Wednesday 4 April, 7.15pm Liverpool Pub (upstairs), James Street, Liverpool



Tony Mulhearn speaking during the Liverpool 47 struggle which fought for and won £60 million of extra funding for jobs, homes and services out of Thatcher's Tory government photo Dave Sinclair



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Wales: Does Plaid Cymru leadership vote show left turn?

Dave Reid

The election of Leanne Wood, a radical, republican, anti-capitalist woman, as leader of Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru makes a sharp change from the party's more conservative leadership of the past and could attract trade unionists and young people to Plaid.

Leanne has identified as a socialist and trade unionist and is chair of the PCS union group in the Welsh assembly. She has been prominent in support of many workers' struggles, anti-war demonstrations and anti-cuts campaigns.

Her election as leader opens up the prospect of a more robust approach by Plaid in taking up social issues and in calling for independence.

She has ruled out any coalition with the Tories, has been prominent in opposing cuts in public services, criticised the capitalist European Union and clearly opposed nuclear power, traditionally supported by Plaid Cymru because of the power stations that were at Wylfa and Trawsfynydd.

Her election will make Plaid Cymru, at least on the surface, appear as the radical alternative, especially as

the "two Eds" - Miliband and Balls - have said a future Labour government would maintain Tory cuts. It will put Welsh Labour under pressure as Wood accuses them of "sitting and waiting" while Wales sinks under the cuts.

During the leadership election Plaid Cymru's membership increased by 23%. A thin but significant layer of young people were drawn into Plaid by Leanne's campaign.

Voting for cuts

However, while being the most prominent politician in Wales in support of workers in struggle, Wood does not have confidence that a mass movement can defeat the cuts or change society.

For example, she opposed the 'needs budget' strategy put forward by a number of trade unionists and Socialist Party Wales that would involve mobilising a mass movement in support of a Welsh government refusing to carry out Con-Dem cuts from Westminster. Reluctantly, she supported a budget that included some cuts.

And while calling for an economy that serves "our people rather than

the market" and "a role for the state in the economy", Wood does not propose clearly socialist policies. She favours a "social economy" rather than a socialist economy.

She supports decentralisation and cooperatives rather than nationalisation and calls for "a robust economic infrastructure that can shelter us from future economic storms".

Wood has linked independence with a campaign for social justice that could resonate with many workers.

Most working people have opposed independence partly because of the weakness of the Welsh economy, especially since the destruction of industry by Margaret Thatcher's Tories in the 1980s.

But the prospect opening up for the Welsh economy - already valued at only 74% of the UK per-head average - with massive benefit cuts, regional pay and huge public service cuts, is to sink to eastern European or Greek levels even while part of the UK. The Con-Dem government plans to cut Welsh public sector wages by up to 18% through regional pay.

When challenged by a TV commentator that independence would

impoverish Wales, Wood replied: "Well we have that already within the UK."

'Cooperative islands'

Support for independence currently stands at about 10%, but as Scotland moves towards an independence referendum in 2014 and the economic situation worsens in Wales, this is bound to rise.

But Leanne's model of a string of cooperatives, islands of socialism in a stormy sea of capitalism, can-

not possibly make up for the past destruction of industry and mining now to be accompanied with public service and welfare cuts. The tidal waves of capitalism would overwhelm these tiny cooperative islands.

A weak, independent, capitalist Wales could withstand the forces of global capitalism even less than Greece or Ireland. Only a socialist Wales linking with workers in Scotland, England, Ireland and the rest of Europe can hope to defy the rigours of the capitalist markets.

Plaid Cymru - a radical party?

While Leanne Wood publicly supported the Occupy Cardiff camp, Neil McEvoy, the Plaid deputy leader of Cardiff council (supposedly on the left of Plaid), denounced occupiers as extremist. He agreed that the camp should be moved from Cardiff Castle's grounds before the police used tasers and horses to break it up.

Plaid-led councils have carried through big cuts in schools and privatisation.

Plaid-controlled Caerphilly coun-

cil has attacked facilities for Unison. A Plaid councillor has attempted to start a witch-hunt against Unison activists in Carmarthenshire.

Whether Plaid's significant conservative section will accept a radical campaigning party remains to be seen. They could form a drag on Plaid's move to the left and even attempt to undermine Leanne Wood.

A split or series of splits is possible given the breadth of ideas and cross-class support in Plaid.

After the millionaires' budget...

TUSC STANDS FOR THE MILLIONS

Paula Mitchell

“The RMT has a proud tradition of fighting politically. There is nothing to be ashamed of about being a trade unionist and a socialist - millions of people out there are looking for an alternative. Labour is ashamed of its background. With TUSC there'll be no running away from supporting strikers - it's on the tin... They've got the millionaires - we've got the millions who are deprived of a voice.”

This was how RMT transport union president Alex Gordon closed a rally to launch the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) list of candidates for the London-wide member list in the Greater London Assembly elections. Alex is the number one candidate on the list.

On the day of the millionaires' budget, the national executive of the RMT made the decision to back the London Assembly election list of TUSC and to allow RMT branches around the country to back TUSC candidates in the council elections in May 2012.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow made this important announcement at the rally. The executive had written to every single branch in the Greater London area and not one said they shouldn't support TUSC!

Bob pointed out that while Labour leader Ed Miliband may get

up and condemn the budget for the rich, “what would they do under the same circumstances? Exactly the same except over a longer period of time.”

Pouring scorn on Miliband's call for “responsible capitalism”, he said you can't have capitalism without inequality.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary Matt Wrack joined Bob Crow on the platform. The London region of the FBU officially backs TUSC and Matt has made a personal commitment of £2,000 to the campaign.

Matt underlined the devastating effects of the Con-Dem policies of rampant privatisation, attacks on welfare, and attacks on workers who make a stand.

Yet the Labour leadership condemned people for striking, and instructed MPs to abstain on the draconian Welfare Bill. “Our message can get an echo - the alternative is a dire future that offers nothing to millions.”

FBU executive member for London Ian Leahair, a candidate on the list, outlined the attacks on pay and shifts and the privatisation the FBU has had to battle against. “I am not a politician. But the FBU in London is fully supporting TUSC. Since 2009 year-on-year we've been in a bitter dispute because we dared to stand up for our conditions of service... We back TUSC because it opposes all cuts and all privatisation.”

Two hundred trade unionists



Some of the TUSC GLA candidates at the launch rally photo Paul Mattsson

and socialists attended the rally. As candidate April Ashley (on public sector union Unison's national executive representing black women members, speaking in a personal capacity) said, the trade unionists on the list, and those present in the room, themselves represent thousands more who want to see the back of the Con-Dems but believe

Labour no longer represents them.

“People feel despair, but we stand to say there is an alternative.” She went on to explain: “This is a socialist banner. There is huge wealth in society. The rich are getting richer. They are enriching themselves at our expense. How is it that the 99% can't run society for our benefit? We stand to build con-

fidence that we can run society, we want to change society”.

See www.socialistparty.org.uk for a full report of the launch meeting and www.tusc.org.uk for updates and a list of the candidates for London and council candidates nationally

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!