

## Are you:

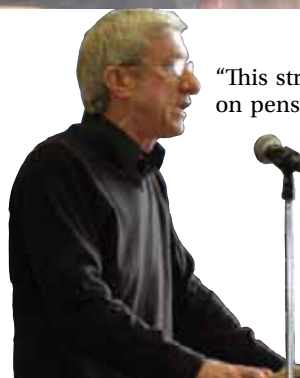
- ☒ Angry that services you rely on are being cut?
- ☒ Worried about having to pay more and work longer for less in retirement?
- ☒ Sickened by tax-dodging millionaires and bankers' bonuses?
- ☒ Think it's time to fight back against austerity?

# ● STRIKE ON 10 MAY!

# ● VOTE TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION ON 3 MAY!

The civil service union PCS national executive has unanimously voted to call industrial action on pensions on 10 May, as part of a programme of action with other unions in the civil service, health and education sectors. The government plans to force public sector workers to pay more for their pensions, and work longer for less in retirement.

Further national action will be called in June and action will also take place in departmental groups. Regional protests and rallies will be organised.



"This strike is a warning to the government. Rather than the battle on pensions being finished, it is gaining strength and momentum. Workers are outraged at an unjustified attack on their living standards.

PCS, along with other unions, has built an alliance capable of winning concessions from a government which is completely out of touch with the lives that most people lead.

This is not a protest, it is part of a programme of action, including further national action in June, aimed at forcing the government around the negotiating table."

**John McNally, national vice president of the PCS**

# 10 May strike will re-ignite pensions battle

The strike called for 10 May represents a new stage in the battle to defend public sector pensions. Civil service union PCS will be taking action along with Unite members in health and the civil service and hopefully lecturers' union UCU, Northern Ireland public sector union Nipsa and others.

PCS and Unite are also calling on the TUC to organise a national demonstration against austerity in the summer. This strategy of action presents an opportunity to re-ignite this struggle which seemed to be in danger of dissipating after the capitulation of the right-wing union leaders and the TUC.

The NUT national executive (NEC) meets in late April, where we believe that they should agree to join the action. We also call on Unison and GMB members in the NHS to reject the pension deal in their ballots that are currently taking place and demand that their unions join this or any future strikes.

This action should demand the re-opening of pension negotiations, the cancellation of the next two years pension contribution increases as well as this year's - or at least immediate financial compensation for it, as well as not increasing the retirement age.

After the incredible show of force of 30 November (N30), which saw over two million public sector workers take strike action, it is natural that in the hospitals, schools, councils and job centres, workers have been asking "what now?"

This is particularly the case when, in the next few weeks, millions will have the first set of increased pension contributions deducted from their pay. If the Con-Dems aren't forced

to retreat, further increases will follow over the next two years. Of course, all this is on top of a four-year pay freeze. There is also potential to coordinate with and give confidence to other groups of workers planning action against cuts.

The NUT conference, which took place over Easter, was in some cases a microcosm of the debate that must be taking place throughout the union movement and especially in public sector workplaces. Understandably, there was frustration that no national action has taken place since N30. Inevitably, workers enthused by N30 will react to the sense that this power, and the opportunity it presents to register a victory or at least wring major concessions out of the government, will slip away. We have to place the main responsibility for this on the right-wing union leaders in Unison, GMB and the TUC who consciously pulled out of the 'coalition of the willing' by signing the Con-Dems' heads of agreement in December, agreeing to pay more, work longer and get less.

## Union regroupment

Since then the PCS and other unions like the NUT have been leading a painstaking process of regroupment to put together another coalition, albeit smaller than N30 but comparable to the 30 June alliance which pulled over 750,000 workers out on strike.

Many NUT activists were furious at their NEC's decision to back down from national strike action on 28 March and instead only call out London, along with the UCU. UCU and NUT members responded magnificently with

up to 10,000 teachers and lecturers marching to Westminster.

On the first evening of NUT conference, over 100 delegates attended a meeting called by a number of local associations (branches) to focus this anger into agreeing an amendment to the executive's motion in the pension debate next day. To put this into perspective, this was bigger than the meetings of either of the two established left organisations which provide the majority of the leaders of the union and its NEC - the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) and the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union (CFDU).

These delegates were rightly concerned that the NEC's motion would lack clarity and an amendment setting out a clear schedule of action over the summer term and beyond was vital, starting on 10 May, anticipating the strike that has now been called.

Unfortunately, this and another amendment were passed over, in favour of one from the STA. While this gave more detail about the "aim" of action before the end of June, up to and including national strike action coordinated with other unions, to many delegates, coming on the back of the NEC vote about 28 March, this lack of clarity sounded like a conscious attempt by the leadership to demobilise the pensions struggle.

Socialist Party members were concerned that this feeling would be dissipated after conference and approached the local associations and offered to open up our pre-booked fringe meeting to them in order to give frustrated delegates the opportunity to debate the way forward.

This time, over 150 delegates attended to

vent their concern but also to coordinate a rank and file campaign through the associations to see what regions are willing to strike on 10 May. Also, it was agreed to organise a rank and file conference on 16 June, a week after the National Shop Stewards Network conference, supported by as many associations as possible.

The PCS and the NUT were strengthened by the overwhelming mandate they received in their consultation ballots for further action. The PCS correctly postponed their intention to strike on 28 March in light of the NUT NEC vote against national action, in order to re-build a wider coalition, preferably including the NUT.

But in the aftermath of their conference decision, the NUT at their NEC in late April should be urged to join the strike on 10 May, preferably with national action or at least regional action and then another national strike before the end of June, all coordinated with the other unions.

In the absence of a serious coordinated resistance to the cuts, with the biggest public sector union Unison in particular refusing to lead in the councils and the NHS, the pensions struggle is in many ways the first major national battle against the Con-Dems' austerity offensive. For the struggle to dissipate now would be a setback which could embolden the government, who were quick to threaten regional pay after the NUT executive's retreat in March.

Alternatively, the strike on 10 May can re-ignite this struggle and send a clear message of defiance to what is a weak and divided Con-Dem coalition, while also marshalling the membership for the future battles, including on pensions, that are coming thick and fast.

## Re-elect the PCS fighting leadership



Marching in London on N30 photo Paul Mattsson

PCS has played a vital role in countering the government's austerity plans, particularly on pensions. This means it is vitally important that the union retains its fighting left leadership.

Elections for the union's national executive committee (NEC) are under way, finishing on 10 May. Socialist Party members are standing, along with other Left Unity candidates, as part of the Democratic Alli-

ance slate. PCS members should vote for these candidates, a full list is on the Left Unity website: <http://www.leftunity.org.uk/downloads/2012/elections/recommendation.doc>.

The Socialist Party members standing are: President - **Janice Godrich**, Vice-President: **John McNally**, NEC members - **Mark Baker**, **Kevin Greenway**, **Emily Kelly**, **Marion Lloyd** and **Chris Morrison**.

## No to cuts: make the bosses pay!

**Graham O'Reilly**  
Southampton

"I wish I was old enough to vote," a woman said to me, "you'd get my vote. With all these cuts I just don't know how I'm going to survive."

The woman went on to explain that she was just 16 years old and was due to have her baby next month. Horrendously she was about to have her benefits cut because she could not find work.

"I'm eight months pregnant - who is going to give me a job? I just want my baby to be safe."

This was just one of the stories I heard while on the campaign trail for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the Southamp-

ton ward of Harefield.

Last year I stood as a TUSC candidate in Southampton and during the campaign I got the feeling that people were unsure of what was happening and believed politicians who said that cuts were necessary.

This year is very different. People are fed up with their services being cut and money being taken from their back pocket to boost big business profit. They now understand that the cuts hurt - especially young families, public servants and even those selfless people who just want to help.

A foster carer told me she is being asked to take care of children whose parents are unable to look after them, not because of a lack of parenting skills or because there has been a death in the family, but be-

cause they do not have the money to feed their children. Some of the kids she has seen in the last few months have only been eating once a day.

Children of two and three years old are arriving with her who don't have toys, who have never had toys, because their parents can't afford them. She asked was this the Big Society that the Tories wanted.

A retired man said he had thought about voting TUSC last year but as a life-long Labour voter he believed and trusted that they would do the right thing.

He is now angry and upset; angry with Labour as they had done nothing and upset with himself for not voting TUSC. Apologising for not voting last year, he said he would vote TUSC this year.

### Come and hear TUSC candidates standing in your area

#### Cardiff

Thursday 19 April 7-9pm, Cardiff Bus Sports and Social Club, Tudor St, Riverside

#### Stevenage

Monday 23 April 8pm, Bedwell Centre, SG1 1NA

#### Liverpool

Thursday 26 April 7.30pm, Adelphi Hotel, Lime Street.

#### Swansea

Thursday April 26 7.30pm, Dyfatty Community Centre, Chapel St, Swansea.

#### Coventry

Saturday 28 April 1.30pm, Coventry

Transport Museum, Starley Suite (upstairs), Millennium Place, Coventry City Centre, CV1 1JD.

#### Leeds Horsforth

Saturday 28 April 5pm, Grey Horse, Long Row, Horsforth, Leeds

#### Carlisle

Monday 30 April 7pm, Currock House Community Centre, Lediard Avenue

#### London meetings

- Southwark. Thursday 19 April from 7-9pm.
- Camden. Friday 20 April
- Newham. Tuesday 24 April 7.15pm Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate.
- Wandsworth and Merton. Tuesday

24 April 7.30pm, Colliers Wood Community Centre, 66-72 High Street, Colliers Wood SW19 2BY.

- Brent. Tuesday 24 April 7.30pm Rising Sun, 25 Harlesden Road, NW10 2BY
  - Waltham Forest. Thursday 26 April 7.30pm. William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Rd, E17 6QQ.
  - Greenwich. Thursday 26 April Charlton House, Charlton Road, London SE7 8RE.
  - Tower Hamlets. Monday 30 April 8pm. Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 6HL.
  - Lambeth. The Karibu Centre, 7 Gresham Road, SW9. Monday 30 April.
  - Hackney. Tuesday 1 May
- See also [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)**



# Vote Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) on 3 May

Alex Gordon, President of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), explains why a vote for TUSC is important.

"As we prepare to celebrate International Workers' Day on 1 May, my union RMT is preparing to defend jobs and safety across the railway industry.

On 3 May we have the opportunity to vote for candidates who share RMT's values of demanding an alternative to privatisation, liberalisation and a race to the bottom in workers' pay and conditions.

TUSC candidates include RMT members Daren Ireland in Liverpool Central, Mick Tosh, Portsmouth Copnor, Paul Reilly, Nuneaton and Bedworth Camp Hill, and David Goodwin, Rugby Hillmorton.

In addition I am standing as a candidate for TUSC on the London-wide list for the Greater London Assembly alongside RMT's London Transport Regional Organiser, Steve Hedley.

All TUSC candidates are standing on a manifesto of total opposition to cuts, privatisation and the outsourcing regime supported by all the three main political parties and also by the Green Party where they are in office.

No one voted for austerity. No one voted for NHS privatisation. No one voted for tax breaks for millionaires and benefit cuts for disabled people.

Most working class people in Brit-



Alex Gordon photo Senan

ain today want a radically different society than the only one they are offered by the Labour Party and the Con-Dems. We want to give our families a future where they can rely on quality free healthcare from cradle to grave and with access to the highest levels of education for all.

On Thursday 3 May you have a chance to put down your marker to say you want the alternative to start in your town or city.

I hope that you will consider doing so by voting for a Trade Unionist and Socialist candidate to build a mass political opposition to the attacks on working class people and communities and to fight for a better future."

Transport union RMT members working for Tubelines in London Underground (LU) are to strike for 72 hours from 4pm on 24 April.

Around 1,000 workers voted by 4:1 to strike because they are not included in LU's pension scheme and they do not receive the same travel concessions as other LU workers.

The union has been calling for these measures to be granted since the takeover of Tubelines by LU after the failure of the tube privatisation project. Tubelines is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Transport for London.

strike that followed soon after.

100 years ago Robert Tressell's "ragged trousered philanthropists" not only produced society's goods and services, but of their daily labour, they 'charitably' (but involuntarily) gave part to the capitalist as profit. Today workers also have a large chunk deducted in tax (in Tressell's day most workers paid no tax).

Meanwhile, the Con-Dem and previous Labour governments have slashed corporation tax and equally

Multi-millionaires paid on average 10% income tax, the government has revealed, while most people pay between 20% and 40%. If the millionaires and corporations paid their majority share of the £120 billion of unpaid taxes, the government's coffers would be overflowing.

slashed welfare and public services - the social wage - which used to protect the disadvantaged. So the modern ragged trousered philanthropists organise charity events and give generously with what little they have left after profit and tax, for the 'maintenance of the poor', as they did 150 years ago.

Here's for ending the need for charitable giving, starting with the charitable donation of the unpaid labour of the working class to company profits, by taking the capitalist companies that dominate the economy into public ownership and democratically planning society to ensure everyone's needs are supported, not just those of the "1%".

## The revolting philanthropy of the filthy rich

Pete Mason

Oxford and Cambridge, universities of the elite, are "in revolt" against Chancellor George Osborne's plans to curb tax breaks the filthy rich gain from charitable donations. Yet the whole 'row' is a smokescreen, since it is the working class who are the real philanthropists.

Claiming to be "shocked" by the scale of legal tax avoidance by multi-millionaires, Osborne was apparently unaware that the principal reason the rich give to charities is to avoid paying tax.

Writing in the Tory Daily Telegraph, 46 'philanthropists' denied that they give to charity merely to avoid paying tax and then shame-

lessly declared that, without the tax incentive, their "generosity" would be grievously "undermined"!

Yet Liberal Democrat business secretary Vince Cable backed the howls of upper-class rage.

The rich give only a pitiful proportion of their disposable income to charity compared to workers. And the total the rich pay is nothing compared to the fund-raising efforts of ordinary workers, without which many charities would quickly flounder.

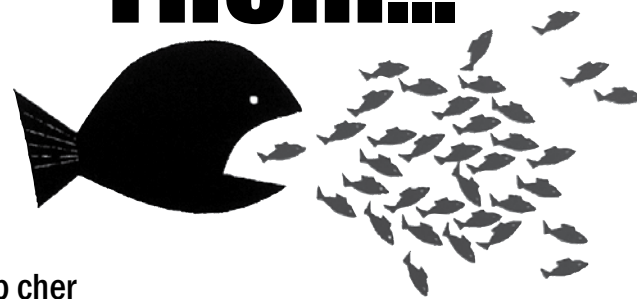
The rich, the City University in London estimated, donated a mere 2.5%, or £0.5 billion, of their lavish £19 billion 2006/07 bonuses. The general public gave £10 billion while the "very wealthy" gave a mere £1.5 billion (Charity Income Trends, May 2010).

The 'rich philanthropist' is little more than a centuries-long self-perpetuated myth. "[M]ore is done by the workers than the bourgeoisie for the maintenance of the poor", wrote Friedrich Engels in 1845 (The Conditions of the Working Class in England).

In 1888, matchmakers and "philanthropists" Bryant and May erected a statue to the Liberal prime minister Gladstone in London's East End, and gave their half-starved women workers, who died of phosphorous poisoning from the matches they made, the day off to celebrate - and deducted it from their pay. The enraged women cut themselves and bled on the marble in protest. The general (unskilled) trade unions can date their inception from the victorious matchgirls'

George Osborne's threat to cap charitable donations from rich donors has backfired on the hapless Chancellor. Stung by criticism that his recent budget benefitted the richest at the expense of the poorest in society, Osborne attempted to show that he could be tough on the rich by closing a tax avoidance loophole. However, his (and previous Labour chancellors') cuts in public services have made people more dependent on charities for such services. So by cutting charities' income he has now been accused of wrecking the voluntary sector - the very core of the Tories 'Big Society' hokum.

## Them...



### Trop cher

Britain's privatised, publicly subsidised, overcrowded rail network is also the most expensive in Europe. If it was nationalised - even on a capitalist basis like France's railways - UK passengers would save a staggering £4.6 billion a year in fares, as season tickets in France cost around 13p a mile, compared to 21p in the UK.

### Critical injuries

Working class and middle class people are suffering huge job losses and cuts in living standards and services - part of the price for sorting out the debt-laden economy claims the government. But the UK economy continues to flatline. It seems that big business is refusing to invest, preferring to sit on cash reserves amounting to an unbelievable £754 billion - equal to 50% of GDP!

According to the chief economic adviser to the Item Club: "British companies remain extremely risk averse. Until these companies stop stashing the cash... the economy will remain on the critical list."

### Accidental tourists

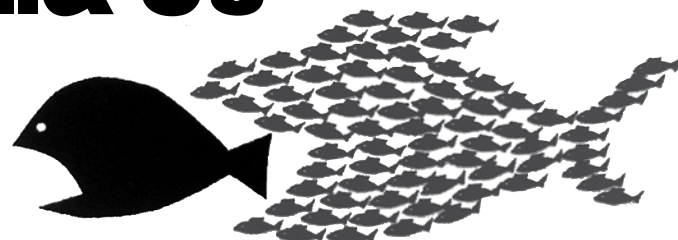
UK premier David Cameron recently visited Burma, currently run by a

repressive military clique and where EU trade sanctions apply. Cameron is keen to lift ("suspend") sanctions on behalf of British capitalists who are eager to exploit the country's rich resources and cheap labour. To get round the tricky problem that it would be illegal under sanctions for the businessmen accompanying Cameron to enter Burma, the ever helpful UK foreign office reclassified them as "tourists".

### Money formula

One country where UK sanctions don't apply is Bahrain. The semi-feudal dictatorship crushed pro-democracy protests last year and has used torture and show trials against its dissidents. Next week Bahrain is due to host a F1 motor racing event. F1 teams are participating on the grounds that the event is "safe", and multimillionaire F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone says 'don't mix sport and politics'. Other reasons might be that the UK based McLaren F1 team is 40% owned by Bahrain's ruling family who also own 50% of the McLaren car group and that the event is worth \$25 million to F1.

## ...& Us



## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine  
May 2012 issue includes:



● **Pensions:** out soon!  
**The battle continues**

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

socialismtoday@socialistparty.org.uk  
www.socialismtoday.org 020 8988 8773

## Tamil Solidarity Day of Action - 20 April

- 'Sri Lanka, the aftermath' symposium, 5.30-6.30pm, with Paul Murphy Socialist Party MEP for Dublin, Frances Harrison, the former BBC Sri Lanka correspondent and others. Southbank Centre, London
- A way forward for the Eelam struggle - What's the role of the Diaspora? public meeting, 7.30pm University of London Union, Malet Street, near Euston station.

For more information or to get involved in these or other campaigning activities on 20 April, contact 07908 050217 or info@tamilsolidarity.org  
**www.tamilsolidarity.org**



Join the fightback!  
Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk •

Phone 020 8988 8777 • Text 07761 818206



# Usdaw conference Time to fight the attacks on pay and working conditions

## An Usdaw member

From workfare to Sunday trading hours, to shop closures and redundancies, issues affecting the retail sector have featured prominently in the national news over the last few months. From 22-25 April, retail workers' union Usdaw will meet in Blackpool at the union's Annual Delegate Meeting to discuss these and other issues.

The key discussions will be around the ever increasing attacks on the conditions of retail workers. There is the now widespread use of flexi-hours contracts which only contract workers to a small number of guaranteed hours from which they qualify for holiday pay, sickness pay and other benefits. They are forced to beg for extra hours to make ends meet. Yet this is now being undermined by the use of workfare, where job seekers are required to work for free for several weeks for major retail companies.

Usdaw has correctly opposed such schemes and demanded the rate for the job. But it has failed to link up with the hundreds and thousands of young people that



photo Senan

have taken to the streets in protest, many of whom could be future retail workers.

The recent decision by the Low Pay Commission (LPC), which Usdaw general secretary John Hannett sits on, to freeze the minimum wage

for those under 21 is an absolute disgrace. Usdaw should be mounting a serious campaign against this.

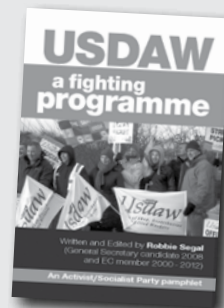
Following Usdaw's success in abolishing youth rates in Morrisons, Tesco and the Co-op we should be pushing for the elimination of such rates altogether. The justification of the LPC for its measures, that it would make younger workers more competitive, will mean older workers being undercut by such rates. The real problem is the lack of jobs for young people with over one million on the scrapheap of the dole.

The recent budget saw the introduction of a proposal to remove Sunday trading restrictions for the duration of the Olympics and Paralympics. Usdaw reps and members are overwhelmingly opposed to any changes on several grounds, including the difficulties in using public transport to get to work, as well as being the only day you are guaranteed to have the evening free. A major campaign must be mounted to resist this and any other attacks.

To find out more about the socialist opposition to the inaction of the current Usdaw leadership, subscribe to the Activist for free at [usdawactivist@gmail.com](mailto:usdawactivist@gmail.com).



Shop workers are suffering pay cuts and poor conditions



## Usdaw - a fighting programme

New pamphlet for Usdaw members. £2.50 including postage and packing, from the Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Or ring 020 8988 8777



**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 member of the construction workers' campaign
- Kevin Courtney, NUT deputy general secretary

**For more information see: [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)**  
**Contact the NSSN at: [info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net) or PO Box 54498, London, E10 9DE**



## Disabled people fighting back

### Neil Cafferky

The Con-Dem attacks on the welfare state and workers' rights bear down particularly heavily on disabled people.

Disabled people have suffered a double attack as services they depend on to allow them to participate in everyday life are cut. The government's supposed solution involves farming those services out to the private sector.

However in a cruel twist, many of the benefits that disabled people could have used to partly pay for these services are being cut back or withdrawn entirely. Many people will be forced to rely on charity organisations. In these circumstances the old disabled movement slogan of 'rights, not charity' is coming back on the agenda.

At the same time, disabled people in work are also under attack with the announcement of the closure of 36 Remploy factories employing 1,752 people, 1,518 of whom are disabled.

These attacks are being met with



A real choice for disabled workers! photo the Socialist

a determined fightback by disabled campaign groups and trade unions representing Remploy workers.

On 18 April Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) held a protest in London to highlight their opposition to cuts.

On Thursday, the next day, there is a joint meeting between the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), Right to Work and DPAC as part of a campaign to stop the closure of Remploy factories. NSSN and Socialist Party member Les Woodward, chair of the GMB

Remploy group will be one of the speakers. 7.30pm, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1.

The following day at noon, Unite are organising a protest outside the offices of the DWP headquarters on Tothill Street, central London, as part of their campaign against the closures.

Finally on 26 April Unite will be organising a public meeting where Remploy workers will put the case for the positive impact continued operation of the factories have on their lives.

## Health service pensions - reject the deal - coordinated action needed

The 2012 Unison Health Care Service Group Conference will take place from 23-25 April 2012 in Brighton. The conference comes in the middle of the Unison ballot on pensions in the health service and during the service group executive elections which end on 18 May.

This pensions deal should be decisively rejected. On 30 November many health service workers took strike action as part of the two-million-strong public sector strike in a tremendous show of defiance. This demonstration of anger and

frustration was not only against the increase in the retirement age and paying more for a smaller pension but against the continuous reorganisations, job losses, the Health and Social Care Act and £20 billion in brutal so-called efficiency savings, really cuts.

Disgracefully, instead of building on this magnificent action and continuing to work alongside those public sector unions who reject the deal, our Unison leadership decided to halt any further action.

This is despite the fact that the

government was not prepared to discuss any concessions.

This government is determined to drive down our wages, terms and conditions, having recently announced that they are in favour of introducing regional pay.

As staffing costs represent 70% of their budgets, they say they have no choice but to either cut services or attack our pay and conditions to meet the £20 billion 'savings' target. But, according to the press, the NHS chiefs have said after this they are looking at another £20 billion of cuts!

Because of the political consequences of cuts in services, they are much more likely to cut staff pay and working conditions. If we don't defend our pensions it will give the green light to this government of the rich to attack our other rights and conditions.

It is clear that we need a strong union. We must reject the argument that any cuts are necessary - just look at the amount lost to the public purse through tax avoidance, mainly by the rich - £120 billion annually!

Taking all the privatised services

back in-house would mean the NHS wasn't subsidising the fat profits of the contractor companies.

We face another year with no pay rise and then two further years of an imposed pay rise of 1%. We cannot trust this government of millionaires, only interested in allowing their rich friends and families to get even richer, and making working people pay for it.

Unison, as the largest public sector union, must reject this deal and start to coordinate united industrial action with the other unions rejecting the deal.



# Clegg's text message plans make us LOL!

James Ivens

Unemployment continues to plague austerity Britain. Over 2.6 million people are out of work. And we're disproportionately aged under 25.

As a young actor I feel the pinch in three ways. Swingeing public sector cuts and the syphoning of resources into the Olympic budget have decimated arts jobs.

The retraction of the much-vaunted private sector has battered me down to part-time hours in my day job.

And the ongoing attacks on benefits mean I currently get nothing from the state. I can't rely on getting the next gig because the competition is so great. Acting work is mostly short and poorly paid in any case.

I can't increase my day job hours because there's not enough work to go round. And I can't resign my day job to simplify my Jobseeker's Allowance claim because I'd lose benefits.

What is Liberal leader Nick Clegg's response? £1 billion to send young jobseekers text messages. Don't make me LOL.

The coalition's "youth contract" scheme aims to solve youth unemployment by giving "extra support". Instead of fortnightly interviews we

will get help once a week. Department for Work and Pensions documents explain this to mean "interviews, SMS texts, emails, phone calls, group sessions".

But candidates outnumber vacancies five to one nationally going up to 20 to one in some areas. No amount of "extra support" will squeeze us all in. So what have Labour got to say? Shadow work minister Liam Byrne leads the charge!

"We need a Real Jobs Guarantee" - too right! "...paid for by a tax on bankers' bonuses" - keep it coming! "...that would guarantee a proper job for 110,000 young people" - oh, and he was doing so well.

Byrne is right to say we need to create jobs. But the number he gives is spitting in the river.

An ambitious programme of public works would solve unemployment. At the same time it would raise living standards for millions.

Decent benefits for all, including part-time workers, would leave jobseekers the time and energy to contribute to society and find proper work. Yes, let's fund it with bankers' bonuses. And while we're at it let's take the banks off them too. Nationalised under democratic workers' control, imagine what good work we



Youth Fight for Jobs on the Jarrow march against youth unemployment photo Suzanne Beishon

could do with their wasted billions. We could end unemployment permanently. We could fund the cul-

tural life of the nation for everyone, not just the wealthy few. And if there's 10p to spare in the plenty,

we could even drop a text to Clegg. "Hi Nick, we hear u r out of a job. Perhaps this txt will help. LOL."

## NUS needs a fighting leadership

Edmund Schluessel

Members of the National Union of Students (NUS), the only UK-wide collective organisation students have, must decide at NUS national conference this week whether NUS will take serious measures in the fight against attacks on our education or vanish into bureaucratic irrelevance.

2010's 52,000-strong London demonstration on 10 November showed the potential NUS has to mobilise the student movement. The wave of occupations which followed showed students wanted more. But as with the anti-war movement in 2003, a demonstration was never going to be enough.

The NUS leadership was and is lacking. It is bound to the Labour Party at the throat and waist. NUS leadership squandered the opportunity to build on 10 November by committing to support trade unionists, even our own lecturers, in their own ongoing fight against public sector cuts.

### Fees tripled

This September will see the overwhelming majority of university students paying tripled tuition fees. College students, already cut off from the financial support provided by EMA, now face cuts to bus passes as local councils join the game of passing on the cuts to ordinary people.

An unliveable minimum wage has fallen further behind crippling inflation while the million unemployed young people are set to be joined by thousands more over the summer.

I am standing for the NUS national executive, with Lizi Gray. Lizi told the Socialist: "I'm standing for the NEC as an FE student currently seeing and experiencing the brutal effects of Con-Dem austerity in our classrooms and communities."

"When the government first announced it was scrapping EMA and tripling fees, I immediately began



Students marching to defend education photo Paul Mattsson

work organising in my college to fight these outrageous attacks. I was one of the many thousands of students who walked out and protested even after the NUS leadership had succumbed to the cowardice of refusing to organise action.

"Since then, I've continued fighting for ordinary young people. As a member of Youth Fight for Jobs I recently took part in the 300 mile 'Jarrow march', highlighting the scandal of mass youth unemployment. I've organised Newcastle 'Slutwalk' taking up the disgusting culture seen in much of the establishment of 'blaming the victim' in cases of rape or violence against women."

"I'm standing in this election because I want to see an NUS leadership as determined to fight as its members. As a socialist, I stand for a society run for and by the 99%."

"I say that there is enough money

to fund free, high quality education for all, with EMA and living grants available, the problem is that it's currently in the hands of the 1%."

"In contrast to the likes of Labour Students, I don't accept that 'some pain is necessary' or 'cuts have to be made'. I say make the rich pay for their own crisis. We deserve a future!"

**Vote Edmund Schluessel #1 and Lizi Gray (FE) for Block of 15 for a fighting NUS.**

**Socialist Students calls on the NUS leadership to:**

- **Organise and build for a mass national demonstration in defence of education in the autumn.**
- **Use this demonstration as a springboard for the launch of a huge campaign organised around the following demands:**
- **Scrap university fees**
- **Stop all cuts and privatisation**
- **Reinstate EMA**

## Welsh government slashes student grants

Grants for Wales's poorest and disabled students are being cut by 15% in real terms. The Assembly Learning Grant, a means-tested grant which the Welsh Assembly introduced for university students in 2010, is being reduced from £5,600 to £5,000 for students starting in September of this year.

The Welsh government is slashing the Special Support Grant, which aids disabled students, mature and international students, and single parents, by the same amount.

Although the National Bursary scheme is being re-introduced this year, it only provides some support to a smaller number of

students. Welsh students also face higher tuition fees, higher rates on their student loans and 20% cutbacks in the number of available university places.

Youth Fight for Jobs Wales demands:

\* Restore funding to Assembly Learning Grant (ALG), Special Support Grant (SSG) and the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

\* Bring back free education - living grants, not loans, for all students.

\* Link students, the unemployed and workers together for a fighting campaign against all public sector cuts and job losses.

## Success at Varndean College, Brighton

Ewan Atkinson

I recently stood, with some friends who share similar political beliefs to me, for election to positions in Varndean College, Brighton. I ran for vice-president and was elected. A friend was elected as chair and the one running for president lost by only five votes out of over 200.

This shows that the students want people who will fight their cause in these hard times.

I stood because the government is making drastic education cuts and I wanted to be in a position to fight them.

As vice-president of the union I hope to re-ignite the student movement and show the students that the fight against fees and cuts is far from over.

Just being on the streets in protest, even if we don't get everything we want, still shows the government that students will do whatever we

can to stop these attacks.

The NUS called a national walk-out and day of action for 14 March yet they did nothing to publicise it.

Some friends and I set up Varndean College Against the Cuts in November.

We tried to publicise the walkout and even organised a demo. But without the student union's support, this was hard.

What is the point of the NUS calling for action when they keep it hidden and don't tell anyone about it? I get emails all the time about free burgers and 10% off in Topshop but I didn't receive any emails about the action they called for.

As vice-president I will organise campaigns to help fight the cuts. I am now a governor at Varndean so I will have a say in changes made to the college.

I will fight on behalf of the students, keep them informed and build campaigns with them to defend our rights and education.



This is a government of the rich for the rich. That is the inescapable message of the Lib-Con coalition's ultra anti-working class budget and the whole cuts agenda. The claim that 'we are all in it together' lies in tatters.

But the working class is left without a political voice to challenge this onslaught because Labour puts up no serious opposition. Its leaders, Eds Miliband and Balls, have basically backed up the Tories, claiming

they would maintain their cuts and can't even commit a future Labour government to reviving the 50p tax rate on the super-rich. Labour cannot effectively challenge the destruction and privatisation of the NHS because it had similar policies in government. That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set up by leading trade unionists and socialists, including the Socialist Party, to provide a political voice to the millions who oppose the cuts.



## Where we're standing

TUSC is standing 133 candidates in 39 councils. In addition there is the TUSC list of 17 candidates for the Greater London Assembly, and the TUSC candidate for the mayor of Liverpool, Tony Mulhearn.

In Coventry the 17 candidates, including TUSC national chair and Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist (standing for re-election), have endorsed the TUSC local elections policy platform (below) but are appearing on the ballot paper under their established electoral name, Socialist Alternative.

The London list is headed up by Alex Gordon, president of the RMT transport workers' union. The full list includes leaders of the fire fighters' union, the teachers and lecturers' unions, the prison officers' union and many other prominent activists.

The full list is on the TUSC website:

<http://www.tusc.org.uk/press110412.php> and includes many leading trade union activists.

In England TUSC is standing 118 candidates (5% of the seats) in 34 of the local authorities where there are elections (27%).

In Wales there are 14 TUSC candidates standing in four of the 22 Welsh councils with elections.

### Scotland

In Scotland, all 32 councils are up for election, with councillors elected by a proportional representation system in multi-member wards. There are 38 candidates standing in nine Scottish councils as the Scottish Anti-Cuts Coalition (SACC) – a name registered by TUSC and made available to candidates in Scotland.

# TUSC AGAINST CUTS

[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

This is in accordance with the TUSC mandate to enable trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to contest elections without having to appear on the ballot paper as 'Independent' or with no 'party description'. See [www.scottishanticutscallition.org.uk](http://www.scottishanticutscallition.org.uk)

**The London challenge for the GLA is supported by three trade union general secretaries:**

**At the launch of the London campaign Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, said:**

"Political parties represent classes of people, that's what it boils down to. And we've got a situation where the three main political parties, even though there might be small details which are different, all support privatisation, all support keeping the anti-trade union laws and all support illegal wars throughout the length and breadth of the world. That's the real reality and there is an under-representation of working people, unemployed people who want to have work and pensioners and it's about time people started recognising the fact in the trade union movement.

**When Matt Wrack, general secretary of the firefighters' FBU union donated £2,000 from his personal campaign fund, he said:**

"I am delighted to be able to support two members of the Fire Brigades Union who are standing for election to the London Assembly as part of the TUSC list.

As a union we are facing huge cuts to our service. We are also seeing creeping privatisation of the London Fire Brigade – a policy which has already been a disaster. I know Ian Leahair and Sian Griffiths will fight to defend good quality public services for the people of London".

**Labour candidates:** Three of Labour's candidates are councillors in Labour-controlled London boroughs. In 2011, Councillor Nosegbe voted for £79 million of cuts over three years in Lambeth; Councillor Desai voted for £100 million of cuts in Newham; and Councillor Ali from Waltham Forest voted for £65 million of cuts.

**TUSC candidates:** believe big business should pay for their crisis.

**Labour candidates:** Candidate Kevin McGrath is a senior advisor and executive committee member

**Steve Gillan, general secretary of the POA prison officers' union, speaking in a personal capacity, said:**

"I support the Trade Union and Socialist Candidates in the forthcoming GLA elections. TUSC gives workers in London a viable political option to fight the cuts, redundancies and privatisation in the capital. I would urge all workers in London to put their cross next to the TUSC list on 3 May."

On 3 May use your vote to:

# SHAKE UP POLITICS AND FIGHT ALL CUTS!

London: Who do you want to represent you?

**Labour has eleven candidates for the London-wide Greater London Assembly (GLA) list. But, as Sean Figg explains, the term 'Labour' is a brand for these people rather than any description of their background or outlook.**

**TUSC candidates:** have pledged to vote 'no' to cuts, and campaign inside and outside the London Assembly to build a mass movement against austerity.

**Labour candidates:** Three of Labour's candidates are councillors in Labour-controlled London boroughs. In 2011, Councillor Nosegbe voted for £79 million of cuts over three years in Lambeth; Councillor Desai voted for £100 million of cuts in Newham; and Councillor Ali from Waltham Forest voted for £65 million of cuts.

**TUSC candidates:** believe big business should pay for their crisis. **Labour candidates:** Candidate Kevin McGrath is a senior advisor and executive committee member

**Steve Gillan, general secretary of the POA prison officers' union, speaking in a personal capacity, said:**

"I support the Trade Union and Socialist Candidates in the forthcoming GLA elections. TUSC gives workers in London a viable political option to fight the cuts, redundancies and privatisation in the capital. I would urge all workers in London to put their cross next to the TUSC list on 3 May."

of F&C Reit Asset Management. F&C Reit manages a global property portfolio worth £7.4 billion.

**TUSC candidates:** are elected trade unionists that have led struggles of workers and believe the way for working class people to improve their living standards is organising and mobilising in mass movements. Between them they represent hundreds of thousands of workers.

Adding one more **Labour** Assembly member – whether they are a cutting councillor or a business person – will do nothing to prepare the working class for the battle against cuts and austerity.

**But even one TUSC assembly member would be a fighting voice for millions of ordinary Londoners, campaigning inside and outside of the assembly, to mobilise the working class in a fightback.**



photos Paul Mattsson

### TUSC list for the London Assembly elections:

● **Alex Gordon**, president of transport union RMT ● **Nick Wrack**, TUSC national committee ● **April Ashley**, Union executive, representing black women members ● **Sian Griffiths**, Fire Brigades Union chair of women's committee ● **Steve Hedley**, RMT London organiser ● **Ian Leahair**, FBU national executive committee member for London ● **Gary McFarlane**, Black activist and journalist ● **Martin Powell-Davies**, executive member for Inner London of the teachers' union NUT ● **Merlin Reader** postal worker and CWU London committee ● **Joe Simpson**, assistant general secretary of the POA prison officers' union ● **Jenny Sutton**, lecturers' union UCU executive ● **Nancy Taaffe**, library worker made redundant, former chair Waltham Forest Union ● **Jackie Turner**, doctor ● **Lee Vernon**, Young Members convener for London of the civil service union PCS ● **Lesley Woodburn**, Unite rep on southeast regional TUC LGBTQ committee ● **Mick Dooley**, Construction industry activist ● **Mark Benjamin**, Black disabled PCS union activist. **Candidates are in a personal capacity**

Five ways to help the fightback:

1. Aim to give out 100 cards/leaflets a day until 3 May. This can be done, for example, by giving them out at your bus stop/station on the way to work; giving some out at the cafe at lunch time; leafleting a street on your way home
2. In addition, get involved in planned activity, leafleting shopping centres, stations, colleges and workplaces
3. Ask your friends, family and workmates to do the same
4. Make a donation to TUSC and ask everyone you know to give a 'tenner to TUSC': <http://www.tusc.org.uk/donate.php>
5. Spread the word by twitter, Facebook and local social media

The TUSC election campaigns are receiving financial support from working class people across the country – both as individuals and, importantly, through their trade unions.

Trade union donations received include: ● London Region Fire Brigades Union (FBU) £500 ● RMT London Transport Regional Council £1,000 ● POA prison officers' union Political Fund £500 ● RMT Transport for London No.1 Branch £100 ● RMT Camden No.3 Branch £100 ● RMT London Underground Engineering Branch £800 ● RMT Hammersmith & City Branch £50 ● Plymouth RMT £200 ● Worcester RMT £300 ● FBU general secretary Matt Wrack £2,000

News from the campaign coalface

### Liverpool: 'Tony's a legend!'

"I hope Tony wins, he's the only one who is honest and will stand up for us". This is just one of the many messages of support we have been getting in the Tony4Mayor campaign in Liverpool. We have been speaking to people all day, every day at workplaces, in the city centre and even those queuing at 5am for trains to the Liverpool vs Everton semi-final. The attitude among the majority of people is the same: the three main parties represent the rich, it's time we had someone who represented us! One example is the overwhelming support from a group of street cleaners who are being out-sourced by the current Labour council under Joe Anderson. After a few came to the Tony4Mayor launch meeting, they invited us to a mass meeting they were holding. There they reported what Tony stood for and one said: "If you vote for Anderson [leader of the Labour council and mayoral candidate], you want your heads checking! Tony's the only one that will defend our jobs." They are making donations to the campaign and aim to raise £500.

Tony has been speaking on the megaphone at our campaigning stalls, explaining to people what he will do if elected. Various people, young and old, have been coming up to shake his hand and offer support. One woman said the last time she met him was when she made him a cup of tea while he was serving as an apprentice!

Many people remember Tony from the 1980s and the fight the 47 Labour councillors led. The difference between them and the current Labour councillors couldn't be clearer. One woman, when she found out Tony was standing for mayor, remarked "We need a fightback. That's what we used to do in the 1980s, but no one's doing that now".

There has been a lot of enthusiasm, with people wanting to get behind the campaign and help by leafleting their own areas. One man who is involved went on demonstrations in the 1980s with his dad, who was a shop steward at the time. He said: "I remember Tony from when I was a kid, he's a legend!" Tony is the only anti-cuts candidate standing in the mayoral election and is the only one who has a proven track record of standing up for working class people.

**Becci Heagney**

### Wales: austerity hits women

A TUSC supporter got in touch: "Just talking to one of my neighbours, who has lost a lot of her income as a result of tax credit changes. She works as a school 'dinner lady' and kitchen assistant, term-time only (Union member). In a small village, very limited public transport and no car, how's she supposed to find those extra hours? If she could have found more paid work she'd have done so before!"

As councils lay off staff around the country, passing on Tory cuts, it's clear that while cuts are a disaster for working class communities as a whole, they are ruinous for some sections.

A GMB union report shows that 62% of those being sacked by councils in Wales are women.

This is the reality of austerity Britain. If you want real change vote and campaign for TUSC candidates.

**Ronnie Job**

### Racists offer no alternative

Thanks to the tireless work of anti-racist activists in Lincoln, including Lincolnshire Socialist Party members, the far-right racist British National Party (BNP) has seen its electoral basis undermined. In 2007, they stood 12 candidates for election. In 2011 they failed to stand any candidates, and could only put forward one candidate this year.

Votes for the BNP in previous elections in Lincoln were largely a protest against the identikit politics of the three main capitalist parties, rather than a positive vote for a racist organisation. Voters in 2012 will be able to give their support for a positive alternative to the three main parties and vote for TUSC candidates in five wards. Lincolnshire Socialist Party members will continue to argue for a programme which opposes racist division and unites working people from all sections of the community to fight for investment in jobs, homes and public services for all.

Lincolnshire Socialist Party has a proud record of fighting against racism and the BNP locally. Our members initiated Lincoln Against Racism and Fascism in 2006 and organised, with other activists and trade unions, several public meetings, two mass demonstrations and three Rock Against Racism gigs, as well as giving out tens of thousands of leaflets countering the lies of the far right.

**Nick Parker**

Nationally far-right and racist parties are clearly not confident they can get big support in these elections. According to Hope Not Hate there are currently only 138 BNP candidates, 35 for the National Front and 91 for the English Democrats. Nonetheless TUSC candidates will continue to challenge racism as has been done in Lincoln.

### Rugby: enthusiastic response

The Rugby TUSC election campaign got off to a flying start this week with leafleting in three out of the eight wards we are contesting.

We had just the sort of problem we don't mind having – too many TUSC candidates and activists turning up for a Friday evening campaign stall in the town centre! So, as well as handing out over 300 leaflets to shoppers, we were able to send a team to deliver another 600+ leaflets in the Newbold & Brownson ward where postal worker and CWU union member Bill Smith is standing.

Afterwards we went for a drink – so we could discuss election campaign plans. And just to round off a great evening of fighting the cuts it was announced that Warwickshire FBU have agreed to donate £250 to our campaign fund.

**Robert Farmer**

### 'Main parties are rubbish!'

Three wheelie bins were placed outside Sheffield town hall. This illustrated how Tory, Lib Dem and Labour are all full of rubbish! They are committed to the austerity cuts agenda and making ordinary working class people pay for the economic crisis caused by the greed of the bankers and speculators.

Instead of this rubbish, TUSC candidates, if elected, will support trade union and community campaigns against cuts in jobs and services, as part of building a mass campaign to force more funding for councils from central government. Radio Sheffield and the Sheffield Star newspaper covered the protest. TUSC is standing five candidates across Sheffield. Alan Munro, TUSC candidate for Gleadless Valley, said: "The real opposition in my eyes comes from the protesters such as the Occupy movement, strikers and all those standing up to the government. We stand with them".

Chaz Lockett, TUSC candidate in Walkley, one of three young TUSC candidates, added: "Young people will not be another lost generation and are looking for a radical anti-capitalist alternative – TUSC has young candidates that have been involved in the Jarrow March for Jobs 2011 and the student protests against tuition fee rises and to restore EMA." **Sheffield TUSC**







# USA: An ‘inspiring vibrant movement’

The Battle of Wisconsin by George Martin Fell Brown reviewed by Dave Gorton

Time magazine’s “Person of the year” for 2011 was simply “The Protester”. From the Maghreb in North Africa to the colder climes of Madison, USA, public places echoed to the sounds of demonstrations, occupations and revolutions. 2011 was a warning to the ruling classes worldwide of things to come.

The Battle of Wisconsin by George Martin Fell Brown is the story of one of those momentous struggles. Recently issued as a pamphlet by Socialist Alternative (the US supporters of the CWI), it is required reading for socialists in Britain, as the lessons needing to be learnt in the US are no less relevant here.

The sleeping giant of the American working class began to wake up. While this battle did not succeed, it helped to pave the way for a potential revival of the US labour movement’s militant traditions in general and the occupy movement later on last year in particular.

Wisconsin’s Republican governor Scott Walker’s attempts to introduce a Budget Repair Bill were met with huge opposition. Little surprise as the bill abolished collective bargaining rights for public sector workers over anything other than pay.

But pay increases would be automatically capped to inflation so public sector unions would be left with bargaining rights only over pay cuts!

## Mass protests

The bill was announced on Thursday 10 February. On Monday 14th, there was a small demonstration, a day later student walkouts occurred along with a rally of 10,000.

On Wednesday, thousands of students walked out state-wide and in Madison itself the whole school district was shut down for the day as 30,000 encircled the Wisconsin State Capitol building.

On Thursday, there was a state-wide ‘sick-out’ by 92,000 teachers and 50,000 were on the street demonstrations. By Saturday, an estimated 100,000 were outside the Capitol and 8,000 participating in



Teachers’ union members march to the State Capitol in Madison

a sit-in inside. As the author points out, “consciousness... transformed almost overnight”.

But why did this movement after weeks of occupation of the Capitol in Wisconsin and tremendous mobilisations not win?

George deals with all of the many factors in the pamphlet. These include the lack of strength of the left; the dearth of recent experience in struggle in the unions; and the role of the union leaders who sunk all their faith in the “recall” campaign. Instead of using the potential of the movement to stop Walker with demonstrations, strikes and – as a next step – a one-day general strike, the movement was derailed to a process of recalling parliamentarians and Walker himself.

While parts of the movement were just inexperienced, a part of the union leadership did everything to channel anger into the big business Democratic Party. This meant subordinating their members’ livelihoods to the politics of this party’s candidates and a “recall” process which is now – one year later – still not over, while the laws are put in place.

This orientation of trade union leaders to a party of “lesser evil-ism” will sound so familiar to readers in Britain. The pressing need for a new mass party of the working class is no less urgent in the US than it is in Britain. What struck me reading the pamphlet is that I could have substituted the words Labour Party (in Britain) for Democratic Party over and over again.

The former Democratic mayor of Salt Lake City, Rocky Anderson, is quoted as calling his former party “a gutless, unprincipled party, bought and paid for by the same interests that buy and pay for the Republican Party”.

He goes on: “I think the answer is a new political party that actually will advocate for and promote the interests of the public rather than the narrow interests of the wealthy.”

## General strike

The demand for a general strike, even of a one-day state-wide public sector nature to begin with, was aired by Socialist Alternative consistently as the only way to try and secure a defeat of the bill. This was probably the most discussed tactic

among workers and one that received widespread support. But the idea of calling a general strike never got past the union bureaucrats.

The pamphlet contains an excellent analysis on the role of the police. Many in Wisconsin declared their support for the struggle. The police union sent messages of support. Some even joined the occupation themselves!

When the pressures of the movement are strong enough to prevent the ruling class from using the police against workers, a certain stalemate can be reached.

But the ruling class will always seek to use the police for their original aim – that of protecting the property interests of the rich. These contradictions led to some confusion in the ranks of many demonstrators.

“The Battle of Wisconsin” deserves to be read by labour movement activists (and their leaders!) worldwide. It relates “an inspiring, vibrant social movement” without “sugarcoating” the outcome.

As the author says, the working class in Wisconsin “in a few months... have learned more than can often be learned in years”.

## 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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

## www.socialistworld.net

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



## Ireland: Abortion Bill - a first step to a woman’s right to choose

Proposal to legalise abortion in Ireland.

Clare Daly TD, (member of the Irish parliament) Socialist Party, (CWI, Ireland)



## Hong Kong: Wolf at the door!

15,000 join protest against the appointment of new leader CY Leung as capitalist establishment is openly split.

Socialist Action reporters in Hong Kong



## Iran: Free Rez Shahabi, jailed trade unionist

Tehran’s bus drivers union leader sentenced to six years in prison.

CWI reporters

# Tunisia: Brutal government crackdown on protesters will backfire

## CWI reporters, Tunis

On Monday 9 April in central Tunis, horrific brutality was used by Tunisian police to repress peaceful protesters. This is undoubtedly the worst police crackdown for months in the country.

What is already being called ‘Black Monday’ brings to light the real character of the new tripartite coalition in power (the ‘troika’), a coalition prepared to reinstate the worst methods of the ousted dictator Ben Ali.

Different demonstrations and rallies were taking place in the capital on that day to commemorate the anniversary of ‘Martyrs’ Day’, a reference to the bloody repression of pro-independence demonstrators by French colonial troops in 1938.

This occasion was seized upon by many to protest against the present Ennahda-led government, to honour the dead of last year’s counter-revolutionary killings, as well as to defy the ban on demonstrations in Bourguiba Avenue imposed by the Interior Ministry in late March.

Some of the marchers had walked for several days from the inland regions to demonstrate in the capital.

As thousands marched to Bourguiba Avenue, they were rapidly met with brutal repression by the police who used batons, tear gas and rubber bullets. The scene soon became a field of indiscriminate revenge by the police aided by thugs suspected to be supporters of the ruling Ennahda party.

## Government lies

The Interior Ministry has made trumped up charges against the protesters, pretending that Molotov cocktails had been used by them. While there is numerous evidence of the police’s violent provocation, nothing of the kind can be found to back such claims about the protesters.

“Tunisia is not threatened by dictatorship, it is threatened by chaos,” Rached Ghannouchi, Ennahda’s leader said, putting the blame on what he describes as “Stalinist anarchists”. This political cover for the police action betrays the fact that

what happened on Monday is not at all accidental but was engineered by those in power in an attempt to intimidate and discourage the most active layers from pursuing their aspirations for change.

This repression followed attacks on another march organised by the UDC (union of the unemployed graduates) on 7 April, with the central demand of the right of a decent job for all. Also, in February, the trade union federation UGTT’s offices were raided.

However, this repression will strengthen the growing understanding that the Ennahda-led government is the enemy of the aims that working people and youth had for the revolution.

Throughout the country the climate is now particularly tense. A general strike has taken place in Ktar (in the Gafsa region), another in Sidi Bouzid, and Ennahda’s offices have been burned down in several areas. A strike of all students and school students has been declared in Sousse, and other actions by the student union, the UGET, are also under discussion.



TUSC candidate's comment

# Grim toll for hidden police racism



photo Paul Mattsson

**Lesley Woodburn**

Trade Union and Socialist Coalition candidate for the London Assembly

Over Easter yet another brazen example of police corruption came to light. It was revealed that the Met police (MPS) buried a 2004 report warning of racist stop and search. This, alongside a barrage of recorded flagrant police brutality, is a call to action for anyone who identifies as a trade unionist, grassroots activist and socialist.

Lib Dem mayoral hopeful Brian Paddick claims that his 2004 report was buried by his bosses for eight long years. But what did he do to campaign for it to be brought to light? If Paddick was so concerned about the level of racism in the MPS why didn't he give the report to the then mayor Ken Livingstone or his Police and Equality Adviser?

I can't help thinking he's only doing this now because he wants black votes. It seems Paddick's job meant more to him than the lives of ordinary black Londoners. The smugness of this 'poli-tricking' is sickening.

A key question is what have been the consequences of this report's

suppression? Between 2004 and 2012 there have been 34 deaths of Black and Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people by the MPS. 38 white deaths have occurred during the same time frame. Racist police, while disproportionately targeting black people, are also indiscriminate in their brutality.

Left unchallenged and with an "Ineffectual Police Complaints Commission" to step in with a cosmetic appearance of a serious investigation, both black and white deaths in police custody will continue. It is only united working class action by black and white people that can stop this.

I am increasingly jaded by calls for public inquiries into police excess, exercises in feel-good ineffective 'slactivism'. 'Public' usually means a government minister, IPPC-led, a mayor or senior cabinet member, a physician, a Lord Chief Justice and, maybe, just maybe, someone from the community concerned.

The community representative will resign within months or weeks of partaking in what they know is sure to be a cover-up. Public inquiries into deaths in police custody never include the organisations many working people belong to and

exercise power within – the trade unions.

The trade unions, and community organisations have collectively come together to combat the injustices we face as working people. I welcome, for example, the RMT transport union's initiative, holding the meeting 'We Demand Justice.'

That meeting heard from the families of those who died in police custody such as Janet Alder, whose brother Christopher Alder died in 1998, and Samantha Rigg-David, whose brother Sean Rigg died at Brixton police station in 2008.

As a trade unionist, I welcome the Police Federation's decision to ballot police officers over strike action against the cuts to its service. I hope the police do strike as they did in 1918 and 1919. Through striking, I hope that it increases many ordinary rank-and-file police officers' collective understanding.

Only through struggling to defend their service will the police understand the need for free association and to form an independent trade union that collectively bargains and defends the rights of its members, while also kicking itchy-fingered racists and anti-trade union corrupt officers out of its ranks.



## Pro-choice action in Worthing

Abort67 is an anti-choice group that draws its name from its opposition to the 1967 Abortion Act. They claim to be 'providing information' to women outside family planning clinics where abortions take place.

In fact they film service users and workers walking in, thrust plastic foetuses into their hands and display graphic images of abortion procedures.

As if these intimidating tactics aren't bad enough, the 'information' they distribute is packed with misinformation intended to undermine women's ability to make an informed choice based on impartial, clinical evidence, delivered sensitively in a calm and private environment.

According to Abort67 the 'act of violence' of a rape victim having an abortion is comparable to the violence of the rape itself. They also claim that abortion leads to breast cancer, mental illness and so on, none of which is true, and compare the right to choose with the holocaust.

On 15 April Brighton Pro-Choice protested outside Jubilee Church's congregation, which they hold in Worthing High School.

The church provides Abort67 with unequivocal support, even holding cake sales to raise money to support their pickets of Brighton abortion clinics.

We called on the Church to

withdraw their support from Abort67, chanting 'Jubilee Church, Stop Harassing Women!' and 'Whose Choice? Our Choice!', and marched through Worthing Town Centre after the service ended.

This action was well-attended by around 60 protesters. Brighton Pro-Choice will meet soon to discuss what further actions to take in defence of women's right to choose when and whether to have children without harassment, intimidation or misinformation.

Socialist Party members helped lead the protest, pointing out that while all women are affected by these actions, it is a class issue in that globally it is working class and poor women who suffer most from unsafe and illegal abortions and bigotry.

Defence of the right to choose and scientific comprehensive sex and relationships education must be a key priority for the trade union, anti-cuts and socialist movements.

Likewise defence of the NHS and education system, decent affordable and available housing and secure employment must be a priority for the pro-choice movement.

●Socialist Party member Beth Granter appeared on the BBC Big Questions TV programme to defend the right of women to choose when and whether to have children.

## Book/Film review

# The Hunger Games

**Mary Finch**

The ruins of North America have been transformed into the totalitarian state of Panem: twelve districts, in abject poverty, surround the utopian Capitol, a centre of glamour and decadence. In repentance for a past rebellion, every year each district is forced to offer up two of their children to fight to the death in the televised Hunger Games, for the enjoyment of the Capitol citizens.

This is the backdrop for Suzanne Collins' novel The Hunger Games, now a Hollywood film and a huge success, as she follows the strong heroine Katniss Everdeen and her

exploits in the Capitol's twisted games.

Intricate, intense, poignant, and quite relevant: the story is entirely fantasy. Yet, in a lesser sense, it holds some resonance with modern Western society. There does seem to be a touch of satire throughout.

A Socialist Party member described it as "capitalism on speed"; the lucky few get richer and richer, while the millions are buried in insolvency. Couldn't that apply to both worlds, fantasy and real? Panem is a far greater extremity, certainly, but the parallel – however small – is there. The later books see the districts in rebellion. Perhaps it's time we did the same.



## New Book!

### Planning for the Planet

How socialism could save the environment

By Pete Dickenson  
£9.95

★ **Special limited offer for readers of the Socialist:**  
**£7 including postage.**

Order from: **Socialist Books, PO Box 24697,**  
**London E11 1YD**

**020 8988 8789 to order by card or see**  
**www.socialistbooks.co.uk**

cheques payable to **Socialist**  
**Publications Ltd**

Planning for the Planet explains how and why capitalism has failed to tackle global warming and other threats to the environment, including nuclear contamination. The author argues that two related factors underlie the looming disaster. These are the quest for profit by big corporations and more fundamentally, the inevitable tendency of competitive markets to degrade the environment.

This book puts forward an alternative of a democratically managed socialist planned economy that could create the conditions where environmental problems are solved.



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 below)**



# Battling for change

## 1932 - mass trespass won the right to roam

The latest crisis in capitalism has given rise to the 'Occupy' movement, a visible and youthful protest at the unequal ownership and distribution of wealth. Eighty years ago working class youth in Britain also held a protest against private ownership, directly challenging the landowning aristocracy over the right of access to open countryside. Roger Bannister writes:

**T**his month, 24 April, is the 80th anniversary of a unique event in working class history, the Mass Tresspass on Kinder Scout, Derbyshire, the highest point in the Peak District.

During the 1930s economic depression, working class youth in industrial towns like Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield or Nottingham, having little money, would take buses or trains out to the surrounding rural uplands of the Peak District, Lake District, Snowdonia or the Ribble Valley, and hike or 'ramble' across them, usually in groups.

But from the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century thousands of acres of common land had been 'enclosed', taken over by the aris-

Nearly 500 people assembled in a disused quarry near Hayfield, and after brief speeches, set off walking, singing the Red Flag and Internationale...

tocracy under laws they put through Parliament, denying the poor their centuries-old rights to cultivate or graze animals there.

In the 1930s walkers were denied access to this land by gamekeepers, and fights between walkers and gamekeepers were not uncommon, with walkers often being arrested.

Kinder Scout was owned by the Duke of Devonshire, and kept private for grouse shooting for a couple of weeks each year!

This situation angered many walkers. The Communist Party, which then had a significant base in the working class, including young workers, set up the British Workers' Sports Federation (BWSF) to campaign for walkers' rights. Following several fights between walkers and gamekeepers the BWSF, under its Lancashire leader Benny Rothman, organised a 'mass trespass' on Kinder Scout on 24 April 1932.

A group of walkers from Manchester was to assemble at Hayfield, and another group from Sheffield at Edale, both picturesque Peak District villages, and walk by different routes to Kinder Scout, where they would meet up. Leaflets publicising the event were distributed, and on the day itself walkers leaving the two village stations were leafleted, and chalked notices on the surrounding roads also urged support.

Police were at the railway station in Manchester, trying to stop Rothman getting to Hayfield, but as he had no money he cycled to the village, giving the police the slip. The "mainstream" Ramblers Association campaigned against the trespass!

Nearly 500 people assembled in a disused quarry near Hayfield, and after brief speeches, set off walking, singing the Red Flag and Internationale, traditional songs of the labour movement. As they reached higher ground they were confronted by keepers, armed with sticks, many of them recruited for the day.



On the mass trespass

About 40 walkers fought the keepers, usually bare-handed, although some took their belts off to use as weapons. Two keepers were disarmed, and their sticks used against them by walkers. One keeper was knocked unconscious.

Having overcome the keepers the walkers continued on their way, met up with the Sheffield group, and held a victory meeting, the two groups then went back to the two villages. The Manchester contingent formed into a column outside Hayfield and marched back into the village singing triumphantly.

But in the village the police stopped them. Assisted by a keeper,

they combed their ranks and arrested five individuals, (another walker had been arrested earlier). The six were charged, pleaded not guilty, and tried at Derby Assizes, by a jury largely composed of landowners and army officers.

One walker had a pamphlet by Lenin on him at his arrest, and that fact was used against him in court! Five were found guilty, one being Rothman, and were sentenced to periods between two and six months imprisonment.

These sentences provoked massive public outrage, and boosted the campaign for walkers' rights of access to the countryside. Only

a few weeks after the Kinder Scout mass trespass an incredible 10,000 walkers, the largest number in history, assembled for an access rally at Winnats Pass, outside Castleton, Derbyshire.

Significantly no more walkers were imprisoned after the Kinder Scout mass trespass. Although World War Two intervened, the post-war Labour government legislated to create National Parks. Significantly the first of these in Britain was the Peak District National Park. Their victories continue - new legislation in 2000 increased what has become known as the "Right to Roam".

## Changing the trade unions into combative organisations

To win change in society workers need audacity, determination and organisation. A London bus worker writes that often you need to start by transforming your own union branch.



London bus workers demonstrating for decent pay Paul Mattsson

Now is the best opportunity in a generation to begin to transform London bus workers into an active, fighting section of the Unite union that stands up for our members. There are forthcoming ballots in each operating company in London over industrial action.

Also, Unite will be holding branch elections in each garage over the next few months.

All garages can do with new life among active members. Many need transforming completely. New activists should show workmates they are serious by pushing for a good result in the ballots.

We should make sure all members understand that a taste of action - or even the threat - can begin to build confidence that our union is no longer 'too close to the bosses'.

Big companies like Arriva, Go-Ahead, First and Stagecoach take the lion's share of the hundreds of millions of pounds of public money TfL hands out in subsidies to the capital's bus operators every year. While they prosper, they expect us to show "restraint" in these hard times (for some).

Often I hear workers at my garage say, "Why don't we join the RMT?" which is widely seen as a better, more militant union in support of tube workers. I argue that apart from Unite having negotiating rights

under TUC rules, it's better to keep London bus workers in the same union and fight to change it. However, some officials take an unsympathetic and frankly bureaucratic attitude to such workers.

Unite's general secretary, Len McCluskey is nearer the mark when he says the only way to deal with such frustration among members is to prove Unite is the best defender of bus workers' interests.

### Leadership

Some among the union tops seem to have realised at last the huge potential asset London bus workers represent. A strong London bus union would be a shining example to all workers nationally, like Bob Crow and the RMT at the moment.

Unite is encouraging its more fighting members to become reps and convenors and take a lead in the garages.

But it is difficult to reverse decades of bad leadership. Real change can only come from the members. And with real change we should aim to work more closely with workers in other fighting transport unions. Unity is strength.

A garage rep is only as strong as the membership. The biggest problem is usually lack of participation in the branch. If you've got a use-

less rep in your garage, remember they may have been the only one prepared to have a go at changing things when they first stood for the position.

Once elected they probably felt isolated against an experienced management team and at best got inadequate support from the union hierarchy.

Many good reps ended up like this. They can easily become resentful towards members and, if not removed, a serious obstacle to the branch. The lesson is: involve others, you can't change everything on your own!

So what's the best way to change your union branch?

Have a go! Don't just grumble to your workmates, plan to stand in the upcoming elections. Get yourself known as the best supporter of a 'Yes' vote in the forthcoming ballot.

You need a team. Not just branch officers but a committee to help keep in touch with all the members, produce newsletters and encourage a thriving monthly branch meeting.

Hopefully, you won't need to declare war on all existing members of the union hierarchy. Find those you can work with. You learn through mistakes and experience. For the most reliable help, contact your local Socialist Party branch!



# SCRAP THE ACT!

## Unions must call national demo to save NHS

**Paul Couchman**

Surrey Unison branch secretary  
(personal capacity)

**T**he private health industry has given the Tories £8.3 million since 2001 – and what do the Tories want to give them in return? Billions of pounds of profits from the destruction of our NHS.

On 1 April – five days after the Health and Social Care Act was given royal assent – Virgin Care took over Surrey care services, including seven community hospitals, community nursing, breast cancer screening, sexual health clinics, specialist dental work, physiotherapy and rehabilitation. 2,500 NHS health workers will be transferred to Virgin Care in a five year deal worth £500 million.

The government says: “This is a local decision, aimed at driving up the quality of services and enabling more innovative models of care. It will provide much needed security for staff and ensure patients receive the best care from the best provider.”

Health workers do not think so. “The NHS in England is being broken apart by the hammer blows raining down on it from the Con-Dem government,” said Whipps Cross hospital worker Len Hockey.

“Huge job cuts and closures of hospital wards and departments, including accident and emergency, are wreaking havoc. The Con-Dems’ Health and Social Care Act will accelerate the privatisation process in the NHS.”

Our forebears fought for a national, free, publicly owned and comprehensive health service. The sale of NHS services in Surrey to Richard Branson’s Virgin company is an outrage and must be fought. Trade unionists, pensioners, young people and community activists must join

together to oppose this profiteering in our health services. Surrey’s trade unionists and socialists, through Save Our Services in Surrey, need to protest locally.

The privatisation that has already taken place within the NHS shows what this deal really means for NHS patients and workers. Hospital cleaning was first privatised in 1981. Since then the number of cleaners employed in the NHS has been halved.

### New Labour’s child

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes, one of the favourite tricks of the Blair/Brown New Labour governments, mean hospitals were built by private companies and leased back by public money at many times the cost. The private company then still owns the property at the end of the lease. The NHS could save billions by kicking out the ‘Profit From Illness’ companies and taking these contracts back in house.

It is essential that a campaign across Surrey is built to explain the threat to NHS services and fight any attempts by Virgin Care to cut services, reduce the workforce or attack pay, terms and conditions. This needs to be part of a nationwide campaign to stop the Health Act being put into practice.

We can win. Two decades ago, the poll tax was made law and implemented, meaning every adult had to pay the same rate whether they lived in a mansion or a one-bedroom flat. It was defeated by a mass campaign organising 18 million people who refused to pay.

The TUC and health unions must call a national weekend demo as the start of a serious fight to defend the NHS, including strike action if necessary, to make sure our health is put before the billionaires’ wealth.



photo Paul Mattsson

### 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!