



LOOTED!

PFI empties NHS coffers

Roger Shrivess

The richest 1% in society are the only people profiting from the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme that is ruining Britain's public services. PFI entrusts the building of much-needed services such as hospitals and schools to private construction firms and banks including the now notorious Barclays.

These capitalists then own the buildings for many years and get rewarded with massive sums of interest repayment. And the rewards are huge!

The Guardian reports that 717 PFI contracts have so far been agreed by Tory, Labour and Con-Dem governments. They had a total capital value of £54.7 billion but by the time they are paid off taxpayers (that's us) will have shelled out £300 billion to these wealthy capitalists.

These repayments are likely to balloon up, taking an even higher percentage of spending (and also raising the risk of bankruptcies) for another five or six years. In the NHS, this is all on top of the £20 billion of 'efficiency' savings the government is demanding by 2015.

If 'efficiency' rather than private profit was really the Con-Dem government's aim, PFI schemes would be its number one target. The price tag for the new Walsgrave hospital in Coventry will jump from an initial capital cost of £379 million to an eventual £4 billion.

Health expert Allyson Pollock says that far from being a hospital building programme, PFI has been the largest NHS hospital and bed closure programme. It is associated with a 30% reduction in beds, redundancies of staff, closures of A&E departments - even of whole hospitals - and of many specialist services.



photo Paul Mattsson

The Socialist Party opposed PFI schemes from the start but Tory, Labour and Con-Dem governments all backed them to the hilt. What have we, the 99% of Britain's population, got out of them? Toxic debts, bankrupt health trusts, cuts and closures. But the 1% richest in society, speculators and PFI gamblers, have got huge incomes from rent, interest and

profit for decades.

Governments can bail out the banks who caused much of the present economic crisis. But Cameron and Co want to leave the NHS and other public services to hang out to dry. PFI is now hitting hospital services hard, so action is needed.

See also feature page 5

We say:

- **Bail out the hospitals, jail the crooked bankers!**
- **Cancel the PFI debts!**
- **Nationalise the schemes with no compensation for the speculators!**
- **No cuts and closures!**
- **No to privatisation which puts public services at the mercy of profit-hungry firms!**

Scrap PFI privatisation - bring health services back into the NHS

the **Socialist**

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what we think

Libor scandal exposes rotten racketeering system

If the appearance of Bob Diamond before the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee was intended to demonstrate some kind of public accountability of bankers before parliament then it dismally failed. It served merely to emphasise the timid approach of establishment capitalist politicians towards the top bankers.

Apart from a little populist bluster, Diamond, who personified over a decade of greed and fraud at Barclays and Barclays Capital, came away without a glove being laid upon him over the Libor fraud. Even one of the leading MPs on the committee admitted "it's fair to say we were useless".

Now it seems likely that Diamond will still come away with a multi-million pound pay-off as compensation for his sacking on top of the £100 million he has been paid since 2005.

Ordinary people are demanding that these gold-plated cheats like Diamond are jailed.

As the Libor scandal spreads it cannot be excluded that like the phone hacking scandal a few of the worst offenders could be prosecuted, but the penalties they face pale compared to the rewards they have gained from their criminal activity.

The capitalist class want to contain the more aggressive financial parasites amongst them who threaten to undermine not just the 'reputation' of the financial sector and banks, but the entire capitalist system. Paul Tucker, deputy governor of the Bank of England, told MPs that the Libor rate system which regulates \$360 trillion of contracts could collapse and, if American law suits are successful, the stability of the whole financial system could be jeopardised as a result of the fraud.

Fear of undermining the system is the reason that the governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, made Diamond's position untenable, culminating in his resignation. A new study by Democratic Audit reported as an 'exclusive' in the Guardian last week warned of

the "long-term decline" of British democracy. The report specifically flagged up 'corporate power' and 'unrepresentative politicians'. The Barclays scandal simply reinforces this.

The dominance of the financial sector in Britain has become a huge drag on the economy. It has an iron grip not just on the economy itself but reaches every area of public life - including the three main, pro-capitalist parties. The Guardian has revealed that about £100 million was spent last year alone by the financial services sector 'lobbying' the government and parliamentarians.

The poison even seeps into the administration of government itself with top civil servants avoiding income tax. Even the HM Revenue and Customs is affected with a director of a company based on the tax haven island of Guernsey on its board.

Batting for the bankers

Tory Chancellor, George Osborne, batting for the bankers, is fighting against a proposal in the European Union to cap bankers' bonuses to 'merely' double their seven figure pay packets. The proposal would do little to limit their obscene payments because the bankers are already inflating their basic salaries in anticipation of bonus limits, but even this was too much for Osborne.

Lib Dem Business Secretary Vince Cable expressed the frustration of the diminishing manufacturing sector when he accused the banks of "choking off" the recovery. Another £50 billion of quantitative easing, on top of the previous £325 billion, is being channelled through the banks by the Bank of England to try and stimulate investment but, as Cable explained, little of it finds its way into the real economy or is loaned to small and medium sized businesses. He admits the banks are "disproportionately influential", but he is powerless to do much about it. His proposal

to split high risk casino investment banking from the high street banking operations of banks would have little effect: the authorities cannot allow even independent investment banks to fail because of the knock-on effects of failure on the system.

Labour leaders who were quite happy to allow the banks full rein to commit these frauds before and during the banking crash when they were in power now call for more regulation. They call for an 'independent' inquiry into the Libor scandal but not one that is independent from the rich business interests who are tied by a thousand threads to banking. They want an establishment judge to conduct the inquiry who would keep it within the safe bounds of the capitalist elite.

The Socialist has called for a genuinely independent inquiry to be conducted by representatives of trade unions, ordinary mortgage holders, pensioners, small business people and young people which could expose the fraud, corruption and extortion perpetrated in the city of London.

Labour dare not challenge the vested interests of British capitalism so their proposed reforms barely pat the hands of the bankers. Ed Miliband and Ed 'light touch' Balls propose an extra two high street banks which merely reverts back to the situation before the banking crisis began in 2007 when NatWest and HBOS were separate banks.

More powers for the Serious Fraud Office and the possibility of bankers being 'struck off' will do little when tens of millions can be made from cheating the banking system. And the banks' control of the financial system means they will find a way around restrictions. Miliband's ideas of stewardship banks as opposed to casino banks and the introduction of a new 'culture' through professional associations echoes his idea of distinguishing 'predatory' capitalists as opposed to 'responsible' capitalists when in reality the whole system is predatory on working people.

The takeover of capitalism by its financial interests is a global phenomenon made particularly acute in Britain due to the decay of its manufacturing base. That cannot be reversed with a few painless reform tweaks.

Miliband is trying to create the impression that Labour has changed from the pro-banker New Labour government whose first act was to de-nationalise the Bank of England. But the Labour front bench refused even to support Labour MP John McDonnell's modest proposal that the House of Commons should be involved in the selection of the next governor of the Bank of England.

Gulf in society

The Libor scandal has reminded the mass of working people of the enormous gulf that exists in society that showers unimaginable wealth on a tiny, parasitic elite while inflicting suffering on millions of pensioners and the low paid. What is needed is a new party of the working class that can articulate the outrage of the mass against the few. And to change society it will have to adopt a programme that can surgically remove the cancer of a parasitic financial system on society: a socialist programme based on:

- Nationalisation of the banks and main financial institutions with democratic public ownership with compensation only on the basis of proven need
- A state bank run by representatives of banking workers and trade unions, the wider working class, as well as the government
- Cheap mortgages and loans to be provided to individuals on a secure basis, with guaranteed low interest rates
- Publicly owned and democratically run control of capital trade to ensure the wealth created in society is maintained for the mass of people who create it to prevent the rich emptying the coffers



At a rally at a previous Socialism event photo Paul Mattsson

Save our server!

The Socialist Party has launched an appeal to raise £12,000 to enable us to buy a new computer server. We have had an immediate response from members and readers. Thanks to: Steve Harbord £10, David Churchley £10, John Boyle £10, K Braben £20. Thanks also to Rosie Taaffe who painstakingly raised £96 by collecting and counting the small change left by her granddad!

Pat James from Bristol sent in a cheque for £20 and writes: "The Socialist tells what's going on in the world and it makes me very angry. I tell everyone 'Vote for TUSC next time' and pass my copy of the Socialist on."

Can you donate to the appeal? Every donation, no matter how big or how small is very welcome and will take us nearer to our goal.

You can pay via the Socialist Party website www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate and mark your donation 'Server appeal' or telephone 020 8988 8777.

Lords reform - Abolish the House of privilege!



"An appalling system of institutionalised corruption"

Ken Douglas

"The House of Lords is an unbelievably undemocratic institution" and an "appalling system of institutionalised corruption". So says Tim Farron, president of the Lib Dems in a recent interview. The Socialist wouldn't disagree with this analysis and it indicates how serious is the crisis facing the coalition government over its bill to reform the House of Lords.

The Lib Dems see the reform as a chance to vindicate their decision to go into coalition with the Tories, to be seen as modern reformers and to bring in proportional representation into national elections. In this way they hope to salvage something from the electoral oblivion that they are currently facing.

However a rebellion of up to 100 Tory MPs voted down the government's proposal to limit the time for the passage of the bill to ten days and has forced it to withdraw the motion for two months.

Lib Dem MPs had threatened to derail the Tories proposed legislation on boundary changes - and could still do so.

Cameron plans to re-draw constituency boundaries to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600, and it is predicted the Conservatives could gain an extra 20 seats, with Labour losing seats.

This could be critical to the Tories' fortunes at the next election as Cameron was unable to win the last general election outright, even after 12 years of New Labour, unprecedented economic crisis and the debacle that was the last days of the Brown government.

Cameron and Osborne are under pressure from rebels on both sides, the possibility of the coalition falling apart and a growing challenge from the Tory right which will continue to develop over their demands for a referendum on the European Union.

The Lords can sometimes be

portrayed in the media and by opposition politicians as less partisan than the Commons; the last chance to stop unpopular legislation as with the recent Welfare Reform Bill which was still passed after a brief rebellion.

However, it was revealed at the time that one in four Tory peers and one in six Labour peers have financial interests in companies involved in private healthcare. For instance Lord Darzi (former surgeon and Labour health minister) who backed the bill that laid the basis for the privatisation of the NHS, said that he

The Socialist Party calls for the abolition of these unelected scroungers and we would support a referendum containing that option

did so speaking "as a surgeon not as a politician" whereas he was in fact speaking as an adviser to medical technology firm GE Healthcare!

More than 120 lobbyists, just under one-third of all staff working for members of the House of Lords, have Parliamentary passes allowing them to move freely throughout the Houses of Parliament.

The House of Lords exists as a bastion of wealth and privilege. Its defenders say it acts as a democratic

check on the Commons but in reality it is there ultimately to do the opposite - to ensure that no government harms the interests of big business and the rich.

At this time of seemingly unending economic crisis and austerity, with massive public sector cuts and growing unemployment, it can be seen to be increasingly a symbol of the growing divide in society.

While David Cameron attacks the unemployed and people on disability benefits as wanting a free ride the real freeloaders are in the House of Lords.

The expenses scandals in both Houses of Parliament have caused a political crisis which will continue to resonate among ordinary people who are struggling to pay bills, keep their houses and maintain their businesses, etc.

A recent opinion poll for the BBC showed that only 23% of respondents backed the status quo on Lords reform, with 72% calling for a referendum.

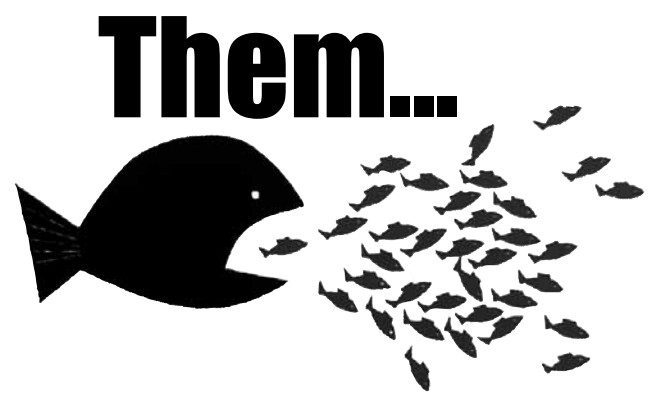
The Socialist Party calls for the abolition of these unelected scroungers and we would support a referendum containing that option.

But this reform would only be meaningful with measures to make Parliament more accountable, including a democratic form of proportional representation, the re-election of MPs every two years and that they be subject to recall.

This would enable socialist candidates to gain a foothold in Parliament, creating the realistic possibility of a government that represented the interests of the working class and not big business and the rich.

The House of Lords reform proposals:

- Reduce the number from 826 members to 450
- 80% would be elected, the rest appointed by an Appointments Commission.
- Elected peers would serve one 15 year term
- The number of bishops would be cut from 26 to 12
- Parliament would choose a new name for members



UK swindlers plc

'Bankers' has become a byword for swindlers after these fat cats stuffed their pockets with bonuses while engaging in fraudulent activities and then received billions of pounds in bailouts from public funds.

But instead of marching these miscreants to the scaffold Tory chancellor George Osborne is reported in the Financial Times as saying he will fight for the right of UK banks to pay big bonuses when he attends the next meeting of European finance ministers.

Unacceptable incomes

Cuts to benefits such as working tax credits, along with rising childcare, transport and other costs, have impacted so hard on families that according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity, a couple with two children must earn a minimum of £38,000 a year to have a "socially acceptable" standard of living. The government's Universal Credit system of benefits - 'to make work pay' - starting in January 2013, will push even more families into poverty.

Money talks

A £92 million lobbying campaign last year saved big finance capital billions of pounds by changing government taxation policies. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, finance lobbyists on behalf of City of London corporation, the British Bankers' Association and the Association of British Insurers secured from the chancellor the slashing of UK corporation tax and taxes on banks' overseas subsidiaries.

The Bureau identified 129 organisations engaged in some form of lobbying for the finance sector, with 800 people employed directly. This big business firepower is in addition to political donations by City firms and individuals which totaled £6.11 million last year to the Tory, Labour and Lib Dem parties.

Women hardest hit

The capitalist recession and government's cuts have resulted in a sharp rise in unemployment. And among those losing jobs the largest affected group of workers has been middle aged women. According to figures from the House of Commons library, unemployment among women aged 50 to 64 has risen by 39% in the last two years, compared with an overall rise of 5%.

This age/gender group receives, on average, 10% less pay than male workers and has the added burden of responsibility of being an important section of society's unpaid carers. Women in their mid-50s have also been hit hard disproportionately in cuts to pension entitlements.

Defence priorities

The astronomical Sliding Spring Survey, which scans the southern hemisphere for earth-bound asteroids, will close next month due to a lack of funding. Its replacement won't arrive until 2017. Commenting on this lack of monitoring, New Scientist points out that the cost of maintaining this early warning defence of earth for the next five years is only \$1 million. In the same period global 'defence' spending will be about \$7.5 trillion.

Cuts and cuts

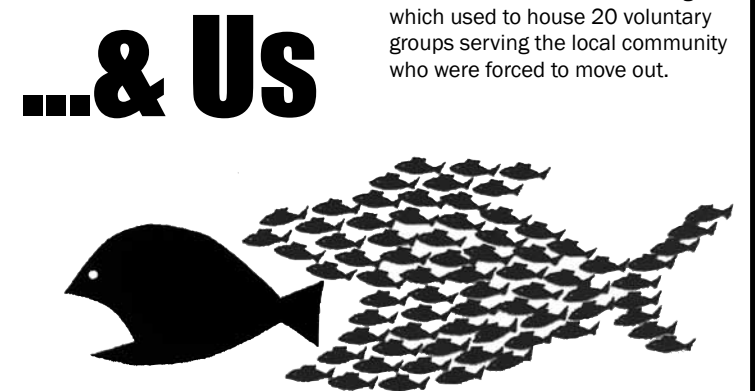
The living standards of the working and middle classes and the public services they use are being squeezed mercilessly by the government's austerity measures. But it transpires that the Con-Dems cuts are even more draconian than first thought.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies the government spent £11 billion less than its budget between 2011 and 2012, rather than the £4.4 billion it had previously forecast. The biggest cut was in the health service budget which lost an extra £1.7 billion.

These devastating extra cuts follow Cabinet secretary Sir Jeremy Heywood's comment that this age of austerity could last to 2020 and beyond.

Free fall

The £8 million west London 'free school' project of Tory Toby Young has run into the rocks when building contractors left last month amid concerns over costs. Free schools and academies, as well as undermining local authority education provision, can be run by outside companies, thereby paving the way for privatisation. Young's pet project is occupying a former council-owned building which used to house 20 voluntary groups serving the local community who were forced to move out.



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London bus workers discuss new offer: “militant strike action pays”

A London bus worker

London bus workers have been fighting for payment for extra work during the Olympics with joint strike action, the first for many decades. For too long London bus workers have been seen as a soft touch by the bosses. Our militant traditions became ancient history. In 1994 privatisation meant the then Tory government let firms buy up a public service cheaply. Since then £100 millions have gone to these profiteers in public subsidy annually. They thought effective trade unionism was dead. In fact it's just reawakening.

In some ways the mood of bus workers never changed. We've always thought public services shouldn't be run for private profit. The supervisors and even most garage managers saw privatisation as a bad move.

Yet the sell-off happened – with no opposition from many garage union reps and company convenors. And a full time T&G (the union before merger in Unite) bus official was rewarded with a senior managerial position in one of these companies.

Despite the remaining high level of unionisation, reps were elected who failed to pursue the best inter-

ests of members. Many new reps became isolated and frustrated.

Members work long hours in unsocial shifts so they find it extremely difficult to get active. For years there has been seething anger in the garages both with bullying management and the apparent impotence of the union leaders. A minority left the union in frustration.

There are particular difficulties in organising across 20 separate bus firms in London. But the recent tremendous 94% vote for strike action over pay during the Olympics gave a big impetus. Unite's organising department have helped build confidence on the picket lines.

These developments have quickly unleashed the fighting spirit of bus workers. This mood will influence other sectors of Unite and other workers in the capital and beyond.

The important thing now is to build strong active union branches in all the garages. We need branches that meet regularly and keep members informed.

As we go to press, Unite has had a firm offer from the bus companies. Garage meetings are being held, followed by a consultative ballot in all the workplaces on 17 July.

The detailed implications of the offer are still being discussed by the workers. But a short time ago the



One of the well-supported picket lines photo Paul Mattsson

employers were refusing even to speak to our union.

Clearly militant strike action does have an important impact because the bosses have been forced to blink first and make some concessions. However bus workers will have to be vigilant against the dangers of any strings being attached.

Mass meetings should be organised to test whether the mood is there to fight for further concessions.

Whatever the outcome, this dispute has opened a new chapter in the history of bus workers' trade unionism and paved the way for rebuilding our industrial strength.

Vote no to the local government pension offer

Socialist Party members in Unison

Unison's local government leadership has instructed branches to consult members over what recommendation should be made on pensions. We believe the leadership should ballot the members now, recommending rejection.

We say, vote 'No' in the consultation and vote 'No' in the ballot because:

Most people will still work longer. For those under the age of 55 the normal retirement age will rise in line with the new state pension age.

Most will still get less because pensions will only be uprated with the lower CPI inflation rate rather than RPI. Also the final salary scheme is to be replaced with a career average scheme. In 2006 we fought to keep this and opposed the career average scheme. Most workers earn more in their last years of work.

Many will pay more. They say only workers earning over £43,000 will see a contributions increase. But some earning under £20,000 will pay more. Also we've been paying more for the last four years and had

no pay rise for three of those.

Part time staff will now pay contributions based on actual earnings, not the full time equivalent. This is an improvement. Staff transferring to the private sector can remain in the scheme from April 2014. This is better but it's not clear who will pay for this, councils or the companies.

Save now – lose later. There will now be a 50/50 option. Effectively you can pay half the monthly contribution rate and get half the benefits.

Vote now – pay more later. The future costs of the scheme are yet to be resolved. This is a recipe for “vote now, pay more later”.

The local government scheme is not in financial difficulty. But the government is trying to rob us! Last November's strike had a real impact in stopping the government from raising contributions for the majority of members. The strike worked.

If we want to avoid having to work until we're 68, or even 70, on a reduced pension, then we need to take action with other unions again. It worked last November, and it can work again!

The ballot starts on 31 July and ends on 24 August.

Single status appeal Victory for Vine workers

A Unison steward

We Learning Support Assistants have finally won our pay and grading appeal. We work at the Vine, a small Leeds City council service that provides specialist education and social care to young adults with learning difficulties.

We will now receive back pay from 2007 after months of campaigning in the workplace.

Because we are all part-time and term-time only, we are poorly paid. When our 'special needs allowance' was not factored into the re-evaluation of the job as a result of the Single Status Accord back in 2007, we were furious.

An appeal was lodged in December 2010 and was heard in January 2011. It has taken 19 months to finally get the outcome we deserve.

The cuts have impacted deeply within our service in recent years. Unable to take more staff on, those remaining have had to work harder to cope with maintaining the service.

For as long as I've been a steward the pay and grading issue has always been important. With deter-



Vine workers protest photo the Socialist

mination, it has taken everything short of strike action to win.

Campaigning doesn't stop there. At our last workplace campaign meeting I encouraged my members to reject the latest council plans which will make it easier to make staff redundant.

My members will also be rejecting the governments' local government pension offer because none of us will be able to retire at 68 with all the moving and handling we do.

Strike suspended as Sheffield recycling workers win reinstatement

Alistair Tice

The Sova recycling workers in Sheffield, members of the GMB union, have won the re-instatement of their six sacked colleagues. After 27 days of strike action, the strike has been suspended pending further negotiations, particularly relating to working hours and pay.

A new bonus scheme is to be trialed, which promises workers up to £2 an hour wage increase across the board. The business model and opening hours for recycling will be

reviewed and this will begin with a full scrutiny board meeting with the Council on 19 July.

Due to privatisation and subcontracting, there are three tiers of management – the council, Veolia and Sova, ten managers overseeing just 28 operatives. Re-design of the business model could release funding for more opening hours.

And the GMB will be at the forefront of a new strategy to develop a green waste service in partnership with the council. The council's preferred model will be a cooperative. The GMB think this has the poten-

tial to increase opening hours and recycling services.

Not all the strikers voted to suspend the action. Several, including the two shop stewards, felt the indefinite strike action was really beginning to bite, especially as that was being supported by direct action being taken by Socialist Party members and other strike supporters.

Indeed, neighbouring Barnsley council have just introduced ID checks to stop Sheffielders dumping their rubbish over the border!

However, the re-instatement of

all the workers made redundant and other concessions represent a real victory for the determination and solidarity of a small group of workers who only recently joined a union and have never been on strike before.

No doubt they will remain vigilant and if the council does not deliver in the negotiations over the next three weeks then the strike could be back on. Socialist Party members have been proud to actively support the strikers and will continue to campaign against council cuts and the privatisation rip-off.

In brief

Remploy strike vote

GMB members working for Remploy have voted 80% for strike action and nearly 90% for action short of strike, to stop factory closures and defend jobs. 60% of Unite members have also voted for action. An overtime ban begins on 12 July, with the first one-day strike on 19 July, and another to follow a week later.

The management are planning to close 36 of its 54 factories, putting at least 1,700 jobs at risk. Remploy factories in Wales will be among those hardest hit, with proposals to close seven of its nine factories, affecting up to 272 staff.

Olympics strike

On 2 July RMT members in travel information centres, call centres, lost property office and the London transport museum took strike action to demand an Olympics reward in line with London Underground, DLR, London Overground etc. In part this would also be to compensate for the heavy restrictions on annual leave we have faced this year.

Management have repeatedly refused to go to ACAS. With all six unions in dispute, only the RMT gave its members the option to finally up the ante and turn words into industrial action. 63% of the votes cast in the ballot were for strike action.

Ominously Olympic delivery funding which could have been used to reach a settlement was diverted to private call centres Novacraft (Northampton) and JourneyCall (Scotland). Management are looking to “market testing” with a view to outsourcing.

Management were clearly rattled on the morning of the strike which saw pickets at Victoria travel information centre, Albany House call centre and Windsor House (TfL HQ).

At Windsor House Alex Gordon, RMT national president came down to lend support and a Royal Mail driver refused to cross the line with TfL's morning mailbag.

With 77% of votes cast also in favour of action short of a strike, an week-long overtime ban started on 8 July.

Paul Stevens, RMT

Olympics deal won

RMT members on Southern trains have voted overwhelmingly to accept an Olympics recognition and reward deal which will see all staff receiving a basic payment of £300. There will be an additional £28 per day available for rest day and Sunday working and £50 for additional late night turns.

Rail strike ballot

Rail union TSSA is balloting its 500 members over industrial action in support of their rep, Martin Hodges. Martin is being disciplined for poor attendance, even though the company recently awarded him a certificate for good attendance! Train drivers' union Aslef has announced its support for TSSA in the dispute. It warned Virgin bosses against bringing in strike breaking managers during a strike, which could take place during the Olympics.

Mick Dooley

Construction union UCATT banned Mick Dooley from standing in the general secretary election. This has now been ruled illegal. Mick has challenged the union leadership several times over misuse of expenses and other issues. More details next week

Fight Profit From Illness

Nationalise PFI schemes without any compensation

South London Healthcare Trust has effectively gone bankrupt. That news will not surprise health workers and socialists who follow the nightmare of PFI (Private Finance Initiative). The PFI scheme threatens vital services and NHS jobs across the country, reports Andy Ford, an NHS rep for the Unite union.

South London Healthcare was formed by merging three hospitals – Queen Mary’s, Sidcup; Queen Elizabeth, Woolwich; and Princess Royal in Orpington. Two of those hospitals – Queen Elizabeth and Princess Royal had huge PFI commitments. They merged with Queen Mary’s precisely to use the non-PFI hospital’s budget to try and cover unsustainable PFI charges.

All three have been now dragged down by PFI’s extortionate, unsustainable costs. 14% of South London’s budget now goes straight to the PFI vultures, and it’s losing £1 million a week.

It is a repeating pattern with PFI. Carlisle Hospital was the second ever PFI, in 1997. But as was pointed out then, this pushed capital charges up from 7% of the Trust budget to an unsustainable 15%.

Some years after opening its doors in 2000, the Carlisle Trust merged with the non-PFI hospital at Whitehaven, purely to use Whitehaven’s budget to service the PFI debt.

But the new merged entity was still sinking beneath the debts and Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust is now poised to take it over. But the PFI is so expensive, consuming 10% of North Cumbria’s turnover, that Northumbria is investigating renationalising the PFI, using Department of Health (DoH) bail-out funds.

Northumbria said that simply bailing out the deal with the funds would not fundamentally change the position. Only buying out or ‘renationalising’ the PFI deal would allow the new Trust to operate properly.

Last year consultants McKinsey named five other Trusts as needing DoH cash support to meet their PFI commitments – Barking Havering and Redbridge, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, St Helens and Knowsley, Dartford and Gravesham and North Cumbria. Most of these Trusts have already been through a cycle of mergers, just like North Cumbria.

A manager suggested in the Health Service Journal (HSJ) that

the logical next step would be to abolish the DoH and just have McKinsey. There is more than a grain of truth in this: Private Eye magazine has exposed the secondments and revolving door between the Department of Health PFI unit and privatisation vultures like McKinsey, KPMG, PwC etc.

St Helens and Knowsley is in an even worse position than South London – 17% of its turnover goes to the PFI consortium. Last September Andrew Lansley admitted that 60 hospitals were at risk of collapse due to PFI. Many other hospital Trusts are likely to end up in the DoH “unsustainable providers regime” – effective bankruptcy – like South London.

Vulture capitalists

Why is PFI so expensive? Firstly, once the “preferred bidder” is announced some privateers then double their price to the NHS. Secondly the contacts are structured to give the PFI consortium their costs plus a guaranteed profit, and PFI charges are linked to the Retail Prices Index, often for the next 30 years.

Meanwhile the Trust’s income from charges for operations and treatments (laughably called ‘Payment by Results’) is either linked to the lower Consumer Prices Index or actually being cut.

Thirdly and most significantly the money borrowed to build the PFI hospitals has to be borrowed on the commercial money market, so the interest charges are double what would be paid on traditional public procurement.

Combine these factors with the fact that the PFI charge is levied for the next 30 years and you get bizarre cost inflation – Norfolk and Norwich would have cost £229 million on public procurement, but will end up costing £1.16 billion over its 35 year PFI.

In a further irony, many PFI consortia were sold to venture capitalists and finance companies based in tax havens who don’t even pay tax on their grotesque profits! PFI hospitals are not sustainable long term,



Needed - a mass campaign uniting workers and local communities to save the NHS photo Paul Mattsson

or maybe even medium term.

What is the political response to the PFI crisis? Tory health secretary Lansley recently declared “We will not make the sick pay for Labour’s debt crisis”. He has a point – far more PFIs were signed off under Tony Blair than John Major, as Labour enthusiastically embraced the market in health care.

Labour has a problem in criticising deals signed off on its watch. So ex-Labour Health Secretary Andy Burnham “did not comment” when Health Service Journal contacted him over the massively expensive PFI in Peterborough, signed off by the DoH in 2007 despite written warnings from the health regulator Monitor. Peterborough reportedly pays more than 20% of its income over to the PFI.

According to HSJ, “sources close to” NHS Chief Executive David Nicholson said that South London’s treatment was intended to send a message to all the other sinking NHS Trusts that they will not be simply bailed out in future. How different to the banks!

The HSJ also speculates what the next stages could be. They expect government to keep the clinical services as NHS while everything else goes to a “private sector partner”. For political reasons hospital closures are unlikely, but some ‘hospitals; which remain may end up as “simply buildings with an NHS badge”.

Uncertainty

For the workforce the future is uncertain – privatisation, TUPE transfer to either NHS or non-NHS employers, and job losses either way. For patients – closure and merger of specialist units, and a “70% reduction in activity” as is planned in NW London.

As usual the privateers are trying to use problems they themselves have created to continue on down the route of a failing, fake market.

NHS managers usually call for extra funds, (bail-outs) so they can pay the PFI for a few more years, but now even some of them are calling for renationalisation – but the question is will the DoH be willing to pay the compensation?

The union leaders call for “ending” PFI deals. After the South London fiasco both Christine McAnea of Unison and Rob Macey of GMB called for renegotiation or termination of the deal, whilst leaving it unclear what this could amount to.

But a motion agreed at last week’s Unite conference shows the way ahead. It calls for nationalisation without compensation of all PFI schemes.

Three years ago Socialist Party members tried to get this adopted at Unite’s Health conference and it was amended to delete “without compensation”.

This year, the motion calling for nationalisation without compensation went through unanimously. It is the only way to tackle and end the nightmare of PFI which will wreck much of the NHS if it is not confronted properly.

Wales: Fight the new health cuts



Socialist Party member Mark Evans speaking against cuts at Prince Philip Hospital in Llanelli

The leaders of Labour-affiliated trade unions in Wales often say: “The NHS is under attack... in England” But, as delegates at the recent Wales Shop Stewards Network Conference reported, Wales faces health spending cuts as bad as, or worse than, any area of England.

Now comes news of the closure of Afallon ward at Bronglais hospital in Aberystwyth. Shortages of qualified staff threaten, the Health Board told BBC Wales, the ability to provide “appropriate and safe care for patients on that ward”.

Earlier this year, hundreds of concerned Aberystwyth residents travelled to Cardiff to lobby the Welsh government over fears that services would be lost from the hospital. Bronglais is part of the same local health board, Hywel Dda, as Prince Philip Hospital in Llanelli where residents are fighting to retain their accident and emergency unit and last month held their own lobby of the Assembly.

NHS campaigners must link up, first on a health board basis and then across the whole of Wales, to take their fight to the (Labour) Welsh government and demand they stop passing on Tory cuts. Trade unionists in Wales should demand that leaders stop trying to hide the scale of cuts to Welsh health services.

Ronnie Job



Protesting against health cuts in Carlisle

Fight for a future for the 99%

No jobs, no education, no future – that's the grim vision that the establishment politicians have for young people.

More than one million young people languish on the dole. School and college leavers are finding themselves priced out of higher education. University applications have dropped 8.9% for the first year of £9,000 tuition fees. Vital youth services have been axed.

None of the mainstream political parties will stand up for working class youth and students. Youth Fight for Jobs and Education (YFJE) was launched in 2009 to provide a voice for young people. This feature shows edited extracts from its new manifesto, A Future For The 99%.

Real jobs

Under the slave labour workfare schemes, young people have been forced to work for their dole, while big businesses get bungs of over £2,000 to take Jobseeker's Allowance claimants on temporary contracts.

YFJE held demonstrations and protests up and down the country that named and shamed companies using slave labour. As a result many companies pulled out of the work experience scheme and the government made concessions by removing the sanctions on those who drop out of that particular workfare scheme.

If there are jobs that need doing, then people should get a living wage for doing them.

YFJE demands

- Stop all cuts. The economic crisis was caused by big business, bankers and irresponsible governments. We should not have to pay with our jobs and services
- Scrap all workfare schemes
- Government run apprenticeship and training schemes that provide a living wage and guarantee a job at the end
- Open the books - if a company claims that it has to let workers go due to lack of money then it should prove it
- A programme of useful public works, such as house building and infrastructure projects, to provide jobs and training for young people

Youth services and leisure

£100 million of cuts are being made to youth services over three years. That's going to mean we lose 7,000 professionally qualified staff, 30,000 trained youth support workers and half a million volunteers.

Youth services are not a luxury, they're vital. They can help save money. One report showed that a young person in the criminal justice system costs the taxpayer over £200,000 by the age of 16 but one who is given support to stay out of it costs less than £50,000.

Youth workers have warned time and time again that these cuts will result in more anti-social behaviour and gang crime. In Haringey, where the August 2011 riots started, eight out of 13 youth clubs had been closed because of council cuts.

YFJE demands

- Immediately re-open all youth services that have been closed, including re-instating sacked staff
- Huge investment into youth services, including training of many more youth workers. Every young person in the country should have access to support, advice and leisure facilities
- A building programme which includes public parks, youth clubs, sports centres and other leisure facilities in every area, in consultation with young people, youth workers, trade unions and community groups



Education

When you add uni fees of up to £9,000 a year to the costs of living, a three year degree could cost £50,000. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) being scrapped in England has left many college and sixth form students without the funds to pay for books or travel. Colleges in England have reported a drop of up to 50% in applications since this cut was implemented.

Over-24s in further education (FE) did have 50% of course costs for BTECs, A-Levels or level two apprenticeships covered by the government. But students starting in September 2012 will foot the whole bill themselves!

Thousands of teaching and support jobs are threatened, leaving students with overworked and undervalued lecturers.

In higher education (HE) a plan for privatisation and marketisation is being formulated by the government, including new private universities such as the 'New College of Humanities'.

School students face overflowing classes and crumbling buildings as funding is slashed. The rolling out of academies and 'free schools' represents the breakup of the state education system.

YFJE demands

- Immediately reinstate EMA and expand it to be available to all 16-18 year olds
- Scrap university fees, for higher education that is universally free
- No to marketisation and privatisation. For education that is fully funded, publicly owned and free at all levels
- Abolish all tuition fees in further education
- For living grants for all college and university students
- Scrap academies and free schools. For a genuinely comprehensive secondary school system, including smaller classes and more teachers



Affordable housing

Young people face over-crowded, squalid housing and starvation rent levels, or being forced out of the cities and areas they are connected to.

Whilst wages have stagnated or been cut and jobs have been slashed, rents have risen 8% since 2009, reaching a record high at the end of 2011.

And for low paid young people, who cannot get mortgages, the housing ladder is missing the first ten steps.

90% of new housing benefit claimants in the past two years were low paid workers. Due to the attacks to housing benefits, young people are now forced to stay living with parents or in shared accommodation until they are 35.

In February 2011, homelessness had jumped 14% nationally in a year, 36% in London, with a 44% increase in house-holds who are homeless after repossession.

YFJE demands

- Cap rents at an affordable level
- No eviction of people who fall into rent arrears
- A living minimum wage for all – no lower youth rates
- All housing and housing benefit cuts should be reversed
- No age discrimination in benefit entitlement
- Invest in a mass programme of building high quality council housing to create jobs and alleviate the housing crisis
- Reopen and renovate empty properties for affordable accommodation
- Banks must offer cheap, no or low interest mortgages. If they refuse they should be fully nationalised with their resources used to meet social need

Democratic rights

The government and the super-rich know that, faced with massive attacks on our jobs and public services, ordinary young and working class people will fight back and question their system.

New Labour was in power for 13 years, but refused to reverse Thatcher's anti-trade union laws. It wouldn't have cost a single penny, but it would have made defending our jobs and services today a lot easier.

To force through brutal tuition fee rises, education cuts, and the scrapping of EMA, the government used the police and university managements to attack student protests and intimidate activists in 2010. The police used widespread 'kettling' to criminalise all protesters.

Police racism and the shooting of Mark Duggan by police contributed to riots kicking off across England in August 2011. Black people in England and Wales are 30 times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white people.

In the wake of the riots, the government encouraged draconian sentences and punishments to the people who had been caught up and their families.

YFJE demands

- Defend and extend the rights to protest
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws and laws that trample on civil liberties
- End police harassment, scrap Section 60 and stop and search
- For all workers to have the right to democratically decide to strike

Rights at work

Young people face some of the worst working conditions of all workers. Many young people find themselves in low paid insecure jobs such as in shops, restaurants and call centres. Around two million people are estimated to be in what is termed 'vulnerable employment'.

For those aged between 18 and 20, the minimum wage will not increase in October 2012, staying at just £4.98. For those 21 and over it will increase by a massive 11p to £6.19.

83 graduates are applying for every graduate vacancy. The most that many graduates can hope for at the moment is an unpaid internship. While the government and the press are busy portraying young people as lazy and workshy, big business is exploiting young people's desperation just to 'get a foot on the ladder'.

YFJE demands

- A living wage of £10 an hour
- Share out the work to simultaneously solve the problems of unemployment and long working hours – for a 35 hour week, no loss of pay
- All apprentices and interns to receive a living wage and a guaranteed job at the end of the training period



Fight their system!

The capitalists - bankers, big business and the rich - are currently faced with a deep crisis, a crisis of their own system. They are plotting a 'way out' built on misery. But there'll be no belt tightening and austerity for 1% whose reckless greed precipitated this crisis.

Capitalists are refusing to invest in production and infrastructure, which could bring jobs to millions. Lying idle in the vaults of big business and the super-rich are an estimated £750 billion, hoarded as they can see no profitable way to invest it.

We are fighting for a system for the millions not the millionaires, where we would plan production to meet the needs of ordinary people, providing decent jobs, homes and services for all.

The top companies and banks should be nationalised so that instead of the wealth and resources of society being held by individuals, it would be collectively owned and democratically managed. Join us, get involved and help us build this fightback today.

A Future For The 99% Manifesto of Youth Fight for Jobs and Education

£1 including postage

www.youthfightforjobs.com

youthfightforjobs@gmail.com

020 8558 7947

PO Box 858, London E11 1YG

To join, text 'manifesto99%' with your name and postcode to 07766 585543

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Youth Fight for Jobs

Support the campaign and sponsor the manifesto

Youth Fight for Jobs and Education is sponsored by six national trade unions and many local branches. If your union, branch or campaign is able to sponsor the production of this pamphlet or give the campaign support in any way, get in touch.



This summer the Olympic Games will be taking place in London. Whilst many will marvel at seeing some of the top athletes in the world, even more people will be struggling under the burden of the attacks of the Con-Dem government. In the areas where the games are taking place there is widespread poverty, and the so-called Olympic legacy will do nothing to stem that. The accommodation built for the games is to be sold off as luxury apartments despite the homelessness crisis in nearby Newham council being so bad the council plans to send people to live in Stoke! Youth Fight for Jobs is organising the Austerity Games this July to help highlight these issues and launch our 'Manifesto for the 99%' to put forward a real alternative.

Welsh Labour opens door to college privatisation

Edmund Schluessel
UCU Wales Council (pc) and NUS (pc)

The Welsh Labour government intends to allow privatisation of Welsh colleges, according to a recent White Paper.

Trade unions hailed Labour's 2010 promise to disincorporate the 14 colleges in Wales, a move which would have returned the institutions to public control. Incorporation of colleges in England and Wales in 1993 by the Tory UK government took colleges out of local authority control and made them independent institutions. It also led to the bankruptcy of 10% of colleges in the first four years, along with huge cutbacks in courses.

Welsh Labour has now gone back on that promise. Instead, the role of college principles and chief executives will be enshrined in law. Colleges would be forbidden from keeping reserves while being allowed to borrow money, and to dissolve themselves and hand over all their property to private companies.

While college students in Scotland are close to winning autonomous students' unions, the White Paper makes no mention of college students' voice.

The need for fighting FE unions will increase as the Welsh government plans to force further college mergers, meaning students would have to travel longer, at

greater personal expense, to attend larger classes.

Labour also now proposes to cap the number of Welsh students receiving places in publicly funded universities. Cuts in student numbers of up to 20% have already been imposed on universities in Wales.

The paper admits the fee system in Wales is to blame but offers no alternative – despite both lecturers' union UCU and the National Union of Students calling for the abolition of fees. (In September 2012 students from Wales will be charged up to £9,000 per year but get a grant of up to £5,525, alongside a loan to pay the rest of the charge.)

The Welsh Government now plan to create a new grant for students studying at private universities, of which there are none in Wales – yet. At the same time, some Welsh universities are losing all their public funding for teaching.

Welsh education minister Leighton Andrews and deputy minister for skills Jeff Cuthbert have both previously said that they oppose privatisation but consider themselves powerless to stop it. Their White Paper would surrender powers to stop privatisation, while keeping the direct responsibility for sell-offs out of ministers' hands.

Students, education workers, and the broader community should mount a vigorous response to the proposed legislation.



Nottingham students fight back

On Thursday 5 July, over 100 students from New College Nottingham (NCN) protested outside the High Pavement campus against attacks being made.

Armajit Basi, the principal of the college, is proposing to move all students to High Pavement and close the two other NCN campuses. There is already a strain on resources and not enough teaching time – a situation which will worsen if these changes go ahead. There is also a proposal to increase the number of hours students will be in college to 9am-5pm every day. Many students work part-time in the evenings, which they rely on more now that EMA has been cut.

Basi is one of the founders of entrepreneurship 4FE, a company which is trying to change the way colleges teach in order to promote 'entrepreneurial skills' and

has used some of the money from the college to invest in this business.

Basi came out to confront the students at one point and was booed back inside the college.

Some members of staff brought out pizza, flapjacks, tea and coffee for the students and congratulated them on what they had achieved.

Andrew Truglia, a student at the college, said: "We've been trying to give our opinions on the changes but have been completely ignored. We're here to get our voice across and show management that we are here to be listened to because we are an essential part of the college."

Fellow students from the other campuses will be contacted with the possibility of holding a joint demonstration.

College elects socialist to fight for students

Gareth Bromhall

The students of Pembrokeshire College have elected me as student governor, on a socialist platform, with three times the votes of my opponent.

As a member of Youth Fight for Education I will use this opportunity to improve the conditions of the students of the col-

lege. The Welsh Assembly has axed the bus subsidy that means students over 19 years old will now have to pay £15-£20 a week to get to college. Access to EMA, which is still available in Wales, is being restricted to those with the lowest household income.

We need to campaign against this, as part of a full programme to stop all cuts and bring back grants and EMA.

Pride should be about protest, not profits!

Greg Randall
Socialist Party LGBT group convenor

25,000 marchers took to the streets of London for Pride last Saturday. Pride is the largest LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) event in the UK but many of the marchers were saying that it was an organisational omnishambles.

Pride started as a political protest for gay and lesbian liberation in 1972 and this year was supposed to commemorate the pioneering struggles of forty years ago, but fell victim to the commercialisation that has infiltrated since then.

With less than a week to go the organisers announced that they were running out of money from commercial sponsors. Tory Mayor Boris Johnson's Greater London Authority (GLA) reportedly imposed conditions that made the Trafalgar Square rally twice as expensive as in 2011 and did not pay promised funding.

Floats banned

Floats were banned from the march. Losing corporate floats isn't a tragedy, but most floats were run by LGBT community groups or trade unions, who are now out of pocket.

Appeals to the Mayor's office to plug the funding gap fell were

spurned. According to LGBT human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, two companies offered to put up the money needed, but the GLA refused to allow Pride to take it.

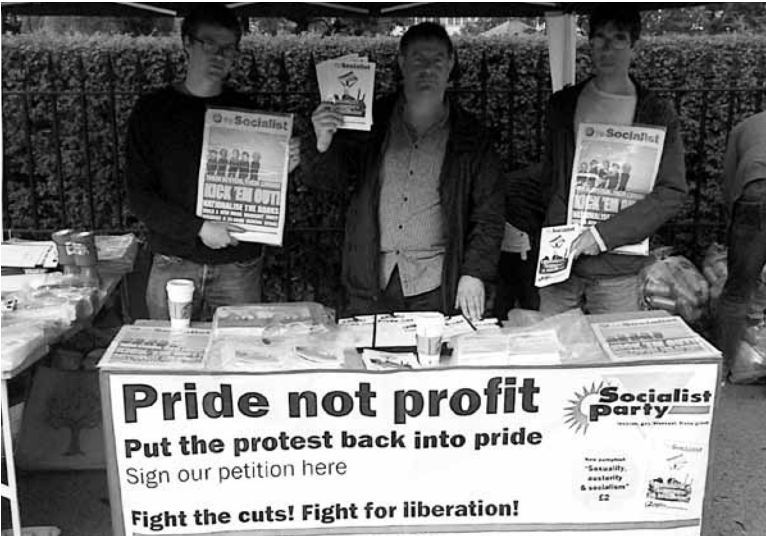
The start time was moved from 1pm to 11am due to "security concerns". As Pride is a peaceful event, this must have been to keep numbers down. In past years hundreds of thousands have participated.

Pride should not have to rely on big business advertising budgets or the goodwill of Johnson. It should be a protest organised by LGBT

activists. Prejudice has not been beaten and austerity will hit LGBT people hard.

Peter Tatchell warns that the crisis may be used by big business to further remove politics from Pride. The TUC, a major sponsor of Pride, has called a public meeting on 16 July. The TUC and member unions must take a stand for a political Pride.

Socialist Party members took up these issues on the day. We will fight alongside others to make Pride a protest once more!



The Socialist Party stall photo S Figg



On the march photo Paul Mattsson

Save Worcestershire A&E services

Worcester National Shop Stewards Network

NHS bosses have put forward six plans for the reorganisation of Hospital Services in Worcestershire. The majority of the plans involve the closure of either the Redditch Alexandra or Worcester Royal accident and emergency services.

Another plan which would see both A&Es remaining is deemed "not workable due to increasing service demand and a forecast shortage of qualified staff". The jobs cut by the Acute Hospitals Trust over the past three years are now affecting us all in the proposed closure of an A&E.

NHS chiefs aim to slash £200 mil-

lion from their budget over the next few years. Stroke services are being lost from Redditch. Recuperative care for the elderly has been moved and is delivered by other agencies.

Get details about meetings and other events near to you
www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

£16 million will be paid this year to Catalyst, the private PFI company making a packet out of its ownership of Worcester Royal. The hospital cost £82 million to build but the

NHS locally will make payments to Catalyst over 30 years totalling £942 million, an estimated total which goes up every year. The whole PFI project should be brought back in house and managed fully as an NHS hospital. The money saved could be ploughed back into patient care.

Almost a decade ago maternity services in Redditch were under threat but a coordinated campaign won a massive victory and services were kept.

Stop Worcester and Redditch A&E closures

Public meeting
Wednesday 18 July, 7.30pm
St Andrews Church, Pump Street, Worcester WR1 2QT

TUSC continues to build support in Liverpool

Alec Price

After Tony Mulhearn's 'remarkable' result in the Liverpool mayoral election in May, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was in action again on Thursday 5 July.

Two city council byelections were held in the wards of Riverside and Allerton & Hunts Cross. The campaign centred around Riverside, where we stood local Socialist Party member Chris McDermott.

Despite a vastly reduced turnout TUSC was still able to increase its vote in actual and percentage terms, something which no other party

could manage. This is another small step forwards for TUSC.

Finishing third with 6.2%, TUSC supporters will continue to build the fight in and outside of elections to stop the cuts and build a socialist alternative.

TUSC also contested the former Lib Dem stronghold of Allerton & Hunts Cross for the first time. We received 31 votes (1.2%), more than the 18 votes the Tories could manage in Tuebrook & Stonecroft in May! TUSC will look to contest any other byelections in Liverpool called before the next full council elections in 2014.

www.tusc.org.uk

Leeds protest at prison privatisation rally

Matt Booth
Leeds North West Socialist Party

Socialist Party members recently took part in a protest outside a conference at Leeds University entitled 'Private Sector Involvement in Criminal Justice'.

The conference programme included talks from academics and researchers, representatives from probation trusts and police forces, and managing directors from private security firms G4S and Serco.

There was a supportive response for the protest from both passers by - including a policeman - and conference attendees.

One of the conference speakers, Richard Morris of G4S, surprisingly came out to chat. He was questioned about: increasing complaints over racial abuse and physical assault in immigration removal centres; the provision of services and facilities to Israeli occupying forces in Palestine; and the charge of corporate manslaughter following the death of Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga

in 2010. Morris had little in the way of a convincing response!

Two 'No To G4S' supporters, as Leeds University law students, were entitled to attend the conference free of charge. But, after talking to campaigners about the conference they were consequently refused entry!

The Socialist Party calls for a fully nationalised and democratically controlled prison, immigration and prisoner transport services, so profits aren't put before the treatment of people.

Help boost sales of the Socialist

Sarah Wrack

The Socialist reached 88% of its national sales target for the April-June 2012 quarter. Well done to the 23 Socialist Party branches that reached their targets.

Socialist Party branches should now be discussing sales plans for the new July-September quarter. If every branch had sold five more papers a week this time, we would have reached the national target.

If we achieve that we can serious-

ly look at moving towards having 12 pages of full colour in the paper.

What can your branch do to sell five more papers a week or get five more subscriptions? Socialist Party

What can you do to help increase sales of the Socialist?

members should discuss this at their next branch meeting and email the best ideas to sarahwrack@socialist-party.org.uk

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At last year's summer camp
photo H Sell

Egypt: Will Mursi's presidential election victory bring real change?

Working masses need independent policies and their own party

A week after Egypt's new president - Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) - took office, a dramatic confrontation with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf) erupted. As we go to press it is unclear how this brinkmanship will unfold.

A week before the recent presidential election, the Supreme Constitutional Court, packed with Mubarak-era judges, ruled that the parliament elected earlier this year was illegal. A third of the seats should have been filled by independents and not party nominees. In effect, this was a Scaf coup, taking back powers conceded in the face of the revolutionary movements last year.

Mursi overturned this ruling while conceding new elections. The MB called for mass marches to support Mursi but then appeared to back down; and the reconvened Islamist-dominated parliament immediately adjourned pending legal appeals.

While millions of Egyptians yearn for genuine democratic rights and social justice, no faith can be put in Mursi and the MB leadership who compete with Scaf for power. In this situation, it is vital that the working class develops its own independent programme and mass party. David Johnson and Niall Mulholland give the background to these latest moves.



Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders represent a different wing of the same class as the military

On 24 June, with just under 52% of valid votes cast, on a 51% turnout, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Mursi was declared president of Egypt.

The defeat of rival candidate Ahmed Shafiq was a rejection of the old detested regime of Hosni Mubarak. Shafiq had served Mubarak as a government minister and then as prime minister in the last few days before Mubarak's overthrow back in February 2011.

That only slightly over one quarter of eligible voters supported Mursi, however, shows widespread doubts that his victory will be a step forward for working and poor Egyptians. It also shows the fears of many that a Muslim Brotherhood (MB) regime could remove rights for women, for the Christian minority, and for the working class.

The result of the election was not announced for a week, with rumours of victory for both candidates circulating. There were probably negotiations during that time between the MB and the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf) about the powers of the presidency and of Scaf.

Soft coup

Two weeks before the election, the 19 generals of Scaf carried out a 'soft coup', dissolving the parliament elected a few months ago. Scaf made clear that it would not be giving up its control over the armed forces, its budget or Scaf's massive economic interests.

They have been able to get away with these counter-revolutionary measures, at this stage. After 18 months of struggles, many Egyptians are exhausted and have to spend great amounts of their energy on the daily struggle to feed their families.

The failure of the revolution to achieve a clear break from the old regime has led to political disappointment among many. Such temporary moods occur in all revolutionary situations, but moods can rapidly change again as the situation changes. In particular, the 'whip of counter-revolution' can lead to renewed mass struggle.

Mursi made three speeches after his election. Showing the still-strong pressure from the revolution, his

first was in Tahrir Square on Friday 29 June.

To large crowds of cheering supporters, Mursi said: "I salute all the revolutionaries in all Egypt's freedom squares... I will always be the first supporter of the revolution, so it should continue everywhere in the farthest corners of the homeland... There is no power above people power."

But the following day his speeches at Cairo University (before an invited audience) and at the Hikestep military training headquarters were different in tone. He thanked Scaf for its role in maintaining national security during the transition period and promised to honour its members in a special ceremony at the end of their tenure.

He did not say that their economic interests should be investigated, nor corruption, nor the generals' role in repressing opposition. But he did promise to grant the armed forces and the police all powers necessary for them to "successfully bring security back to Egypt."

Security for whom? Thousands of protestors have been injured and dozens killed since the downfall of Mubarak, with the armed forces used by Scaf to repress opposition to its rule.

In return for Mursi's praise, Field Marshal Tantawi, head of Scaf, thanked him for his speech at Cairo University and promised on behalf of Scaf "to stand by the side of the president the way we did with the revolution." That may be as much a threat as a promise!

The MB leadership includes wealthy businessmen such as Khairat El-Shater, who had been their first choice as presidential candidate.

They represent a different wing of the same class as Scaf. But the MB's large membership and its wider support reflect the views of many other layers in Egyptian society, including middle-class professionals and small businessmen, workers and the urban and rural poor.

Economic crisis

The desperate state of the economy means there is little scope for real reforms that would improve living standards, create jobs and build homes, although this is what most Egyptians desperately need.

The day after his inauguration, Mursi announced a 15% rise in social allowance for government employees and a 10% rise in civilian and military pensions, raised the next day to 15%. But it is not clear where this extra money will come from. Foreign currency reserves have fallen by half since the revolution and revenue from tourism continues to fall.

Mursi will come under strong pressure from imperialism as the price of a \$3.2 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund. The Financial Times advised Mursi to use "what powers remain to

Two weeks before the election, the 19 generals of Scaf carried out a 'soft coup'

him to implement the reforms that Egypt badly needs. This means taking decisions that will be politically difficult, such as eliminating costly subsidies that cripple the country's budget" (30/06/12).

If Mursi goes down the road of removing subsidies on the price of bread and fuel, or of privatisation, his government will come up against massive opposition, especially from workers and the poor.

The MB leaders have already shown their opposition to genuine trade unions. In May they proposed draft legislation in parliament that would have made recognition of trade unions dependent on court rulings.

Another issue producing conflicting pressure on Mursi is the peace treaty with Israel. The US government, supported by Scaf, who receive over a billion dollars a year of US military aid, are strongly opposed to any renegotiation of the treaty.

MB businessman Khairat El-Shater also said: "We have announced clearly that we as Egyptians will abide by the commitments made by the Egyptian government, regardless of our reservations regarding anything else. There is an obligation attached to all things relating to conventions in general, not only Egypt's Accords with Israel, including oil and gas agreements and so on" (Ikhwan Web 29/01/12).

But millions of Egyptians want an

immediate re-opening of the Rafah crossing into Gaza and the lifting of its blockade. There is enormous anger at the export of cheap gas to Israel while Palestinians continue to be evicted from their homes and land by illegal settlements, and the Israeli government continues to prevent the free movement of Palestinians as they lay siege to Gaza.

Opposition

After decades of Mubarak's corrupt dictatorship, Mursi's election will raise expectations that there will be real change. But he also has strong opposition from the start. In the first round, the radical Nasserist, Hamdeen Sabbahi, came a close third. On top of the almost 50% of the electorate that did not vote in the second round, 800,000 voted but invalidated their ballot by writing "down with military rule" while refusing to vote for Mursi.

Disappointment with Mursi will quickly start to surface. Blocked on the political front, the opposition is likely to show itself in increasing numbers of strikes and occupations, as workers fight to improve their living standards through trade union action.

The independent trade unions, nearly all of which have been formed since the revolution, now have an estimated 2.5 million members. The Egyptian Trade Union Federation, whose leaders were compromised under the Mubarak regime, still has four million members.

Nevertheless, it is also possible that there will be a prolonged trial of strength between the MB president and Scaf, with the MB opportunistically leaning on the masses during this process. Socialists will fight alongside the masses, including working class and poor MB supporters, in the struggle for basic democratic rights. But socialists will also fight for independent policies and a workers' party, putting no faith in the new MB presidency, and exposing the class bias of MB leaders.

The responsibility of socialists in this situation is to warn workers that they cannot rely on Mursi to deliver the democratic rights and higher living standards desperately needed and that they can only rely on their own organisations and struggles to fight for their interests.

It was a serious mistake of the

Revolutionary Socialists, part of the International Socialist Tendency, to call for votes for Mursi. There is a danger that they, and the April 6 Youth Movement, who also issued this call, will be blamed as workers and youth turn away from the new government.

Workers' movement

Winning those who supported the MB to the banner of socialism will require an independent workers' movement, including trade unions and a workers' party that struggles alongside workers and the poor and puts forward a clear programme addressing their daily needs. This must be linked to a programme of socialist and democratic change, raising the need for a second - socialist - revolution to complete the tasks started on 25 January 2011.

The MB could split along class lines if this programme was fought for. But if such a lead is not given, there is a danger that disappointed MB supporters will turn to the more conservatively religious right-wing political Islamic party, Nour.

In the last few weeks, Scaf have attempted to control the presidential elections, including ruling out several candidates, scrapping parliament and carrying out a 'coup'. This all shows the need for the working class to fight independently for real, lasting democratic rights, including genuine elections to a revolutionary constituent assembly and for a workers' government to carry out socialist policies.

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

TV Review

Britain on the brink - back to the '70s

Paul Callanan

This Panorama documentary (9 July) looked at what effect the economic crisis had on ordinary people. It asked whether we would see the same response as at the end of the 1970s when falling living standards led to huge industrial unrest.

The programme first looked at Clapham, south London, which in the 70s was home to what they called the "ordinary man". Nowadays Clapham is out of reach for "ordinary" families. Bankers have now moved into the area and house prices sky-rocketed from three times average income in the 1970s to five times today.

Even the previously well to do are being squeezed. Justin and Rosanne Pilditch were forced to move their family away from the area as a result of property prices. They were used as an example of the "squeezed middle".

Nancy Kelly of the Rowntree Foundation said their research showed that the poor are hit hardest. As costs go up it is not 'luxuries' that become most out of reach to working class people but basic necessities. Gas prices rose 16% in a year, while childcare went up 6%. Food prices too - in the last four years the cost of white fish went up by four times the rate of inflation.

The programme looked at the desperate situation for young people, taking us to Stainforth near Doncaster. In the 1970s the community was based around the town's coal mine. That all disappeared as a result of Thatcher's attacks on working class rights and living standards. A quarter of all young people in Stainforth are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

But instead of talking about how people are fighting back (no repre-



Campaigning for real jobs photo Paul Mattsson

sentatives of the trade union movement were featured) the programme raised the spectre of rioting. It discussed how the rich are getting richer. The presenter said the "rich had never had it so good", the top 1% saw their share of the wealth (already large) grow by a quarter since 1970.

A survey carried out by the programme has found that two-thirds of all people have no faith in the government to solve the crisis. Haley Gay, a single mother and a school admin assistant, felt "that the government who make decisions on behalf of the people are out of touch with the people".

Crispin Oday, a banker who took

home £36 million in 2010, said we need to "forgive the bankers" and that the untrammelled free market is the only way. He claimed that when we have a crisis like this there's a danger that "people in second class start looking at those in first class and say let's storm first class".

And the super rich should be very worried about that danger, the programme pointed out that we now have a unifying hate figure in the bankers.

Join the Socialist Party and help build and unite a movement of workers and young people around a real socialist alternative to the crisis and this rotten capitalist system.

As useless as a hole in the ground



The Shard

Europe's tallest building, the Shard, next to London Bridge station, opened on 5 July at a cost of nearly £1 billion. The hyperbole surrounding it is in full flow. Its owners, the middle eastern state of Qatar, claim it will enhance London's reputation as a place for future developments like it.

They should know, they have \$100 billion in spare cash from Qatar's oil and gas wells to splash about.

It is another indication that the super rich have no idea what to do with all the profits that have been robbed from the labour power of the world's working class. The Shard stands at over 1,000 feet in height, with 87 floors, the top floors being left deliberately uninhabitable and open to the elements. 72 floors are to be rented out to the obscenely super-rich in £50 million pound apartments and an 18 floor luxury hotel.

Its original owners had rented out part to Transport for London, but the new owners withdrew that

contract as it was not what they envisaged for the "right" sort of tenants. The utter blindness of the bourgeoisie of the Bob Diamond variety is their inability to see how their plans are seen by the rest of society.

The Shard is based in Southwark, where I live, which had the reputation of one of the most impoverished parts of Britain. Southwark's Labour council leader said that the Shard will bring thousands of jobs to the borough. As if that could justify the obscenity of the whole project.

You might as well advocate that the unemployed should dig holes in the ground to give them something to do, the end product (the Shard) is about as useful to society as a hole in the ground.

The Shard shows the utter irrationality of a society where the rich have so much money that they can build playthings like the Shard, instead of things that meet the needs of the vast majority, like homes, hospitals and schools.

Bill Mullins

Minimum wage, minimum security

As a young unemployed person living in East London the Olympics were painted as a brilliant chance for me to find work, not only within the Olympic park but also in other businesses in the surrounding areas.

In reality, as I found out, these jobs are minimum wage, with short-term contracts and extremely insecure. The outlet I am working in posted an advert for eight empty positions of which around three would become permanent.

All new members of staff are on

three-month probation and 25 hour contracts, although we have all been asked to work as many as 50 hours each week during the Olympics. It has become obvious that extra staff will not be needed after the Olympics.

We will see a massive surge in unemployment in East London then. Me and the other young people I work with (many who have just graduated from university with large debts) will be unemployed again.

Helen Pattison



Youth Fight for Jobs photo Suzanne Beishon

Ringing bells in the GMB

When Kevin Parslow's report on the Unite union's policy conference, (socialist 725) said: "On the Labour Party, Unite will continue its strategy of working to 'change from within' with its radical policies," it rang bells with the situation in my union, GMB.

GMB's leadership still clings to Labour. Their only real argument is that, despite everything, they have to support Labour as the 'only show in town'. This position is becoming increasingly difficult to justify, given Labour's experience in power at central and local government and their failure to offer any real alternative to the Con-Dems' austerity agenda.

A political executive report produced by GMB's Central Executive for the recent annual congress reflects this. The document is scathing in places about the 'New Labour' project. It correctly points out that "New Labour fell under the spell of the free market gurus" and that in power they pushed forward privatisation everywhere, and as a result "the gap between rich and poor widened under New Labour".

The report recognises problems with the Labour Party, its MPs and councillors, and highlights how Progress and other similar networks have grown up within Labour to

push forward right wing policies. They argue: "we need to re-engage our key activists to join with others and rescue local Labour parties from falling membership".

They say that in recent years they introduced annual audits of MPs supported by GMB resources. Fundamentally they say Labour must be reclaimed. The report argues that unions "will have to be far more aggressive in our arguments for progressive economic and social policies", but does not explain how they think workers will want to join Labour. For example, GMB members in local government facing attacks on jobs, pay and conditions from Labour councils, will probably not be too keen!

The report does not mention unions already outside the Labour link such as the RMT and PCS, or initiatives such as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Labour long ago stopped even being able to claim to be a vehicle for working class political representation. Trade unions should wake up to this reality and work to build alternative poles of attraction that represent members' interests. Clearly the leadership is under increasing pressure on this key question.

A GMB shop steward

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine
The new July-August 2012 issue includes:

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The politics of fighting the racist EDL

A Waltham Forest Socialist Party member

“We Are Waltham Forest” (WRWF) campaigning group has been meeting regularly since it was discovered that the English Defence League is planning a march in Walthamstow on Saturday 18 August. The EDL’s choice of an area with rocketing unemployment and over-crowded housing is even more provocative since the large Muslim community will be celebrating the end of Ramadan on this date.

The EDL, a pernicious racist organisation that feeds off the desperate conditions of poverty and hopelessness, claims to be standing up for English workers, even, in a few cases, trying to support workers’ protests over job losses.

In fact they are thugs. They act like a tool of big business, whose real aim is to ruthlessly create divisions amongst the working class, so that the 1% - the billionaires and millionaires - can rule without challenge and drive all workers’ living standards even further into the dust.

It is ABC that racism can thrive in times of austerity unless it is effec-

A fight against the EDL goes hand in hand with a fight against austerity

tively fought. Racist organisations explain poverty by pointing the finger at immigrants, whilst socialists point the finger at the bankers and the bosses’ system, which raids the wealth of the country for their own pockets in a relentless orgy of greed. It would seem, therefore, obvious that a fight against the EDL would go hand in hand with a fight against austerity.

Not one act

Defeating fascists is not one act, ie of blocking their path on a certain day - important though that is - but also, it is an urgent campaign to undermine and answer racist ideas; at the same time to win all workers to a socialist banner, and prepare now a real political alternative to the three main parties of the rich.

It is only a matter of time before the EDL, or another far right outfit, create a political party in Britain that will stand in parliamentary and council elections. This process has happened in a very graphic way in Greece. The PASOK government let down the working class by behaving like a bosses’ government and carrying through savage cuts. The fascist Golden Dawn party exploited this situation and have now captured 7% of vote from less than 1% four years

ago. The Tories, on the foundations laid for them by New Labour policies, are creating similar conditions here. The struggle against cuts is central to the struggle against the far right.

One might imagine that this proposed march would give socialists in Walthamstow an opportunity to highlight the real culprits for the austerity cuts and how to fight them. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The organisation heading this group is Unite Against Fascism (UAF), largely influenced by the Socialist Workers Party. Their emphasis is on mosques and faith groups. This might be useful if the main thrust was a class appeal to Muslim workers in particular. They also say that the trade unions are central to their campaign. However, their actions unfortunately tell us a different story.

Motions

At one of the earlier meetings of WAWF a motion from Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union was put forward:

The publicity surrounding this event could reinforce racial bigots from all communities, who, confused and mistaken, direct their anger at deteriorating living conditions, towards fellow workers, instead of at those who have caused all these problems, namely the bankers and the 1% rich and powerful, in whose interests the Con-Dem government operates.

We reaffirm the commitment of the Anti-Cuts Union to:

- Raise a campaign of ALL workers in a common struggle to stop ALL cuts to jobs and services locally, and
- Fight for the £750 billion in the vaults of the banks and big bosses to be put to use to provide a job on a living wage, and a home with an affordable rent for all.

We call on local trade unionists, community campaigners and workers of every heritage to join with us in a campaign to:

- Stop the EDL gathering in Walthamstow
- Help end the conditions of poverty and hopelessness that give rise to racism

The motion was overwhelmingly defeated, opponents claiming it was at odds with the WRWF declaration:

The EDL is a racist and fascist organisation dedicated to attacking Asian people and Muslims. Islamophobia or bigotry against Muslims is as unacceptable as any other form of racism. Its aim is to divide us by making scapegoats of one community, just as the Nazis did with the Jews in the 1930s. Today they threaten Muslims. Tomorrow it could be Jewish people, Hindus, Sikhs, black people, lesbians and gay men, travellers or Eastern Europeans.

The EDL have held countless demonstrations across the country, where they have rampaged through towns, attacking mosques, businesses and individuals. More recently, they have begun to attack peaceful demonstrations and multicultural and trade union meetings. Their leader, Tommy Robinson, who has a string of convictions for violence, appeared on a recent Channel 4 programme praising Anders Breivik, the fascist terrorist responsible for killing 76 people in Norway. Each time the EDL assemble, minorities and trades unionists are subjected to threats and racial/religious abuse.

At the end the speaker agreed it had been a good discussion, but it was “time to put politics to bed and get on with preparations for the march”. Since then, whenever we have raised similar issues, the strong message has come from UAF mem-



The fight against racism goes hand in hand with the fight against austerity

bers, irritated by having to confront this point of view, that, yes, we are all against cuts, discussions about cuts are “fine for the trade union branch, but not here”!

Keep things simple?

The theory that apparently underpins the UAF fight-back policy is that the EDL are very bad people. They beat up Muslims and on occasions attack trade unionists. Campaigners, on the other hand, want to reinforce peace, harmony with Muslims, and celebrate cultural diversity - all very laudable aspirations. However, defeating fascists will require more than this. Appealing to cultural tolerance will not answer the rage of the kid with no job, or the family eking an existence on benefits.

The UAF keep repeating: “We want everyone against the EDL on one side of the line, and the EDL on the other.” We understand how people new to mass struggle want to keep things simple. But, whilst sounding attractive this policy is fraught with potential danger for the working class, and it is incredible that the SWP, who claim to be a Marxist party, are the leading force promoting this position. The reason it is potentially dangerous is that, from this declaration flows actions.

In particular this view has informed the selection of speakers at public meetings. From the Anti-Cuts Union and the Socialist Party we have made it clear that all are welcome in the campaign, even councillors and MPs. They are welcome if they want to attend campaign meetings, leaflet on the streets, or even link arms on the counter-demo. But when it comes to offering them a platform with no other speakers prepared to confront them, it is a different story.

Imagine the reaction of black, white and Asian workers who have lost their council jobs when they see the very same councillors - who disgracefully carried through government cuts without a pipsqueak of resistance - afforded a place at the top table where they can pontificate about good and evil! One Labour councillor, when lobbied at the town hall to vote against £65m worth of cuts, gasped: “Oppose them? I am the one proposing them!” Imagine the reaction of public sector workers



The EDL feeds off the desperate conditions of poverty

to an MP who refused to back their strike to stop the pensions robbery; or the MP who refused to intercede with councillors from his own party to do something to help stop sackings of council workers.

The UAF think that these people can be invited, with a grudging proviso that they can be called to account only “where possible”. We have had experience of this attitude in a previous hospital campaign, where similar leaders were given a platform without any criticism. We say if they are on a platform we will use any opportunity to take them to task on this score.

Fight racism, fight all cuts

And further, by inviting such collaborators in cuts, the UAF then go on to compound their mistakes by firmly rejecting real local fighters on the ground. A speaker from Youth Fight for Jobs, an organisation backed by seven major trade unions, was rejected - at a time when the TUC itself is positively embracing young workers in the fight-back. The local TUSC candidate, who is a sacked library worker, and who is continuing the campaign to create an electoral political alternative for jobs and homes, was also rejected.

The London Transport Regional Organiser of RMT, Steve Hedley who has been instrumental in winning pay increases for workers of all backgrounds like the underground cleaners, and prising an Olympics bonus out of a ruthless private com-

pany for all tube staff, was amazingly not considered as worthy as a trendy Labour author!

It is hugely important that the trade unions, anti-cuts campaigns and the labour movement generally involve workers hailing from all countries and living in London to come together to defeat the EDL. We appeal to all workers, black, white, Asian, East European to get to Walthamstow on 18 August. The EDL must be blocked.

However, it is just as urgent is to combine this battle with the fight in the unions to defeat this government who offer nothing but increasing austerity for years to come. They are one and the same fight, not separate issues. Initially we in the Socialist Party felt uneasy that this group, first off the mark to spearhead the campaign to stop the EDL, chose a slogan so devoid of political or class content as “We Are Waltham Forest”. Now we realise why such an anodyne slogan was chosen!

We hope, and will work for this campaign to address the issues of stopping all cuts as part of the fight to defeat racism. There are many sincere and hardworking activists involved in the campaign. We might have expected that SWP leaders could have given their comrades on the ground more of a class understanding. We hope that this non-political trajectory does not continue. It would not bode well for successful intervention in workers’ battles in the future when the situation is likely to be even more serious.

Kick the racist English Defence League out of Bristol

Saturday 14 July
Anti-racist demonstrators meeting at 11am
at The Fountains, Central Promenade, City Centre,
BS1 4XG
and Temple Meads Station
Approach, BS1 6QF

BUILD THE FIGHTBACK AGAINST THE CON-DEMS

Join the lobby of the TUC on 9 September For a one-day general strike

Nick Chaffey

Despite the best efforts of the Con-Dem PR machine, the Jubilee, Wimbledon and the Olympics, the Summer Circus cannot hide the fact that government cuts and the austerity agenda are provoking a fightback.

On 15 July, thousands of trade unionists will march in commemoration of some of its founders, The Tolpuddle Martyrs. They were jailed and deported in 1834 for organising trade unions and fighting for a living wage.

Today it is the bankers who face demands for lengthy jail sentences because of the misery they have caused in the lives of workers, the unemployed, youth and pensioners.

Many of those marching will be the front-line troops, public sector workers who struck last year on 30 June, 30 November and this year on 10 May. As the speeches are made by trade union leaders in Tolpuddle, many will be asking: what can we do today to defeat the cuts?

The message from the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is clear: turn this anger into action. This means drawing together all those trade union members hit by cuts and demanding the TUC, the national organising body of over six million trade union members, calls



The NSSN lobby of the TUC in 2011 photo Paul Mattsson

a national one-day strike of public and private sector workers against all cuts.

In mobilising for the national TUC demo on 20 October, an appeal must be made to the unorganised, the one million young unemployed,

all those looking for work, to those hit by welfare cuts and pensioners, to join with the trade unions in a one-day general strike.

Only action can force this government of the super-rich, for the super-rich, into a retreat and out of

office before their time is up. That is why the NSSN is calling for trade union members to mobilise their branches and supporters in a mass lobby of the TUC conference in Brighton on Sunday 9 September in support of this demand.

Mobilising for the lobby are the young members of the RMT transport union who moved the resolution at the RMT annual general meeting in defence of pensions, calling for general strike action.

Emma Linacre, national vice-chair of RMT Young Members and a member of Youth Fight for Jobs explained why she was coming on the NSSN lobby: "Young people are taking the brunt of the Con-Dem cuts. Education means poverty - no EMA, tuition fees and student loans. Work means poverty as they are confined to low-paid jobs and benefits are being slashed. Young people have the most to lose in the long term - decent jobs, secure housing, occupational pensions, the right to decide how best to live their lives - and will fight hard to keep these things.

"The media claims that young people only care about body image, reality TV and getting drunk, that they don't care about political and social issues. This is completely untrue. In the RMT, young members have been at the forefront of strikes and demos to defend their jobs, working conditions, pensions and workmates from management harassment.

"Young members will continue these struggles and will be on the NSSN and TUC demos to show the Con-Dems we will fight them all the way and will defeat the cuts."

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!