



# SUPPORT SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS

## Stop the exploitation of workers by ruthless multinational

Rob Williams

**T**rade unionists in Britain have been stunned by the scenes of slaughter on TV from the Marikana platinum mine in South Africa. For many veterans of the anti-Apartheid movement, it was all too reminiscent of the massacres in Sharpeville and Soweto.

But horror turned very quickly to anger when the reports came through that 34 striking miners were killed by the police, with 78 injured, for just fighting for a decent living wage. As one miner said: "We can't live on this money."

To add insult to injury, the owners of the mine, Lonmin, gave mourning miners an ultimatum to return to work or be sacked. In a heroic show of solidarity, less than a third went to work on Monday, meaning



Lobbying the South African embassy in London over the killings

that the pit couldn't operate.

Faced with an outraged public in South Africa and internationally, the African National Conference (ANC) government of president Jacob Zuma, which had steadfastly backed UK-based Lonmin, applied pressure on the company to drop the ultimatum.

The Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network send our solidarity and support to the miners and their families.

We know that the company's ruthless attitude towards its impoverished workforce is driven by the falling price of platinum on international markets due to the capitalist recession. The Marikana workers are being made to pay for the bosses' crisis - in blood!

We lobbied the South African High Commission in London on Friday 17 August and again on the following Monday, demanding that

the ANC government stand down the police and stop the killings on behalf of this brutal multinational corporation.

The Socialist Party calls for the mine and all of Lonmin's operations in South Africa to be taken out of their blood-soaked hands and nationalised in the interests of the miners and the South African working class as a whole.

Moreover, this is an act by a militarised police force of the ANC government, killing workers to defend the profits of this company.

This raises the need for the South African working class to build a new mass party with socialist policies that is prepared to break with the rule of the corporations and build a real future for the working class and poor.

**Report from South African socialists - see page 9**

the **Socialist**

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what we think

# Lobby the TUC on 9 September

## Demand a 24-hour strike against austerity

**B**y most estimates, 80% to 85% of the Con-Dem cuts are still to come. But the so-called 'easier' cuts have been devastating. Since Osborne's original autumn statement in October 2010 – only 20 months ago – some 400,000 public sector workers have lost their jobs, tuition fees have been trebled and EMA student payments abolished.

Benefits have been slashed vindictively, including those of disabled people and the young, who now have to wait ten additional years for full housing benefit. Fewer students have applied for university places and many are unable to afford private rents or house prices. Tory threats to council housing will massively aggravate this.

Add to this the four-year pay freeze in the public sector. In the private sector 'precarious' employment increases with the scourge of zero-hours contracts – in work but not necessarily paid. The imposition of the pension 'deal' in large parts of the public sector has exacerbated the situation with increased contributions meaning an effective pay cut with the promise of working longer for worse retirement benefits.

This is the real position facing working class people in Britain and is the basis for the reported booing of Prime Minister David Cameron every time he appeared on the big screens at an Olympic event. He and his split and divided government will not be able to absorb reflected glory from the gold medals won by Team GB.

In fact the rash of disputes this year, including important victories for the sparks in the construction industry and London bus workers who secured an Olympic bonus, has revealed the huge potential that exists for building a mass movement capable of defeating this government.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) conference in Brighton from 9 September should therefore provide a way to build that movement and a balance sheet for the first phase of resistance to the Con-Dem cuts. This included the largest trade union-led demonstration in this country's history on 26 March 2011, as well as the fantastic 30 November (N30) strike – arguably the biggest single day of strike action since the 1926 general strike.

Leaders like Brendan Barber from the TUC and Unison general secretary Dave Prentis

must not be allowed to re-write history. The real lesson from the pension struggle is that the two million-strong N30 strike opened up the possibility of building a force capable of defeating this government. But this would have required escalation and widening it to include the plethora of disputes that opened up in 2012 in the private sector.

But the betrayal of the pension dispute just three weeks after N30 meant that unity across the striking unions and momentum was lost. For much of this year, militant unions like the civil service union PCS, with Socialist Party members in leading positions, have looked to push the movement forward. The strike of 400,000 workers on 10 May, which saw workers in the PCS, Unite, UCU, Nipsa, ISU, RMT unions, along with POA members in prisons taking unofficial action, was more than a necessary act of defiance as the government imposed the first year's increased pension contributions. It was an investment for the type of coordinated action that will be posed over the next few months.

### 20 October demo

The Socialist Party welcomes the TUC's decision to call another day of demonstration against Cameron's austerity programme on 20 October in London, Glasgow and Belfast. We will do all we can to ensure that a million are out on the streets – more than on 26 March 2011.

We call on the TUC to propose a clear slogan against austerity for the demo. But we also have a responsibility to argue that this alone will not be sufficient to force the Con-Dems back, despite their splits and weaknesses.

It's also necessary to warn that any strategy of the right-wing union leaders that action should be subordinated to a 'wait for a Labour government' must be challenged. After all, Labour leader Ed Miliband agrees with the necessity for cuts – just not so far and fast. In reality, in office his position would be determined by the bond markets and the needs of British capitalism. In fact, a confident trade union movement that has defeated this government would be in the best position to put mass pressure on an incoming Labour government.

We therefore fully support the lobby initi-

## I'm lobbying the TUC on 9 September

**T**o show support for the low-paid women workers in Unison at my school who face the prospect of looking after children as young as four until they're 70 and who voted unanimously to reject the pension proposals at our recent union meeting. These workers should not have to accept a pay freeze or cuts to their pensions just because they care. They need the TUC to call for action to both defend and improve their working conditions.

Because despite having two part-time jobs I'm still struggling to feed, clothe and house my family. Life should be about more than just survival; the money and the

resources are there, but in the hands of a tiny minority. This government is intent on making life as difficult as they can for millions of people in this country and I want the TUC to take the initiative in a fightback against them.

Because the Unison leadership, with their big salaries, paid for by their members, are refusing to listen to our anger and frustration at their lack of action. We demand that they call a 24-hour strike as the beginning of a campaign to fight against all cuts.

**Unison Shop Steward, east midlands**  
\* For details of transport to the lobby see [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)

ated by the National Shop Stewards Network to call on the TUC to follow up the 20 October demonstration with a 24-hour general strike. The lobby will promote motions from the PCS and the POA which push for further coordinated strike action.

The POA motion calls on the conference to consider "the practicalities of a general strike". If these motions were passed it would put pressure on the TUC and the leaders of the big unions but also build the confidence of workers in the run up to 20 October.

Some of these leaders may argue that the demand for a 24-hour general strike against austerity is abstract and in any case wouldn't be possible under Thatcher's anti-union laws. But as with the pension dispute which reached its highpoint on N30, effectively a public sector general strike, it is possible to coordinate strike action against austerity on a scale of millions. One of the main reasons that the pension attack was chosen as a focus for action in the first place was because it gave the maximum potential for joint strike action.

Many unions have not accepted the pension deal and are therefore in a live dispute. As well as the PCS, UCU and the NUT this also includes Unison in Higher Education. But in any case, at Unison conference, in an attempt to draw a line under the pension dispute, Prentis flagged up pay as the next bat-

tle. Learning from the betrayal of the pension dispute we have to fight to make sure there is a serious battle on pay that is fought through to victory.

All public sector unions should be balloted on pay. Unison's own Higher Education sector executive has agreed to ballot for strike action just before the TUC demonstration and at the end of November, possibly to link up with the NUS student demonstration.

This opens up the prospect of coordinated strike action throughout the public sector on pay and pensions. If a call was then made to workers in the private sector to coordinate any live disputes or planned ballots with this, the prospect of a one-day general strike can be concretely posed.

The anger and frustration against this government is almost palpable. It goes beyond the trade union movement and the working class. The Libor scandal has angered many small business people who have been penalised as a result. The strike rallies and demonstrations in towns and cities up and down the country on N30 were often the biggest these places had ever seen.

This was because the unions were seen as the organised expression of the opposition needed against cuts and the most likely to succeed because of its strength. The first stage of the cuts has only emphasised the necessity of building this resistance.

## NHS: Dewsbury mass meeting opposes PFI

### Yorkshire Socialist Party members

The campaign to halt the planned cuts to Dewsbury hospital took another step forward on Wednesday 25 July with a packed public meeting at Dewsbury Town Hall, organised by Dewsbury Socialist Party, debating how to best fight the cuts.

Around 75 people heard Adrian O'Malley from Unison Mid-Yorkshire Health branch, speaking in a personal capacity, outline the history of NHS changes in West Yorkshire over the past 20 years. In that time Pinderfields hospital was built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme, with all changes in the area revolving around supporting

that development – to the detriment of other NHS services.

Pontefract hospital has been decimated, with services moved to Pinderfields, while long-promised mini-centres around the area never materialised, leading to overcrowding at Pinderfields.

This is the situation that now faces people in Dewsbury. The lack of local services and inadequate space at Pinderfields clearly shows that nothing should be moved from Dewsbury but, such is the obsession with supporting PFI, common sense is being thrown out of the window. As a result A&E, maternity and children's services are threatened at Dewsbury leaving the long-term future of the hospital as a whole under question.

With the £300 million PFI deal, which continues to cost

£40 million each year, locked in for another 25 years any future financial cuts will again fall on Dewsbury or other public hospitals. That is why Adrian called for the campaign to oppose PFI in its entirety, to demand the re-nationalisation of all PFIs and an end to further use of the scheme.

Former Save Huddersfield NHS councillor Jackie Grunsell also spoke, relating the lessons of that campaign to the meeting. She noted that this campaign has got in earlier than the Huddersfield one and so is in a better situation to win. She called on everyone to act fast, to attend the NHS committee meetings, demand financial transparency, pressure our local political representatives and help organise public action against

the plans.

The people attending the meeting echoed the two speakers' sentiments about PFI and about the need to fight the plans immediately. Two follow-up organising committees of 20-30 members have since developed a strategy for the campaign further.

Our initial aim is to demand the trust opens its books to public scrutiny to let us see where our money is going. We want a genuine consultation with public and staff fully involved in the decision-making about the future of these services.

Petitioning and local area meetings are progressing fast and momentum is building behind the campaign with plans for a demonstration in the autumn.



# Murdochgate rumbles on... Another News of the World perjury charge

**Philip Stott**

Socialist Party Scotland

Yet another ex-News of the World (NoW) journalist has been charged with having committed perjury during the 2010 trial of Scottish socialist Tommy Sheridan.

Douglas Wight, who was the Scotland news editor when the NoW ran stories about Tommy's private life in 2004, has also been charged with multiple counts of conspiracy to obtain personal data from members of the public. Wight continued to work for the NoW until it was forced to close in July 2011, following the public outrage that came in the wake of the Milly Dowler scandal.

Andy Coulson, the former editor of the NoW and former employee of the prime minister, and Wight gave evidence that subsequently has been proved to be false.

As Labour MP Tom Watson commented: "It is now abundantly clear that members of the jury were not in full possession of the facts. If they knew what the police now know, it seems impossible not to conclude that Mr Sheridan would be a free man. His conviction should be urgently reviewed."

Both Wight and Coulson, have now been charged with perjury in Scotland for claiming during the Tommy Sheridan perjury case that they knew nothing about the widespread phone hacking that was endemic at the NoW.

Coulson has also been charged in England along with five other



**Tommy Sheridan**

former NoW journalists and private detective Glenn Mulcaire, on phone hacking charges. According to the Crown Prosecution Service at least 600 people were victims of voice-mail hacking by NoW employees.

## "Industrial scale"

The "industrial scale" of illegal phone hacking emerged after the police and the prosecuting authorities effectively covered up the chronic levels of criminality by News International, the Murdoch parent company of NoW.

On top of this, 14 current or former Sun journalists have also been arrested as part of the Met police's investigation into "inappropriate" payments to police and public officials by News International journalists.

The Met, who have seen a commissioner and deputy commis-

sioner forced to resign as a result of the scandal, are under huge public pressure to be seen to act.

The Tommy Sheridan perjury conviction hinged on the unprecedented decision by the Scottish Crown to pursue an inquiry following Tommy's 2006 defamation victory over the NoW.

Lothian and Borders police carried out that inquiry and millions was spent trying to secure a politically-driven conviction of Tommy who was a key leader of the mass anti-poll tax movement that ended the career of the 'Iron Lady' Margaret Thatcher in the early 1990s.

The conviction against Tommy Sheridan is indeed unsafe and unsound and should be overturned. A full trade union-led public investigation should also be carried out into this political vendetta against one of Scotland's leading socialists.

## Doors close after A-level results

**Helen Pattison**

In mid-August thousands of young people received their A-level results. These young people will be the first to pay the higher £9,000 tuition fees and so it's no surprise that applications by English students to universities this year were down 10%.

Young people priced out of education are forced onto the dole queue - one million are unemployed - or into unpaid training schemes, or very poorly paid apprenticeships.

For many, apprenticeships repre-

sent a cheaper alternative to higher education - 63% more decided on this path in 2010/11 than the previous year. But this year the numbers of young apprentices are down in a third of regions and are generally static. That might have something to do with the fact that 70% of apprenticeships are reportedly given to existing employees.

## Minimal wage

The national minimum wage for apprentices is just £2.60 an hour which in many cases will barely cover the

costs of attending the apprenticeship. Many young people working in apprenticeships receive little training and end up performing the tasks of a job which should receive a full wage.

In effect apprenticeships represent the slashing of the minimum wage, for recent school leavers in particular, but also for those already in work. Employers will replace the current jobs with apprenticeships to save money and increase their profits at the expense of a future for young people.

See [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)

## Justice for Kingsley Burrell!

**Nick Hart**

On Saturday 18 August 200 people marched through Birmingham to demand justice for the family of Kingsley Burrell.

In March 2011 Kingsley called 999 after he and his five year old son were threatened by a group of men. Yet when the police arrived he was held under the mental health act, despite having no record of mental

health problems.

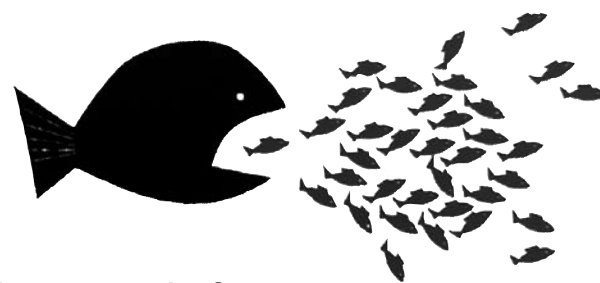
He was then kept in an institute where his family were not allowed to speak to him. He sustained mysterious injuries after police were called to an incident that took place within the unit. A few days later he died. His family have not yet been offered an explanation.

Local people, trade unionists and friends and relatives of some of the 545 people who die in state custody

every year joined the peaceful demonstration.

One of Kingsley's school friends told the Socialist: "the police act like the world's biggest gang, looking out for the haves in society and victimising the have-nots. The plans for privatisation will only make them more corrupt. What the government should be doing is providing support for the young kids coming through now instead of cutting everything back".

# Them...



## Inspire a generation?

Politicians were crawling all over the Olympics - desperate to be seen taking part in an event enjoyed by so many. That's why many of us took it as a not-so-surprising stab in the back when it was revealed how seriously (or not) those same politicians take giving young people the chance to develop their interests and skills in sport.

Since 2010 the sale of 31 school playing fields has been approved. Tory councils have approved the most but New Labour is no friend of the Olympic legacy either - between 1997 and 2010 200 playing fields were sold off.

## No recession for 1%

FTSE 100 chief executives reached a new milestone in 2011 - an average pay package of £3 million a year. That's 8.5% up on the previous year.

# 8.5%

Increase in total pay package of FTSE 100 chief executives - just 1.6% for workers

Meanwhile the average pay rise for workers was 1.6% - less than half the rate of inflation - while many are in the middle of pay freezes. So workers can afford less and less while the bosses can afford more and more.

## Unhealthy and dangerous

If you were thinking of a list of people not to invite to join the Health and

Safety Executive's board, Howard Shiplee would be pretty near the top. Shiplee was an executive director of construction giant Laing O'Rourke - one of the companies which took part in blacklisting trade unionists for, among other things, highlighting health and safety issues. And yet, Shiplee has indeed been appointed to the board. This decision must be challenged.

## Idleness

Five 'young gun' Tories have written a book, Britannia Unchained: Global Growth and Prosperity (health warning: do not read if you suffer from high blood pressure). In it they helpfully outline the root of all our problems. Billions spent bailing out the banks? Growing inequality? The careless quest for profit? No. Idleness.

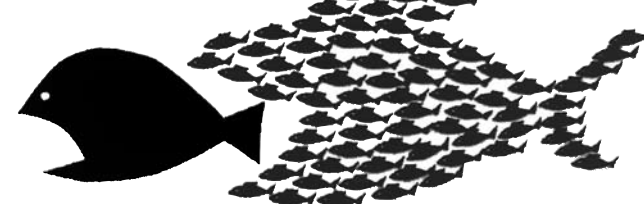
Yes, we're all just too lazy. "Too many people in Britain prefer a lie-in to hard work." We quite agree - all those bosses sitting around counting the money made for them by low-paid workers, often having to work two or three jobs to get by - they're a real blight on society.

## Worse and worse

"Tony Blair once explained his priority in three words: education, education, education. I can do it in three letters. NHS." That's what Cameron told us in 2006. But since he became prime minister things are even worse than they were under New Labour! An extra 2,000 patients a month are on hospital waiting lists - that's an extra 60,000 since May 2010.

And now NHS chiefs are claiming it would be a great idea for hospitals to 'expand abroad' to make a profit. But introducing the profit motive to the NHS is the main factor causing the problems!

# ...& Us



## What we heard

the RMT transport union relief regional organiser. He said: "It doesn't matter where you go or what campaign you're pushing, the Socialist Party will always help. I have worked with them on numerous campaigns in the north east and elsewhere - they are a sound bunch of people. We're under a sustained attack here by the employers and government (and the official opposition aren't any help - for the most part!). We need to show unity and strength in the face of this onslaught."

I thought I'd share this praise with you all, as it's always nice to get some recognition for what we do as activists, and in my capacity as the local RMT branch secretary, I'd just like to say thanks again to all who helped out!

**Paul Reilly**



## Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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# And the toilet seat medal goes to... Sheffield City Council!

Because that's what around 100 Sheffield council craftsmen think about councillors and management that have left them earning up to £4,000 a year less than labourers after a re-grading exercise.

On strike for the day on 17 August, electricians, mechanics and stonemasons, members of Unite, GMB and Ucat trade unions, marched down to the town hall after picketing Olive Grove depot from 6am. There they presented the council with their toilet seat medal.

Unite's vote was 81.4% in favour of the walkout, while the other two unions, GMB and Ucat, secured 100% votes for a strike.

Mark Keeling, Unite convenor said: "The craftsmen have served apprenticeships and taken college courses to do their skilled jobs. At the same time as the council is refusing to review craft wages, it is do-

ing a review of managers' wages in line with equal pay legislation."

On the picket line, most other workers signed the strikers' petition demanding equal pay.

On Monday, these workers along with 480 council Streetforce staff are being transferred over to Amey, a private multinational that has won the 25-year £2 billion Private Finance Initiative contract to repair and maintain Sheffield's roads and street lighting.

Because of penalty clauses in the contract, the craftsmen feel confident that the threat of further strike action can force Amey to concede on pay.

It says something about Sheffield's Labour council when the strikers feel they have more chance of getting re-graded with Amey than a Labour council!

**Alistair Tice**



Workers gather on the picket line photo Alistair Tice

## Victory for One Housing workers

"You're fired!", "Welcome back after accepting £8k salary drop", "Unite accuses landlord of failing to engage!"

These headlines were typical of the extensive press coverage of an open letter to One Housing Group from the London Unite housing workers' branch.

Unite London officer Nicky Marcus commented: "One Housing talks of the importance of its social purpose but in reality they simply wish to expand by undercutting other housing associations".

Management have responded with a significant step back, lifting the threat to dismiss supported housing staff and reinstate them on worse conditions. The measure, which would mean pay cuts of up to £8,000 per year, will now be discussed at a meeting with unions in September.

Unite London officer Nicky Marcus commented: "One Housing talks of the importance of its social purpose but in reality they simply wish to expand by undercutting other housing associations". Branch chair Paul Kershaw said: "We are committed to back supported housing staff at One Housing and elsewhere in the sector."

## End seafarers' poverty wages



Workers unite to fight low pay photo Portsmouth SP

**Nick Pollard**

Banners and flags were caught in the early Saturday morning breeze at Portsmouth Ferry Port on 18 August. The chant was "low pay, no way" in the second protest outside the port.

One of the chief reasons for the protest was to end poverty pay in the maritime industry and achieve union rates of pay for all. Condor Ferries use EU directive 'Mode 4' to recruit Ukrainian workers and exploit a loophole in UK legislation to pay them as little as £2.35 an hour.

On 17 August a similar protest was held at Southampton docks to

campaign against Condor but also against the cruise liner operators who pay their crews as little as 75p per hour.

Among the speakers at the event in Portsmouth were Steve Hedley, newly elected assistant general secretary of the RMT and Mick Tosh, RMT rep and Portsmouth trades council president.

Darren Procter, branch secretary of the RMT's Southampton Shipping branch highlighted the importance of these protests and explained the need to continue to build support here and in the Ukraine.

The campaign has already picked up support from Ireland. Back in 2005, Irish Ferries workers went on

strike to defend conditions and pay and were widely supported by the local communities and wider trade union movement.

Paul Murphy Socialist Party MEP said in a message: "I salute your campaign to prevent Condor Ferries exploiting Eastern European workers. This is part of a wider attack on working people across Europe to drive down wages and working conditions."

We demand trade union rates of pay for all and will campaign to stop companies exploiting immigration loopholes.

For a publicly owned shipping industry under workers' control and management.

## In brief

### POA rejects pensions offer

Members of the prison workers' union POA have voted overwhelmingly to reject the final offer on changes to their pension scheme. The main attacks proposed are to force prison officers to work until they are 68 and to change the indexation from RPI to the generally lower measure, CPI.

On a 28.1% turnout, 88.5% voted to reject the proposals (960 for and 7,377 against).

The POA are calling on the government to engage in further discussions but "will not rule out further action".

### Churchill cleaners



photo Elaine Brunskill

Churchill cleaners working on Tyne and Wear Metro have taken further strike action against their stingy bosses who had the temerity to describe a 0% pay offer as generous! Yet the RMT point out this is a company that has doubled its profits in the past five years and has extracted nearly £7 million from the exploitation of essential cleaning staff on the most basic pay and conditions including no sick pay, no pensions and none of the travel concessions rights enjoyed by other workers.

Speaking to the striking cleaners it is clear they are absolutely determined to battle for improved terms and conditions.

RMT member William Etchells, who was sacked by Churchill cleaners on Tyne and Wear Metro because of honest criticisms he had written on a comments box on his time sheet, has won his tribunal. The court ruled he was unfairly dismissed by Churchill.

**Elaine Brunskill**

### DWP strike

Jobcentre staff who deal with calls from people entitled to benefits went on strike on 13 August over oppressive working conditions and unrealistic targets.

More than 6,000 PCS members in 32 call centres in England, Scotland and Wales were on strike.

**Reports from the picket lines are on [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)**

# Builders plan to stop 'Besna 2' at Crown House

**Rob Williams**

On 17 August at a protest outside the Crown House site in St Pancras, London, a campaign was launched by Unite and the Sparks rank and file. This was against any attempt by construction company Crown House to bring in a new version of Besna, the bosses' attempts to break the national agreement and slash wages by 35%. Suspicions have been raised ever since Crown House left the JIB in the aftermath of the historic defeat of the 'Dirty 7' big construction electrical contractors. And it appears that Crown House

are trying to force their workforce to sign new contracts, in order that the company "remains competitive", so the campaign against this is urgent.

The national rank and file meeting on 11 August drew up a balance sheet of the incredible events of the last 12 months. A year ago, the Sparks (electricians, pipe-fitters and plumbers in the construction industry) were looking down the barrel at the Besna with the union officials dragging their feet. The last couple of decades of the bosses' offensive and the apparent weakening of union organisation from the top down were all coming together - with the workers paying the price.

The bosses must have been supremely confident that the JIB terms and conditions would have been ripped up, opening the way to ever more profits. But they didn't count on a rank and file organisation mobilising ordinary sparks.

There was a marathon national campaign of protests and unofficial walkouts that pushed Unite into committing fully to this dispute. The result was an effective leverage campaign and what in the end proved decisive - a successful official strike ballot in Balfour Beatty which raised the prospect of a national stoppage, starting in the Grangemouth Oil Refinery.

This victory has undoubtedly given a boost of confidence to Sparks with unofficial stoppages around the country including the 1,600 that walked out at Ratcliffe to get safety steward Jay Poulter reinstated. But to protect their profits, the bosses are always looking to grab back what they've lost. Jay has been laid off and Crown House are trying to break the agreement through the back door.

But we have to take confidence from the victories of the last 12 months and the union now being firmly involved. One of the unofficial stoppages of the last few months actually came at the Crown House job in Heathrow. We beat the Besna

and we can win again now.

If Crown House don't back down, as soon as the union organisation is strong enough, the union should ballot for strike action. This must be backed up by national action across the industry and unofficial if necessary, mobilising rank and file construction workers.

Forcing Crown House back would send the strongest signal to any other companies planning to follow suit that not only will sparks fight again and again to defend their contracts but that all the other grievances such as agency work and blacklisting have to be dealt with. Victory to the Sparks...again!

# Zero-hour contracts mean zero rights

**Natalie Owen**

Coventry, West Midlands

I was recently interviewed by BBC Two's Newsnight after writing in the Socialist (issue 719) about zero-hour contracts and feel privileged to have spoken for the unemployed. Everyone needs to know about zero-hour contracts and how impractical they are!

Zero-hour contracts mean you have no set working hours. You have a job but won't have any idea what hours you will be doing from one week to the next. To claim working tax credits and financial help with extortionate childcare prices, you must work 16-hours or more.

I would have received no tax credits if I'd started the job I had first accepted, which had a zero-hour contract. I would have been worse off and still needed to pay for childcare, which I couldn't afford. So I had to turn the job down, which I really didn't want to do.

It seems so unfair. I thought the whole point of working is to be better off and to have a better life, not to suffer more and to face greater pressures. Why are the government punishing people for trying to better themselves? They go on about getting the unemployed back into work but contradict themselves by taking benefits away when you can't obtain

a 16-hour contract.

Large companies only care about large profits but we also need a decent wage. We need more jobs, bet-

You have a job but no idea what hours you will work from one week to the next

ter pay, better hours and job security! Zero-hour contracts need to be made illegal.

We are the people making the money for these large corporate companies - without us there would be no "them".

I recently wrote to David Cameron about my experience trying to return to work and I received a "non-letter" reply, which gave me no answers or solutions to these problems.

I don't think many people want to be on benefits. There are also other important issues that need addressing such as affordable housing, drink and drug problems linked to poverty, that there are not enough youth clubs, private landlords charging so much rent and putting it up when they want, not enough funding into health care, tuition fees... all while there are too many loop holes for wealthy tax dodgers!



**We need real jobs - not zero-hour jobs!** photo S Beishon

## Scrounger? The truth about living on the dole

**Paul**

London

Following redundancy after six years at a local authority, last summer I had to claim Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), and discover first-hand the inequities of the benefits system.

The process begins with demands for various forms of identification, including a tenancy agreement and proof of redundancy that put you at the mercy of landlords and HR departments. DWP staff now have stringent targets aimed at reducing the number of claimants. As a result, there's often an assumption that every claimant is a potential criminal or fraudster. There are constantly insinuations that you may have alternative sources of income.

Only a minority of landlords are willing to accept benefit claimants, despite that housing benefit guarantees rent paid on time. I had to challenge attempts at eviction. Almost permanently engaged Shelter



**DWP staff have stringent targets to cut claimants** photo Walthamstow SP

and Citizens Advice Bureau phone lines tell tenants 'if they want you out, you will have to move out'.

Constant and emphatic lobbying via my MP and ward councillors narrowly averted an eviction. But many people have neither the knowledge nor resources to write, email, or seek outside help.

Due to the failure of my landlord to provide a tenancy, I lived without benefits for most of the year, watching my redundancy pay disappear. Eventually my benefit started to arrive in slow dribs and drabs, with housing benefit eventually being paid just before I was due to be taken to court.

The £67.50 a week that a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant receives is impossible to live on. If you decide to eat, you won't pay any bills, or bus and tube fares, or get your hair cut, or anything else that a functioning human being needs to do.

Bills pile up, unpaid, with a likelihood of the gas and electricity being cut off. If the companies decide to install a top-up meter, you will pay higher prices to heat and light your home, and, when out of cash, stay

cold and remain in the dark.

The final indignity for me came when the post office shut down my account after I accidentally used an incorrect pin number. Unbelievably, the post office will not give you access to your benefits if this happens. This meant I faced two weeks with no money and no food.

The Jobcentre offers anyone without access to income a voucher to a food bank on a Sunday evening - even if that means waiting several days. You may receive life-saving essentials such as jam, biscuits and tinned pudding.

Publicising the plight of the unemployed, and the many different ways in which they are left vulnerable to homelessness, hunger and denial of basic rights and dignity, should be central to socialists in our opposition to cuts. I also believe that private tenants must be organised with the assistance, advice and guidance of socialists, in order to fight evictions.

We also need to counter the propaganda spread about claimants, and bridge the gap between the unemployed and employed to support each others' struggles.

## Tottenham: a year since the riots

**Jane James**

Haringey and Enfield Socialist Party

A year after the riots in London, the promised money agreed by London Mayor Boris Johnson and local government minister Eric Pickles to regenerate the riot areas has not materialised.

In Tottenham, the post office which was burned down during the riots is still an unsightly abandoned piece of land covered in rubble. The post office is now housed in what was a council rent office, while other council facilities have become overcrowded.

The local council offices on Tottenham High Road were closed down last year, but at least they covered the building in 'We love Tottenham' posters!

Many small shops have closed for good. Asda survived the riots thanks to its huge metal shutters.

The only charity shop left on High Road now has a poster in its window asking for donations! But at least the numerous betting shops on each side of the shop were doing a roaring trade.

### Carnival cancelled

The Tottenham Carnival, which brought the community together each year, has been cancelled this year.

There are still some independent shops and cafés, but they have to continually campaign to avoid be-

ing shut down to make way for more betting shops or overpriced housing developments for big companies.

The campaign to save Downhills School from being made into an academy received huge support from the community. Ironically it is Lord Harris - whose furniture shop was burnt down in the riots - who is sponsoring the unwanted academy.

We should not forget that a year later there is no closure for the family of Mark Duggan. Rioting started four days after Mark was shot and killed by police in Tottenham on 4 August 2011.

### Youth services cut

In 2011 young people in the area, alongside Youth Fight for Jobs, campaigned to save their youth services. But youth services have still not been brought back to the level they were before the cuts.

The latest statistics from the End Child Poverty campaign reports that 41% of children in Tottenham are living in poverty. The number of children whose families are on unemployment benefit is double the national average.

No doubt the Labour Party, which controls Haringey council, will dutifully push through the next tranche of cuts in the autumn, saying there is no alternative. But the Socialist Party will continue to call for no cuts and demand that Tottenham and the other areas affected by the riots must be regenerated with the participation of the community.

### Socialism Today



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# Scoffing on profits

“Please sir, may I have some more?” It’s not just Dickensian orphans who have to fight for the most basic staple - food. Billions around the world suffer from either malnourishment or obesity. Even in the ‘advanced’ capitalist countries, the profit system is incapable of providing people with a balanced diet. Iain Dalton looks at the effect of capitalism on food and socialist solutions.

## Food prices soar

The lives of 18 million people in the Sahel region of west Africa are currently threatened by poor harvests and high food prices. In 2011 the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation reported that world food prices were at the highest since tracking began in 1990. In 2010 the World Bank estimated that around one billion of the world’s seven billion population were malnourished. Every year six million children world-wide die of malnutrition before their fifth birthday. In Britain, as austerity measures combined with rising prices, a record 129,000 people used food banks in 2011 showing how an increasing number have to choose between food and heat. Food prices in the UK increased by 26% between June 2007 and 2011 according to government figures.



Roughly a third of the US is now a disaster zone

**US drought**  
One factor behind the current rocketing prices is the ongoing drought in the US. In a report sounding more like Sub-Saharan Africa than the US, the Guardian reported: “Some stalks are chin-high – but with no ears of corn. Others are as squat as pineapple fronds. Soy bean that should be spread out at knee-level barely graze the shin.” Roughly a third of the US is now officially a disaster zone. In July the National Climatic Data Centre found that 55% of the continental US was in moderate to extreme drought. Wildfires have broken out in Utah and Colorado.

The US government estimates that a third of corn and soy bean crop is in poor condition, but those on the ground suspect the devastation to be far worse. One farmer told the Guardian: “Some stuff technically is not going to be worth the combine bill to harvest it” On 23 July, corn hit a record \$8 a bushel, when in 2006 the price was \$2. This will have a knock-on effect on milk and meat prices as corn is used in most animal feeds. It’s reported that some farmers have resorted to feeding their livestock candy. Livestock is being slaughtered because US farmers can’t afford the higher costs of feeding them, horse shelters are taking in extra animals and there has been a 70% drop in sales of tractors and farm machinery in parts of the mid-west. One retailer commented: “We’ve even had guys putting the money down and letting the money go just so they can get out of their contracts.” This situation in the US follows the worst drought in Russia’s Black Sea region in 130 years which sent prices of wheat spiralling. As climate change leads to greater occurrences of extreme climate events such as droughts, tsunamis and flooding, the devastating impact on food

production will be felt. With 40% of US corn being used in ethanol production a debate is heating up on the question of biofuels. Some states have reported that ethanol and bio-diesel plants are either cutting back or shutting down production temporarily. Countless summits have shown that pro-big business politicians are incapable of taking action against the powerful energy lobbies.

**Speculation**  
There are other factors that affect food prices. As the banks went into crisis in 2007-8, a wave of speculation developed on commodity futures, including food-stuffs such as sugar and cattle - their total value increasing from under \$2 trillion in 2004 to \$9 trillion in 2007. Big institutions which buy and hold goods over long periods started investing in the commodity bubble, not only increasing prices, but also cutting off supplies – principally to developing economies. Speculators have again welcomed the latest crisis with massive bets on food prices. Their attitude to rising prices was summed up by one fund manager: “It’s like a big money tap has been turned on” (Bloomberg 23 July). But “not only do high food prices weigh heavily on the incomes of the poor, they lead to more political unrest around the world,” as the Economist recently blurted out. 2008 saw food riots in West Africa, Haiti, Morocco, Bangladesh and the Philippines. After a general strike over bread prices in the Egyptian city of Malhallah, the army was ordered to bake and distribute subsidised bread to stop further protests occurring. While Tunisia and Egypt were in the midst of revolutionary upheavals in early 2011, fuelled in part by soaring food prices, Algeria was buying up 800,000 tonnes of wheat and Indonesia 800,000 tonnes of rice - both ruling elites trying to prevent upheavals in their own countries too. Yet this option to stave off upheavals

As the Economist blurted out on 23 June: “Not only do high food prices weigh heavily on the incomes of the poor, they lead to more political unrest around the world.”



## End market madness!

Ever had people tell you that socialism can’t work? Or that planning can’t work and the only way you can run an economy is by the ‘hidden hand’ of the markets? When I worked in the Oven Fresh department of Morrisons it was very clear that they didn’t leave making a profit to chance. We had plans of production that we drew up every day of how many of each product we would make based on recent sales figures, longer term trends in the industry as well as items that were on special offer. We would have targets of what we would aim to sell that day, with the actual levels of items we produced being slightly higher in case of a surge in demand. Linked to this we had a semi-automatic ordering mechanism to replenish stock. In the afternoon each day after we had cooked most of the products, we would take a stock count and the shortfall would be delivered the following morning. But because our production was organised for profit, other things went out of the window – especially hygiene. Staff shortfalls on groceries and checkouts were made up by dragging staff away from hygiene and maintenance tasks.

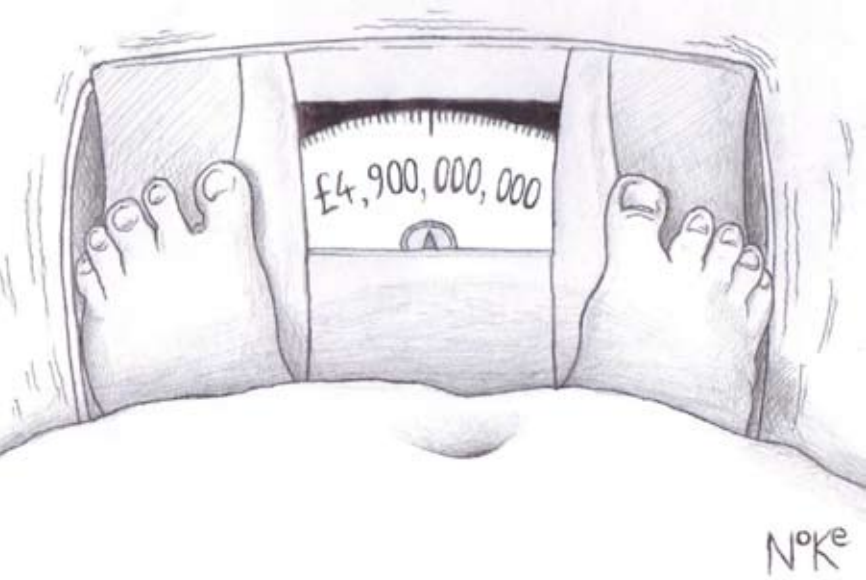
Crucially, a publicly owned and democratic food industry, with oversight committees involving nutritionists and consumers could exert control over what is put into our food, where it is sold and in what portion sizes

## Review: The Men Who Made Us Fat, BBC 4

The average weight of a person in Britain is three stone heavier than in the 1960s. Around two thirds of British adults are overweight and a quarter are obese, leading the NHS to spend £4.9 billion on dealing with obesity every year. These are that facts that Jacques Perretti starts out with in the three part documentary series ‘The Men Who Made Us Fat’. Peretti starts out in his quest to understand why these changes have taken place by posing the question - who is responsible? Is it the choices of individual people or those of governments and companies? Peretti comes down hard on the decisions of governments and corporations over the past 40 years. He starts by examining the political situation in the early 1970s US which saw big increases in food prices, and the appointment of Earl Butz as Secretary of Agriculture in 1971 to propose solutions.

Butz encouraged the widespread production of commodity crops such as corn, calling for planting from ‘fencerow to fencerow’ and for farmers to ‘get big or get out’. He also abolished government programmes designed to stop overproduction of corn and low prices. To dispose of the new surplus, Butz championed a new product – high-fructose corn syrup – to replace sucrose (table sugar) as a sweetener. This changeover was further encouraged by the imposition of sugar tariffs and quotas in 1977. When Coca-Cola switched over to using corn syrup in 1984, it was a third cheaper than sugar. Today corn syrup is in many processed products such as fizzy drinks, tomato ketchup, coleslaw and pizza toppings. Even burger baps in fast food restaurants are made with corn syrup to make them last longer. This has a knock-on effect, as fructose is easily converted into fats and also suppresses the hormone Leptin, which gives you the feeling of being full. Peretti links both these factors with the increase in body fat and obesity.

**Super-sizing**  
Peretti gives several other examples of schemes to increase profits for food and drink companies such as increasing portion sizes and introducing snack foods. Yet capitalism doesn’t deliberately seek to create unhealthy food. All goods and commodities have two types of value that matter to ordinary people – their usefulness and how much they cost. So long as big business makes their profit, what goods are used for and how good they are at it, is largely irrelevant to them. Any changes to the product they are making matters only so much as it affects the profit. But nutritionally this makes a huge difference. ‘Supersizing’ portions adds more calories, while replacing natural

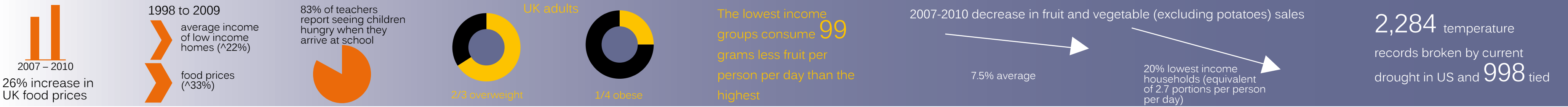


sugar with corn syrup increases fat intake massively. Yet the standard line among food and drink industry spin doctors is that everything is a question of lifestyle choices

While large food companies are run to produce huge profits for a few at the top, it will continue to be at the expense of our health

and people not doing enough exercise to balance out the calories. At one point in the documentary we see a representative of the American Beverage Association contort her face into various grimaces as she tries to claim there is no link between soda drinks and obesity. This has even been recognised by some companies. Cadbury’s ran a promotion to collect a certain number of wrappers to exchange for sports equipment - a sort of weight-gain offsetting to complement companies carbon-offsetting in relation to the environment. This was quietly dropped when it was pointed out in the media just how much chocolate you would have to consume before you were ever able to claim any equipment. Despite giving countless examples that demonstrate that the capitalist drive for maximising profit is responsible for the dominance of unhealthy

food, Jacques Perretti concludes that a handful of men are to blame and that solutions on a capitalist basis, such as taxes on unhealthy food, are what’s needed. Yet as Richard Ayre, a former board member of the Food Standards Agency, pointed out: “For the last 20 years, politicians of all parties say they are not in favour of regulation...” Capitalist corporations will resist any attempt to put limits on their profits. **Socialist alternative** While large food companies are run to produce huge profits for a few at the top, it will continue to be at the expense of our health. As the programme points out, one of the key problems for people in trying to eat healthily is that the actual contents of food products are often hidden from us. Outside the capitalist chase for profits, there are a number of ways which socialists would propose to deal with these issues. A chain of low cost, healthy, publicly owned and democratically-run restaurants could be established, as the Bolsheviks attempted to do after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Preventative approaches to deal with obesity and other diet-related conditions could be organised through the NHS, including education initiatives such as free lessons in cooking healthy, nutritious food. Crucially, a publicly owned and democratic food industry, with oversight committees involving nutritionists and consumers could exert control over what is put into our food, where it is sold and in what portion sizes.



[illegible]

# South Africa: solidarity with Marikana platinum miners!

The African National Congress (ANC) regime of president Jacob Zuma has attempted to distance itself from the massacre of miners at the Marikana platinum mine in Rustenburg, South Africa, by announcing a government commission of inquiry and declaring a 'week of mourning'. Such is the public outrage over the killings that the government, having backed UK-based mining company Lonmin in demanding an immediate resumption of operations at Marikana, has now pressured the company into lifting its threat to sack the miners. The Democratic Socialist Movement (the Socialist Party's counterpart in South Africa) has condemned the massacre and called for solidarity action at all the region's mines and a nationwide one-day general strike to launch a fightback.

## DSM reporters

**T**he government says 34 workers were shot dead, and many more injured, on 16 August following a massive police assault to crush a strike by thousands of workers at the Marikana platinum mine outside Rustenburg. This appalling figure is likely to be an underestimate.

This deadly assault is in addition to at least six mine workers who were killed in clashes earlier on in the strike which began on 10 August. Two policemen and two mine security guards were also killed in the near civil-war-like conditions.

It is clear that the Lonmin bosses, backed by the entire big business elite and its servants in the ANC government, the police and army, are hell-bent on restoring order at any cost.

The background is that thousands of workers at Lonmin, the world's third largest platinum producer, went on strike in demand of an increase from their current monthly R4,000 (£307) poverty wages to a R12,500 (£958) living wage.

The strike was initiated by workers belonging to AMCU, a break-away union from the dominant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

AMCU has benefitted from the collapse of the political authority of the NUM leadership, who are widely regarded by miners as management stooges.

The president of the NUM has also just become the president of the South African Communist Party which has called for a return to work

and the prosecution of AMCU!

The strike, which grew to involve tens of thousands of workers, was attacked not only by the infamously brutal mine security but also by the NUM, which attempted to force workers to break the strike.

This provoked mistaken retaliations such as the torching of a car which led to the death of the two security guards and the killing of two police officers. This gave the

blood, the bosses may win a battle but not the war which has been brewing on Rustenburg's platinum mines for years now.

As a result of the global economic crisis, the platinum price has fallen drastically and the bosses are des-

**"**Last Saturday (18 August) the DSM held a solidarity rally of 200 workers outside the shaft (mine) at Marikana. There we met a group of women (wives of strikers) who were protesting, demanding to be let in as there are scores of miners unaccounted for. In this area people can just disappear and you wouldn't know.

They told us that they had received a text message from miners inside the shaft saying they are being held by mine security and tortured! The mine security wouldn't allow the women into the shaft to look for their men.

We then marched with the women to the mine hospital. They were stopped outside by police who didn't want any filming. The women wanted a list of people who were in the hospital. A huge argument developed between the women and the police. At that point mine security appeared – rifles in hand. It was like taking a step back to 1994 (apartheid) South Africa."

**DSM spokesperson**

government an excuse to restore 'law and order' (and Lonmin's rapidly falling share price), through what is nothing less than an orchestrated massacre.

Lonmin withdrew from negotiations which had been agreed for 15 August stating that the matter would now be "in the hands of the police".

No longer able to rely on containing the workers through the NUM leaders, the bosses resorted to brute force. By drowning this uprising in

perate to make the workers pay. That is why they are resolved, with the backing of the entire ruling class, not to give an inch to the bold strike launched by the Lonmin workers.

The Rustenburg region is the world's largest platinum ore deposit and the recent closure of shafts has alerted its tens of thousands of workers to the urgent need to fight back. In doing so, increasing numbers are turning their backs on the NUM – once one of the proudest,

most militant trade unions in South Africa.

Now, the NUM – through backdoor deals with the bosses, investment companies and an alliance with the capitalist ANC government – is so discredited that its leaders only dare to address workers protected by guns, bodyguards and police armoured vehicles.

Seeking a way forward, many workers have joined AMCU, and with the NUM, backed by management, defending its turf, a tense stalemate has been established this year.

The DSM is calling on workers in both unions to demand united solidarity action, beginning with a local general strike, involving all the platinum shafts and the bitterly poor local working class communities.

We also call for a national general strike to end the shooting of striking workers, and for a campaign of rolling mass action for the nationalisation of the mines under workers' control and management.

We appeal internationally for protests to be sent to the Lonmin head office in London and to South African missions in your countries, and to picket South African embassies and consulates where possible.

Please send copies of all protests to the Democratic Socialist Movement: dsmcwi@gmail.com

**For updates and more analysis see socialistworld.net**

## The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

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

## www.socialistworld.net

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

## Egypt: Mursi replaces generals and strengthens his powers

Wave of strikes and occupations as workers fight for real gains.

David Johnson, Socialist Party (CWI, England and Wales)

## Australia: Offshore processing no solution for refugees

Labour government joins with Liberal/National opposition to restart offshore processing of refugees.

Chris Dite, Socialist Party (CWI Australia)



## UN: Arms trade treaty negotiations expose hypocrisy of industry

After a month of negotiations the US, Russia and China pull plug on any agreement.

Joe Higgins, Socialist Party TD (CWI Ireland)

## Draconian sentences for Pussy Riot protest will backfire on Putin

The two-year prison sentences for 'hooliganism' handed down to three members of Pussy Riot in Russia has triggered a storm of international protests and underlined the dictatorial regime of president Vladimir Putin. Rob Jones in Moscow reports.

It would have been difficult to predict a year ago that a group of "third generation feminist punk rockers" calling themselves Pussy Riot and dressed in brightly coloured balaclavas and woolly stockings would not only become a symbol of the rapidly growing opposition to Putin but also the subject of his vindictive wrath.

Three members of the group were arrested in February following a performance of their explicitly anti-Putin, anti-church hierarchy "punk-prayer" on the altar of Moscow's main orthodox cathedral.

Their performance enraged the ruling elite who demanded firm action against these women.

The Cathedral itself symbolises all that is rotten about the new capitalist Russia – built in the mid-1990s, it

has been surrounded by corruption scandals. Today, only 7% of the cathedral is used for religious services, the rest is home to various commercial activities.

But this is of little concern to the Russian Orthodox church. According to the church's lawyer, Pussy Riot represents some form of "higher power, trying to destroy the Russian Orthodox church. These are the same forces behind the 11 September terrorist actions in the USA – Satan!"

Vsevolod Chaplin, the official spokesman of the Church, is known for his reactionary and violent beliefs. He believes it is the moral duty of any Christian to kill as many Bolsheviks as possible.

It is not surprising that the church is often seen side by side with fascists in protests against abortion rights and against rights for women and the LGBT community.

Not one of the official parliamentary parties has spoken out against this vicious campaign against Pussy Riot. At the start of the trial, Genady Zyuganov, leader of Russia's so called Communist Party, issued

a press statement which "firmly rejected this latest anti-orthodox provocation".

The three members of Pussy riot were denied a fair trial. The judge made comments against them, the prosecution submitted another 200 pages of evidence without giving their lawyers time to read it. Witnesses wanting to speak in support of the group were rejected by the judge.

The case against Pussy Riot however is not an isolated case. It comes against a wave of other arrests associated with the growing protest movement.

However, the regime is finding itself backed into a corner over these arrests and which have led to huge international protests. But far more worrying for the regime is that the whole population is beginning to rapidly change its outlook. Initially, the vast majority of Russian society, hearing the outright condemnation from all official quarters, supported the government's actions against the group. The latest opinion poll, however show that a majority of Muscovites already think that the

regime has gone too far.

This is in line with other polls that show that up to 20% of Russians (that's about 30 million people) are prepared to actively protest against the government.

The CWI in Russia calls for the immediate release of Pussy Riot and all those arrested around the recent opposition protests and for all charges to be dropped. There should be genuine freedom of speech and the immediate separation of the Russian orthodox church from the state at all levels.

The Putin regime should go, with the convening of a democratic constituent assembly made up of representatives from the workplaces, educational institutes and residential areas to decide what forms of government are best for Russia.

There should be established a mass workers' party with a socialist programme prepared to fight for political power and establish a new, socialist society free from capitalism and the bureaucrats and priests who serve its interests.

**Read this article in full on socialistworld.net**

# WikiLeaks and Assange

## No extradition to the USA

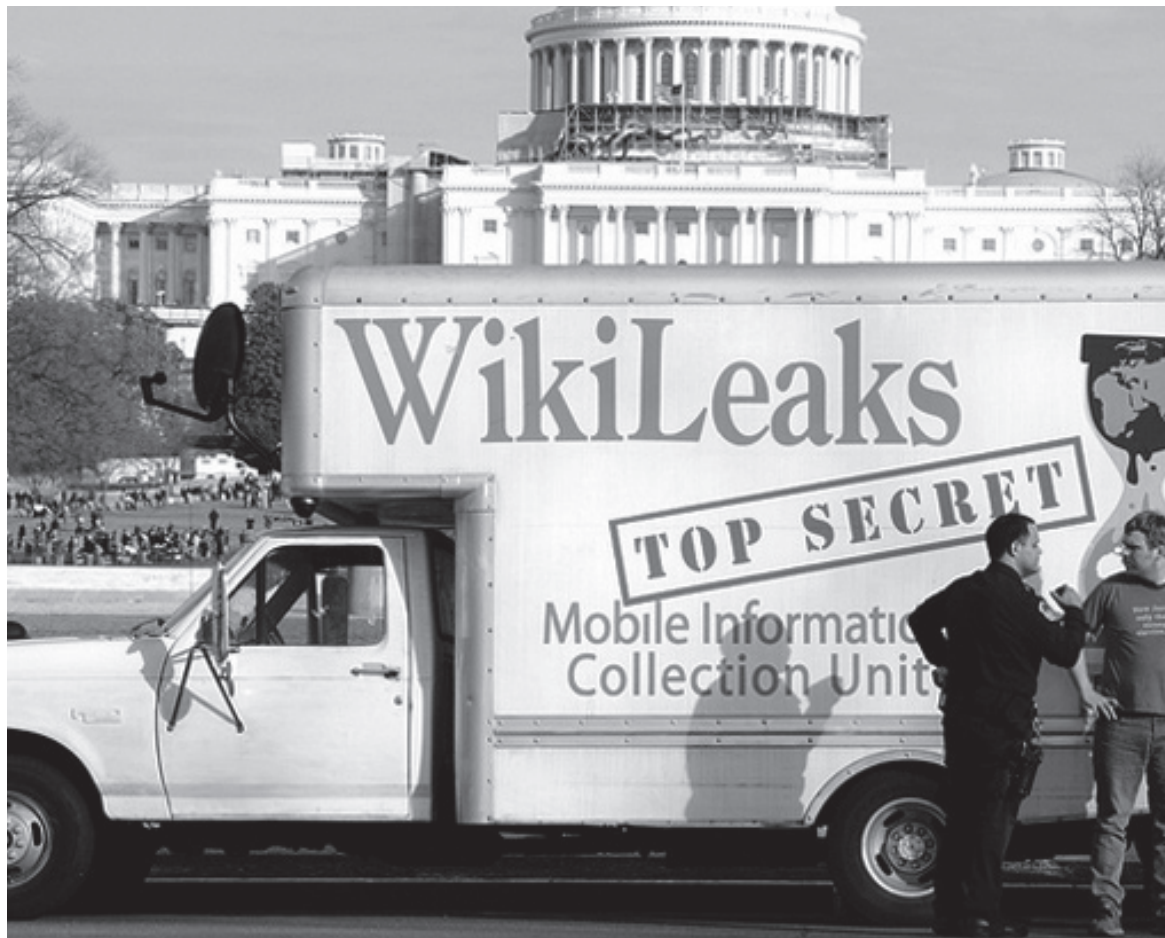
The political furore over the attempt by the British government to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to Sweden over allegations of sexual offences was ratcheted up after UK foreign secretary William Hague threatened to revoke the diplomatic status of Ecuador's embassy in London.

Assange had entered the Ecuadorian embassy in London in late June claiming political asylum. His fear is that the Swedish authorities will extradite him to the USA to face

charges relating to WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of confidential US government documents, which exposed the duplicitous role of western imperialism.

Assange's asylum request has been granted by Ecuador's populist president Rafael Correa.

This is an edited version of the article by Wjard van Leeuwen, Socialist Party (CWI in Australia), posted on the CWI website, [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)



WikiLeaks has lifted the lid on a rotten system

Sweden has never refused an extradition request by the US and is expected to help facilitate the process. The Swedish allegations were made in 2010 soon after WikiLeaks began publishing huge amounts of classified documents.

However, in a society where crimes against women are often ignored and trivialised such allegations cannot be dismissed and should be properly investigated. This is more important than ever in the context of, for example, US Republican senate candidate Todd Akin's reference to "legitimate rape". It is important for socialists to reject any idea that some rape does not need to be taken seriously.

Assange, however, should have the right to defend himself without

the fear of political persecution or extradition to the US. There is little doubt that Assange stands no chance of receiving a fair trial if he is taken to the US.

### Revenge

This is not only because of the fundamentally undemocratic laws that would be used against him, but also because of the baying for Assange's blood by right-wing politicians and the media. The severe treatment of whistleblower-soldier Breanna Manning (formerly known as Bradley) is a taste of what Assange could expect.

Assange and WikiLeaks more generally are being persecuted because WikiLeaks exposed many important

facts about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the corporate domination of politics and the secretive, anti-democratic nature of capitalist governments. Many of the leaks reveal the double standards and blatant lies of world leaders.

The controversy over Assange's situation has pushed to one side the content of the leaks themselves. WikiLeaks has lifted the lid on a rotten system. Alongside defending that organisation, the task now is to use this information to build a mass movement that is capable of effecting social change.

Only by replacing capitalism with a democratic socialist society can we really guarantee full freedom of speech, accountability, openness and an end to imperialist wars.

## Tommy Walker - tribute to a working class fighter

Andy Bentley

Tommy Walker, who has died aged 91, was a working class hero. This Communist Party member inspired many trade union activists in Stoke-on-Trent and beyond.

My father and Tommy were both joiners and worked together on many jobs. Tommy fought like a lion for building workers on the sites.

At Seddons in the 1960s Tommy was a thorn in management's side. Seddons was like something out of the Ragged Trouser Philanthropists - the boss's son, John Seddon, was called 'Master John'!

They wanted to get rid of Tommy by sending him to some remote site. The foreman told Tommy: "I have a message from Master John. He wants you to go to another job". Tommy replied, "Tell Master John that Master Tom says his request is refused!"

### Inspiration

Tommy talked about the need to organise building workers to fight the bosses and that this fight would not stop until the working class had achieved socialism. Tommy was blacklisted but became a regional organiser for Ucat union.

I started work in the building trade in 1972 and marched alongside Tommy in strike action against the 'lump' (casual cash-in-hand labour -Eds) and in defence of the victimised Shrewsbury pickets, in the great miners' strike of 1984/5 and against the poll tax.

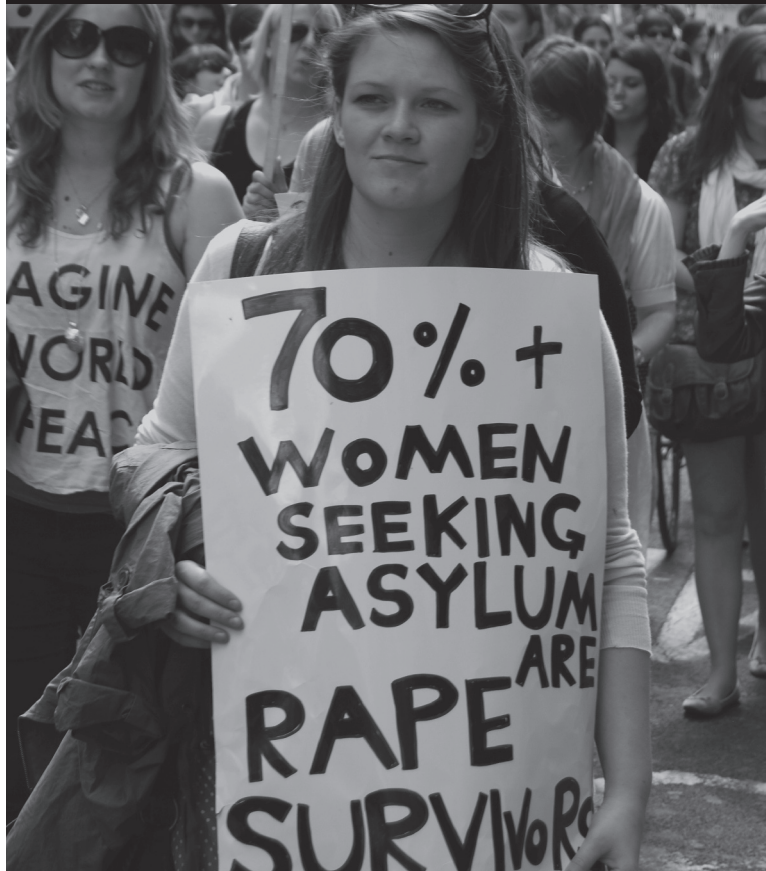
During the miners' strike I joined the Militant. Despite some political differences I visited Tommy regularly to sell him the Militant newspaper.

Tommy and my dad introduced me to the class struggle and which side I was on.

Tommy was an inspiration for the battles to come.

## Shafilia Ahmed murder

### A question of women's rights



Campaigners on the London slutwalk 2011 photo Sarah Wrack

Cathy Meadows

The horrific murder of Shafilia Ahmed by her parents will no doubt be exploited by the far right and used by the government to further their attacks on minority groups.

The right wing press focused on a young Asian woman caught between two cultures; a Times editorial saying that Shafilia's murder was "the result of a collision of cultures".

The failure of agencies to support Shafilia, the Times suggests, was a fear of "trampling on religious and cultural sensitivities" and the Daily Express puts it down to "the destructive and divisive creed of multiculturalism".

In fact this case is about women's rights and violence against women. When a woman's behaviour is seen to represent the status or self-respect of an individual man, a family, a community or a country; this is sexism. It happens in all cultures.

### Stereotypes

In Western popular culture there are many songs, plays, and films where women are mistreated or killed for "humiliating" their partner. How many of us have sung along to the words, "I love you Delilah, I just couldn't take any more" about a man who kills his lover who has been unfaithful? In 2012 the Court of Appeal allowed that infidelity could be used as part of a defence of "loss of control" in a case where a man murdered his partner.

Equally stereotypes about women mean that we don't get taken seriously, don't get believed, get sent back into a violent situation - even, as also happened to Shafilia, questioned in sight of an abuser.

In Shafilia's case, stereotypes about young Asian women will have also influenced the response of agencies. Identifying what happened as sexism does not make Shafilia's murder any less terrible, but it should inform future responses to such cases.

Shafilia's mother's role in her murder may seem inexplicable but women do internalise sexist atti-

tudes and, in hierarchical and sexist set ups, some will ally themselves with the person (man) in power.

But many women and men are prepared to fight for women's rights, often risking being ostracised by their families, or even their lives. Shafilia's sister, Alesha is one such woman and her bravery and commitment to women's rights is an inspiration to us all.

Last year there were 31% cuts in local authority funding to the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector which led to closures of refuges and support services including the closure of two specialist refuges for minority women and cuts to two more. Cuts in the last year to police and court services impacted Domestic Abuse Officers and female genital mutilation and domestic violence courts, says a Lancaster University report.

Further cuts can be expected this year and the charities Refuge and Women's Aid say that women's refuges will close down as a result of planned changes to housing benefit under the Universal Credit proposals.

This is then compounded by the major housing crisis. If domestic violence services were being fully funded, resourced and developed and decent council housing available would Shafilia still be alive today?

### Clear message

Trade unions need to lead a campaign to demand full funding and reopening of all services which support women and children experiencing or fleeing from violence and abuse, including the many developing specialist services for minority women and young women. They should also campaign against legislation which puts women who are immigrants particularly at risk.

Just to focus on support services without fighting to end violence against women however is not enough. Any campaign also needs to send out a clear message which condemns violence against women and challenges the myths which are used to justify it.

## The Olympics

# Sport for all, or just for the elite?

Shelley Lawson

The Olympics were enthusiastically enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people. But estimates are that a medal won by Team GB at the London 2012 Games cost an average of just over £4.5 million from government and lottery funding through UK Sport.

Many people will be asking if such funding is a waste, especially when the basic living standards of ordinary people are being slashed from all angles.

Total UK Sport funding for the London 2012 Olympics was £264 million, up from £235 million spent for the Beijing games. Since 2008, a total of around £100 million a year has been invested in 1,200 athletes across 47 different sports in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

37% of Team GB medallists were privately educated, although private schools educate just 7% of the population. This reveals serious problems in how sport is funded and organised, who controls the funds and what the sports organisations seek to achieve.

Previously the Sports Council, with the motto 'Sport for All', directed and governed sport in the UK. In 1994 the then Tory government replaced it with UK Sport to concentrate sports funding on fewer sports – those in which the UK succeeded.

The Sports Council concentrated

on around 110 sports and employed around 470 staff. UK Sport concentrates on around 30 sports and now employs around 90 people.

The idea behind this change came from Olympics chief Seb Coe who saw financial support to elite sport as the overriding priority, putting local authorities in charge of mass participation in sport.

But over many years of both Tory and Labour attacks to public services, funding for helping mass participation in sport has often been one of the first victims of local authority cuts.

## Elite v grassroots

So currently elite sport is funded instead of the grassroots sports which aim to increase mass participation in different sports.

This has excluded the majority of working class people from ever getting the opportunity to try out a lot of sports.

For decades the ruling class has attempted to block working class people from sport. The famous 'mechanics exclusion clause' was adopted by many early amateur sports bodies in the 19th century, such as rowing and even athletics, in order to keep out the early successful professional working class athletes.

This excluded not only those who made a simple living from the sport but also anyone "who is or has been by trade or employment for wages

a mechanic, artisan or labourer." Later these sports, predominately Olympic sports, allowed workers to take part but banned 'professionals'. This restricted the sport to those who could afford not to work every day or at least put those workers who did take part at an extreme disadvantage.

Despite this, many workers throughout the 20th century continued to pursue their chosen sport to the highest level. This often involved training multiple hours a day around full-time manual work. Today, low wages and long working hours are still an insuperable barrier to many aspiring athletes.

While cricket allowed amateurs and professionals to play together, it wasn't until 1962 that the distinction between amateurs (aka the Gentlemen) and professionals (aka the Players) was ended.

A socialist society would see a complete change in how sport is organised and run. All sports and facilities would be opened to be used and enjoyed by everyone and organised democratically by fans, athletes, coaches and local people.

It could be based around workplaces, communities, schools and local clubs as part of a nationally planned set-up sharing expertise and facilities.

This would allow everyone to play and take part to whichever standard they wish - to keep fit or to be a full-time athlete.



**Up to 150 angry protestors took part in a loud and vibrant demonstration against plans to close the Aston Arena in Birmingham, the only leisure centre in the area. The plans were started by the previous Tory council, and are being continued by the Labour administration. Is this what the Olympic legacy looks like? Closing down facilities in the poorest areas robbing people of the chance to take part in sport and other activities?**

**The council say they are developing the area to create over 1,500 jobs - but they have not raised any possibility of alternative sites within Aston for a new sports facility to be built. This is very similar to the situation in Coventry, where the Labour council are closing Foleshill Leisure Centre, in one of the most deprived areas of the city. photo PD Hart**

# The Paralympics and Atos

Mark Wright

Disabled people should be able to enjoy sport too. I've watched closely the news and reports and reaction to the Olympic Games over the last few weeks but now attention turns to the Paralympics.

I'm registered blind myself and attend a gym once a week. I'd love to go more often and engage in a lot more sports but the costs are astronomical. To be fair British Blind Sport do a good bit in promoting blind people taking part in sport. I am really pleased to hear my old college the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford will be hosting the blind football during the Paralympics.

This is all very well but for many disabled people the chance to take part in sports on a regular basis or to simply exercise to some extent is becoming increasingly difficult with less and less funding from local government and central government alike.

Disgracefully private vultures Atos are one of the Olympic and Paralympics Games' main sponsors. Only a government happy to make disabled people pay the price for the failures of the capitalist system can think having a sponsor such as Atos is ok.

This company makes big profits out of removing disabled people from benefits through the hated work capability assessment and finding them 'fit for work'. Having this company as one of the main

sponsors is sick in my opinion. It rubs the noses of people who have been on the raw end of Atos and their techniques in it.

Only the other week on BBC Panorama, the rigid rules to which Atos work were exposed. They apply a system which is designed against disabled people and which leads to tremendous stress on the person being assessed.

Constant assessment and appeals only makes people's worries and lives worse - not knowing if they'll be able to keep their benefits to live on or not. In one horrific case one man with a heart condition who struggled to breathe was unbelievably found fit for work by Atos. Several weeks later he sadly died of heart failure.

## Atos' methods feared by disabled people

Atos are a private company who the government have brought in to assess people who can't work because of illness or disability.

They have just won another £400 million contract to privatise Disability Living Allowance assessments which are currently carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Atos test 11,000 sick and disabled people every week, then decide whether they're "fit for work". The tests are deeply flawed, driven by targets and designed to push people off benefits in an effort to slash billions from welfare spending.

There have been 600,000 appeals since the tests started, costing £60 million; 40% are successful, rising to over 70% when people have proper representation.

Disabled People Against Cuts are holding five days of action against



**On a DPAC protest in January this year photo the Socialist**

Atos nationally. On 28 August they are organising protests outside the assessment centres. For more details see [dpac.uk.net](http://dpac.uk.net)

\* Kick ATOS and other private

companies out of the DWP. Redeploy their staff into the public sector

\* Reverse cuts to disability benefits as part of a campaign against ALL cuts

## the Socialist Olympic postbag

### Opening ceremony review

I must applaud Sarah Wrack's review of the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games (socialist 729), I really enjoyed reading it.



Watching the ceremony reminded me of a fast forwarded musical version of the People's Century, not a 'socialist programme' but never the less a celebration of the endeavours of ordinary people.

Yes, quite rightly we attack and condemn the commercialism and contradictions that capitalism brings to all sport, and yes we can and do point to how sport freed from these constraints would allow, encourage and create more athletes/sports women and men to compete and achieve even greater goals under socialism.

I for one haven't been duped into becoming a flag-waving jingoistic nationalist and I'm sure the overwhelming majority of viewers haven't either. Neither have we forgotten the crisis that world capitalism has dumped us in, and the struggles that lie ahead. But yes I did cheer on the athletes I watched during the games including many of the 'Team GB' ones!

Who can fail to be impressed by events like Jessica Ennis's dogged determination in the heptathlon or Mo Farrah's double gold in the 5,000 and 10,000

metre races, and the deafening reaction of the crowd? Or marvel at David Rudisha and his race from the front against the clock to set a world record in the 800 metres? Or the sheer drama and expectation surrounding the Usain Bolt triple?

Each of which were inspiring examples among many others, that showcased the athleticism and determination of human beings, striving to achieve their full potential.

**Mick Cotter Hackney**

### Elephant in the room

Overall, London 2012 was a wonderful Olympic Games. Loads of sporting memories, a great performance by Team GB with the unfair ticketing system the main negative.

The 'elephant in the room' however, will be the question of "legacy", especially for the host boroughs (some of Britain's poorest areas).



The media will try to use the 'feel good' factor for years to make people forget the lack of jobs, growing inequality, smashing up of the NHS etc, but it doesn't change the underlying social and economic conditions in Austerity Britain.

**Bill Gordon Waltham Forest**

# Fare rises and rail cuts: KICK THE FAT CATS OFF OUR RAILWAYS!

Privatised railways don't work. Britain's rail fares – already up to ten times more than those in Italy where the service is state owned – are being increased by between 6% and 11% in January. The First Group's successful bid for the West Coast Main Line franchise has been predicted to result in cuts and increased fares. The government-supported McNulty report aims to cut £1 billion a year in railway spending – while Network Rail bosses enjoy £18.5 million in bonuses. Virgin boss Richard Branson has 'earned' £204 million from rail since privatisation – no wonder he's bitter about losing the West Coast contract! RMT leaders Bob Crow and Steve Hedley spoke to the Socialist about why the railways should be renationalised.

“**A** nationalised industry would benefit people who work on the railway; it would give them decent terms and conditions, decent pay and a decent pension.

It would be far more efficient for the travelling public. Studies have shown that British Rail – for all its faults – was far more reliable.

British Rail was deliberately starved of investment before privatisation.

Taxpayers would benefit from renationalisation because they're funding these private companies through massive subsidies from the government that go straight into the pockets of the executives.

The McNulty report – the pretext for the government to wield a big axe on the railways – itself acknowledged the cost of the private companies is between three and four times as much as it was with British Rail.

First Group won the West Coast Main Line contract by putting in a bid higher than Richard Branson for



photos Bob Severn

We need coordinated ballots across every company – it's the only way that we can defeat the implementation of the McNulty recommendations. If we do it company by company, we'll be picked off one by one – the government will fund the companies for the losses on strike days.

The workers in those companies, if they're all fighting together and realise the strength that they have in a national industry, will be far more keen to fight if they see a strategy that's likely to bring them victory.”

**Steve Hedley, RMT transport union assistant general secretary elect**

**Steve Hedley stood for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the 2012 London Assembly elections. TUSC stands against all cuts and for rail renationalisation. Come to the TUSC 2012 conference – see page 8**

Virgin, who himself is a very aggressive capitalist. But even Branson said that the only way First can operate on that bid is to cut staff and cut the service to the public. That's what's going to happen right across the railway – high bids to the government paid for by cuts.

“**F**rom fare rises to franchises, the exploitation and greed of the private train operators and their supporters at the heart of government has been kicked right to the centre of the stage.

The case for renationalisation is now both overwhelming and endorsed by a massive majority of the British people. Labour politicians who whinge about the attacks on the travelling public by the train operators while failing to come out in favour of the public alternative just

expose themselves as bound up with the old Blairite agenda. It's down to us in the unions to force the political pace on the renationalisation campaign on this surging tide of public anger.”

**Bob Crow, RMT transport union general secretary**



**Bob Crow is one of the speakers at the National Shop Stewards Network lobby of the TUC for a 24-hour general strike – see page 2**

## 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!