



WE CAN BEAT CON-DEMS' AUSTERITY: **MARCH** 20 October TUC demo **STRIKE** 24-hour general strike

John McNally, the national vice-president of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) spoke in favour of the resolution calling for general strike action against austerity at the recent TUC Congress. The motion was moved by Steve Gillan, general secretary of the POA prison officers' union, seconded by Bob Crow, leader of the RMT transport union and received overwhelming support. This is John's speech:

"The motion calls for co-ordinated action and 'far-reaching' campaigns, including considering the practicalities of a general strike against the government's austerity programme.

Austerity is a sanitised expression for what is an unremitting class war on our people.

The aim is to achieve, on the basis of the cuts and privatisation programme, the biggest transfer of wealth and power in many generations.

At its core is a 'race to the bottom' that is ripping the heart out of our communities.

It means the driving down of wage levels, massive job cuts, the destruction of the welfare state and the NHS and the public services that provide the basis of a civilised existence for working people.

This unprecedented assault can only proceed because of the poisonous political consensus that exists among the major parties – shamefully including Labour – that says there is no alternative to the market and the barbaric proposition that the acquisition of obscene wealth and profit by a tiny unaccountable elite comes before the needs of millions.

Those millions are crying out for an alternative.

They watch in fear and disgust as one outrage follows another:

*The Libor fixing rate affecting

millions of workers

*Banks laundering drug money

*Government-instigated hate campaigns against the disabled and unemployed

30 November [public sector strike] demonstrated the massive strength and potential of our movement.

But rather than building on that tremendous display of class solidarity the abject surrender [by right-wing trade union leaders] that followed sent out a message of division, despair and defeatism.

We now have an opportunity to send out a message of hope – loud and clear – that we intend to harness the full strength of our movement and class to stop the austerity programme in its tracks.

The 20 October [TUC demonstration] must be more than another protest march – it must be the platform on which we build coordinated action on the widest possible front across both the public and private sector.

Every union here has a legitimate dispute on pay, pensions, jobs, privatisation or a related issue.

So, let's hear no nonsense about the difficulties or legalities of organising coordinated action.

Let's not fixate about the 'scary words, general strike.

Let us rather sit down together and agree a date for joint action and wider campaigning across the trade union movement as soon as practi-

cally possible after 20 October.


A 24-hour strike as a start to an effective programme of coordinated industrial action and wider campaigning would irrevocably shift the balance of forces in our favour.

How many times must it be said – campaigning works and action gets results.

We have recently won thousands of jobs in the civil service by organising action.

The attacks are increasing, not abating. Millions are waiting for a lead to fight back. Let's provide that lead."

See also page 2

**nationalshop
stewardsnetwork**

For more information on how to build for the demo, and campaign for a 24-hour general strike see www.shopstewards.net or email the National Shop Stewards Network: info@shopstewards.net



On the 28 March teachers' strike photo Senan

the **Socialist**

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what we think

All forces to the point of attack against austerity

Arage is building up. How can it be any other way? Every aspect of our lives is under threat – and the people attacking us, the pro-big business politicians, the bosses and the right-wing media, are sitting pretty. We suffer. They get richer.

That anger is bursting out. Faced with cuts to the services and benefits that disabled people rely on, 80,000 people at the Paralympics booed Tory Chancellor George Osborne. This week the booing continued when Thatcher's name was mentioned at a vigil for the 96 killed at Hillsborough. Expressing the mood YouTube footage shows Liverpool fans singing "there's going to be a party when Maggie Thatcher dies".

The Con-Dems should be warned. Among the first expressions of anger in Greece, which has seen a colossal mass movement of the working class against austerity, with generalised strike action at its heart, was jeering and booing of pro-cuts politicians. Since then a prime minister was removed and a government brought down – with the current coalition also on course for collapse.

But the Con-Dems, attempting to hide their own division, plan to carry on making the remaining 85% of their planned cuts. No doubt serious opposition is needed.

But the 'official' opposition is far from providing this. The latest poll from YouGov puts Labour 12 points ahead; hardly surprising given the hatred for the government. In fact the latest British Social Attitude Survey puts trust in politicians in general at only 9%.

Actually Labour has already suffered a

'booing' of its own – as well as Labour leader Ed Miliband having a personal approval rating lower than Cameron's! Asked at the TUC what a Labour government would do about the pay freeze on public sector workers Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls explained that Labour supported the freeze. That did not go down well. Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS, has previously pointed to the scandal of workers in benefit offices being forced by low pay to claim the very benefits they dispense.

An RMT delegate then asked if Labour would repeal the anti-trade union laws. No. Labour will not be helping or supporting the mass fightback necessary to end austerity.

Even when the government's policies appear to be crumbling, a la the Universal Credit, the most Labour can muster is a demand for this pauperising measure to be delayed by a year.

Behind Labour's poll lead a growing number of people are questioning its usefulness as a defence against cuts and are starting to look for an alternative.

During a debate on austerity at the TUC an RMT member pointed out that fighting cuts also had to be aimed at Labour councils who have pushed through every cut suggested by the Con-Dems. He explained that his union backs the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), an electoral alliance that stands anti-cuts candidates.

The potential for this coalition to be a reference point for the struggle was illustrated when motion 5, the prison officer union's general strike motion, was moved and seconded by members of the TUSC steering committee,

POA general secretary Steve Gillan and RMT general secretary Bob Crow. First into the debate was a third member of that committee (see page 1 for John McNally's speech).

It was no coincidence that Steve and Bob were also on the platform of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) rally on the first day of the Congress. That rally was part of a lobby building pressure for a 24-hour general strike.

Mood for action growing

The overwhelming support at the Congress for that motion reflects the pressure from ordinary members and activists who want to, and need to, see a powerful fightback. Inspired and then frustrated by the experience of the 30 November public sector strike and subsequent sell-out by right-wing trade union leaders, the mood for generalised action is growing.

Writing in the Independent, commentator Laurie Penny correctly warns: "If the left isn't taking the possibility of a general strike seriously, though, the government certainly is. Plans have been revealed to draft in the army to fill in the gaps left by a possible 6.5 million public sector and service workers, as well as unguessable numbers of wildcat and solidarity strikers in other industries."

Her description of what is possible is in line with what the Socialist proposes: coordinating action between public sector unions – pay is an obvious common issue – and calling on all groups of workers with live disputes to link up their actions. But also appealing to every other

section of the 99% suffering cuts to support.

The 20 October TUC demo will provide a fantastic opportunity to show the support there is for the TUC to coordinate this action – and if they don't for the left trade unions to do it. The Socialist calls on all our readers to assist in this campaign. Below is a letter produced by the NSSN.

A motion based on this letter should be moved in every trade union branch, in every trade union meeting, and at meetings of trades councils, tenants associations, student groups, anti-cuts campaigns and every other body we can reach. It should be discussed with neighbours, families and friends. It should be tweeted, Facebooked and blogged about. A petition is available for gathering names in support. See NSSN website for campaign material.

We're in the fight of our lives. The demand must be that the TUC makes it a matter of urgency to meet, discuss and set the date for a 24-hour general strike as soon as possible after a magnificent show of strength on 20 October. As we go to press Rob Williams, national chair of the NSSN, is meeting with the TUC leadership to say this. Reports next week and online.

A one-day strike must be the first step in a determined strategy against austerity, but it could have a transformative effect on 'social attitudes'. Working class people will get a glimpse of their potential power and strength as the most significant social force in society and of how the government can be forced out.

See p8 for TUSC conference details

CAMPAIGNING FOR A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE - WITH THE SOCIALIST

The Socialist is planning to increase its number of pages for a limited time to allow space to print reports of this campaign to show the support for action. That will require funds. Can you raise financial support in exchange for reports/articles from your area? Send reports: editors@socialistparty.org.uk



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To trade union and anti-cuts organisations,

The National Shop Stewards Network welcomes the overwhelming vote at this year's TUC Congress in support of the POA motion. It called for the unions to take "coordinated action where possible with far-reaching campaigns including the consideration and practicalities of a general strike."

We are proud of our relationship with the POA, RMT and the PCS, who officially support the NSSN. They were prominent in this historic debate. The calling of a general strike could give hope to millions of workers and working class people in general, that this government's austerity offensive can be met with fierce resistance from the trade union movement.

Before the start of Congress, the NSSN organised a lobby of the TUC, when up to 1,000 union members support the POA motion.

We now firmly believe that this vote can change the character of the TUC's 20 October demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Belfast. Along with the rest of the union movement, the NSSN will strive to help build a turnout that even eclipses the massive demonstration on 26 March 2011.

We will do all we can to get a million people on the streets. But we believe that if the marches are used as a platform to popularise the idea of a 24-hour general strike, we can send a real message of intent to the Con-Dems that, if they continue with these brutal cuts, they will be met with the full force of the organised working class, still the most powerful force in society.

We therefore, call on the TUC General Council to discuss how this motion can be put into practice and to name the day for a 24-hour general strike.

We hope there will be debate and discussion throughout the movement about the next steps to fight austerity. The NSSN is happy to provide speakers to any regular or special meeting called by your organisation, to explain why we think a 24-hour general strike is necessary as the next stage of resistance.

Please contact us through the above email address or this mobile phone number - 07816134690. The NSSN is also organising a series of regional meetings and conferences over the next few months, details can be found on our website.

In solidarity,

Linda Taaffe – NSSN national secretary
Rob Williams – NSSN national chair

Southampton: Save Oaklands Pool
"This is what we pay our council tax for!"

Nick Chaffey

On 12 September Southampton rebel councillors Don Thomas and Keith Morrell, trade union members from Unison and Unite, Oaklands Pool campaigners and Socialist Party members gathered in solidarity to oppose cuts being made by the newly elected Labour council.

They were joined by campaigners supporting Jim and Lorayne Emery who are facing eviction from their tied house following Jim being made redundant from the council after 42 years' service.

Campaigners from Oaklands Pool included members of Oaklands Team and Recreational Sports. They are a disabled users group who have used the pool since 2005.

Support workers explained that they have tried all the other local pools to find room for their club without success so have nowhere to go.

Wayne, a group user, said: "I feel disgusted at what the council are doing."

"After the year of the Olympics and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, closing the pool is against everything the public wants."

Speaking to protesters, Councillor

Don Thomas said: "The campaign to keep the pool open will continue to the day it is re-opened."

Despite seeking consultation, the Labour council refused to hear a deputation of pool users for "technical reasons".

The council agenda was then organised to discuss Oaklands Pool six and half hours into the meeting to ensure no protesters remained in the public gallery.

Some of us stayed to hear

Councillor Keith Morrell berate the Labour group: "Shame on this council for betraying the people it was supposed to represent." Labour Councillor Keogh suggested users should "take a bus" elsewhere!

Councillors say they cannot afford the £250,000 'subsidy' to keep the pool open. But this is what we pay our council tax for! Rather than cut our services, Labour should fight the government for the money to run the services the city needs.

While £750 billion sits in the vaults of big business there is not a single justification for a single cut.

Don and Keith have been rewarded for standing firm to the election promises of the Labour Party with suspension from the Labour group for four months.

The debate on the council budget revealed the unravelling of Labour's election promises.

Southampton Socialist Party has given full support to Keith and Don and to the Oaklands campaign. Over 1,000 signatures that we collected were handed in to the council.

On Thursday 20 September, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is holding a public meeting on 'How councils can fight cuts'. Labour group leader Richard Williams has been invited to speak as well as local Unite and Unison officers, with Clive Heemskerk speaking for TUSC.

It is essential we build on the stand taken by Keith, Don, the unions and the community to develop an alternative to the cuts that can protect jobs and services and meet the needs of Southampton.

See www.socialistparty.org.uk for full report



NHS: Condition critical

Fightback needed to save public health service



Marching through Woolwich against PFI cuts photo R Shrivs

On Saturday 15 September some 3,000 protesters marched, with rallies en route, to converge on Ealing Common, west London, in their campaign to save the A&Es at four local hospitals.

On the same day around 200 marched from Harlesden to Central Middlesex Hospital to oppose north west London NHS' plans for closing the A&E department at Central Middlesex and a number of other hospitals in the area.

And in Woolwich, south London, 150 demonstrators marched against threatened cuts to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - part of the South London Health Trust which has gone into administration after being bankrupted by exorbitant private finance initiative (PFI) charges.

'On the brink of collapse'

As the government-led health cuts go deeper and as privatisation measures expand, a new report by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) has warned that the National Health Service is "on the brink of collapse".

With up to £30 billion of cuts being implemented over the next few years the report - Hospitals on the Edge - shows that the number of NHS beds has decreased by over 30% in the past 25 years, despite a 37% increase in emergency admissions.

This widening gap between di-

minishing resources and demand for services, which began under previous governments, is accelerating under the Con-Dems.

And yet health authorities continue to push the government line of closing Accident and Emergency departments, merging hospitals and substituting 'urgent care' walk-in centres for acute services.

The RCP's damning report into shrinking NHS resources comes only months after the passage of the almost universally criticised Health and Social Care Act - a piece of legislation designed to drive the

final nail into the coffin of the NHS in England with its widespread privatisation measures. Measures, incidentally, which the Labour party had embarked upon in office.

However, it is still possible to pull the NHS back from the precipice of destruction.

A trade union-led campaign, linking up the many local community NHS campaigns, could, through a programme of coordinated industrial action, demonstrations and other protests, pull the rug from under this hated but weak coalition government.

Cable launches new attack on workers' rights

Alex Davidson

The attack on workers' rights outlined by Lib Dem business secretary Vince Cable is one more confirmation of the government's absolute determination to drag us back to the pre-World War Two years.

In what the trade union Unison has rightly described as "Beecroft-lite", Cable has adopted close to 80% of the Tory financier's recommendations published in October 2011. The most prominent of these is the plan to limit unfair dismissal claims to one year of salary alongside plans to restrict Tupe (employment transfer procedures) rights even further.

In responding to the announcement Unite general secretary Len McCluskey rightly stated that "UK workers already have the worst protections in Europe. This government is utterly misguided in its belief that making workers more vulnerable will power our economy to recovery."

It must be pointed out though that Labour had 13 years to strengthen workers' rights but we were still left with the weakest employment rights in Europe.

Cable's latest assault needs to be seen alongside his plans to abolish health and safety inspections in thousands of firms.

As the victimisation of a Unite

health and safety rep on the Cross-rail project shows (see page 4), employers are already riding roughshod over trade union rights.

While there has been plenty of condemnation from union leaders they must follow this up with real action. The attack on workers' rights affects both public and private sector workers equally, therefore the union leaders should use this to mobilise their members in support of the POA motion passed by the TUC conference last week calling for a general strike.

As Steve Gillan of the POA said when moving the motion "they will only stop chasing us when we stop running".

On the same day as education secretary Michael Gove announced his education counter-reforms, Coventry National Union of Teachers (NUT) members and fellow trade unionists (right) protested against the rigging of GCSE exams by Ofqual due to government pressure. Jane Nellist, joint secretary of Coventry NUT said:

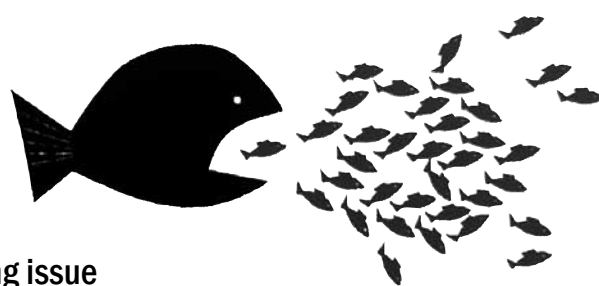
"We called this lobby of teachers, parents and young people to send a message to Ofqual, which has its offices in Coventry, that they must put right this wrong and re-grade those papers to restore the integrity of our exam system and the hopes of those young people. However, with Gove's plan for O-levels we see that this is just a way of devaluing our exam system. This is a massive educational mistake and will set us back years."

No to Gove's counter-reforms



Protesting outside Ofqual in Coventry photo D.Nellist

Them...



Taxing issue

'Only the little people pay taxes' appears to be chancellor George Osborne's mantra after allowing, from 2013, UK-based multinational corporations to avoid paying taxes on profits from offshore operations. This hand out to big business will cost the Treasury an estimated £1 billion in lost taxes, despite the government's insistence on cuts in jobs and services and other austerity measures to plug its budget deficit.

of union members, rather than a simple majority of members who actually vote in a ballot, to validate strike action.

Of course had such a threshold been applied to the last general election then the Tory led-coalition would be deemed illegal - as too would Johnson's mayoral election when the turnout was only 38% of the electorate.

Bank of Blair

Tony Blair, the former prime minister whose gung-ho invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by western imperialism have left an enduring legacy of death and destruction, is nowadays scraping a living as an adviser to the world's biggest financial and industrial corporations. This 'work' includes financial giant JP Morgan which, despite suffering an estimated loss of \$2 billion, continues to pay Blair an annual \$2.5 million for advice. Indeed, JP Morgan's enthusiasm for Tony's 'skills' shows no signs of dimming as the investment bank recently gave him a \$4.2 million mortgage, an act of generosity which must have warmed the hearts of many would-be first time house buyers.

The messianic Blair has also mediated eleventh hour multi-billion dollar merger talks between commodities giant Glencore and mining corporation Xstrata, netting the ex-Labour leader a cool \$1 million. Glencore is most notorious for making vast sums by speculating on rising food prices.

But Blair's wealth doesn't only reside in consultancy (including advising Kazakhstan's despotic regime) and speaking fees, he also enjoys a property empire worth over £17 million.

Bugger off

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, London's mayor, has described the strike action of trade unionists in defence of jobs and services as "endless buggeration". Johnson, with one eye on the Tory party leadership, wants to legally prevent general strike action, public sector strikes and picketing. He also is intent on getting onto the statute books the long-held Tory ruse of demanding a 50% threshold

Heroes to zeros

The 2010 Healthcare Financial Management Association winner of the Efficiency Award was Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The trust said it was "thrilled to have beaten out nationwide competition to win the well respected and coveted award." In 2011 Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust made the final shortlist of four trusts for this 'coveted award'.

The two trusts with the biggest forecast cash cuts in annual income 2011/12 to 2014/15 are... Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals, losing £36 million (13% of its annual income) and Sherwood Forest Hospitals, losing £34 million (also 13%). Both trusts face punitive Private Finance Initiative charges that have to be paid before a patient is treated.

This is another telling example of how efficient market forces are in delivering public services!

Jon Dale

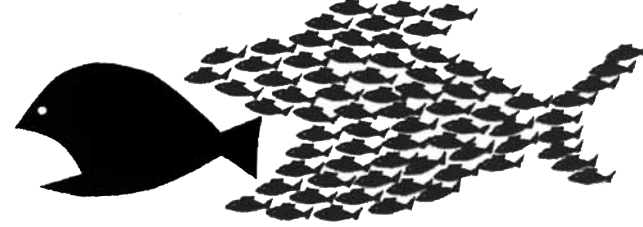
Housing crisis

The latest manifestation of the UK's deepening housing crisis came in figures showing that the number of families forced into B&B accommodation have risen by 44% in the past year - some 3,960 families. Campaign group Housing Voice says 250,000 new housing starts in England are needed each year to begin to address the current crisis, where affordable house building is down 68% and homelessness up by 26%.

Those qualifying for assistance with homelessness have risen to 50,290 in the last year compared with 40,020 in 2009/10.

This dire situation reflects the failure of the private sector to provide affordable accommodation to buy or rent, the unwillingness of banks to provide mortgages, the government's reluctance to invest in social housing and the effects of its benefit caps.

...& Us



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Sparks’ picket blockades Crossrail site

Neil Cafferky

The epic battle between electricians and the electrical contracting companies has been running on construction sites around the country for the past 18 months. In London there have been 6am protests almost every week.

The opening battle ended in defeat for the employers. Wage cuts of 35% and changes to terms and conditions in the form of the Building and Engineering Service National Agreement (Besna) were defeated after a determined rank and file campaign from the sparks.

However the employers have not given up the war. There have been a number of attempts to bring Besna in through the back door as well as attempts to victimise the leaders of the rank and file.

These attacks took a more serious turn on 14 September at the Crossrail site at Paddington, west London. EIS lost the contract on site which led to the sacking of 28 of the firm’s electricians, including two Unite stewards, with only a few hours’ notice.

Union activists see this as a blatant attempt to drive union organisation off site. A decision was made to picket the site on 17 September to demand that the sacked electricians be transferred to any incoming electrical contractors.

Over 40 sparks and their supporters gathered at 6am outside the main site entrance. Bollards and plastic barriers were scavenged from the site entrance to assemble a makeshift barricade.

A game of cat and mouse went on between security and pickets. Security would charge in and pull pieces of the barricade out. Picketers would then plug the gap.

The game finally came to an end when a number of picketers sat down on top of the barricade, forcing security to line up behind the barricade with their arms folded! Traffic



The next stage in the battle to defend jobs and conditions photo Suzanne Beishon

was delayed on the busy Great Western Road as numerous lorries were refused entry and eventually turned away.

The picket caused such a commotion that bus drivers from the nearby garage came out. One driver, seeing the Unite flags and clearly still reliving their recent strike victory, rushed over to the picket and asked: “Are we on strike again?”

As the picket was winding down, one security guard attempted to photo the registration number of the picketers’ van.

With memories of blacklisting and victimisation fresh in the minds of sparks, this was an extremely provocative move.

A number of picketers, including Rob Wil-

liams from the National Shop Stewards Network, blocked the security guard from taking pictures.

In frustration the security guard shoved Rob Williams against the van bonnet. This provoked a furious reaction from the pickets, forcing the security guard to beat a hasty retreat back behind the police.

Scandalously the ranking police officer then defended the behaviour of the security guard! Pickets were quick to point out that if the situation had been reversed the police would not be so forgiving.

A number of Unite officials met with Crossrail project managers to discuss the sackings. At the time of writing, no progress had been made.

In brief

NUT action



On 26 September teachers’ union NUT members will be starting a programme of industrial action in defence of their pay and conditions. Teachers are being attacked, not only with a pay freeze but with ‘appraisal’ measures which can be used to push teachers down the pay scales.

Regular reps’ meetings are essential to coordinate the action and to escalate it to strike action where schools try to impose unacceptable policies.

But national strike action, coordinated with the other public sector unions should also be built for.

• For more information and advice see the blog of NUT executive member Martin Powell-Davies: electmartin1.blogspot.com

Defend the Four



As part of our long-running campaign against a witch-hunt within Unison of four Socialist Party members, we launched a new petition in June this year. The Four had been accused of several breaches of the union’s rules but were singled out when they argued for increased democracy within the union.

The petition opposed the fact that Unison was intending to spend up to another £100,000 appealing the previous decisions against them at an employment tribunal and employment appeals tribunal. The petition called on Unison to stop spending money on further persecution of the Four.

The petition got massive support over the summer. We have 1,000 signatures and over 400 on an electronic petition.

This was presented to Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, before the TUC on 9 September.

*For more information and an opportunity to buy a campaign wristband, see: <http://www.stop-thewitchhunt.org.uk/>

Brian Debus

Argos strike

On 19 September workers at five Argos distribution centres are likely to be starting a four-day national strike. This is over the closing of the company’s final salary pension scheme, which it is seeking to do without compensating the affected staff.

The centres are in Magna Park, Leicestershire, Bridgewater, Heywood, Lancashire, Castleford and Basildon.

Building solidarity across the trade unions

NSSN supporter invited to address RMT

Alex Moore

On 14 September I turned up at a meeting of the transport union RMT in Plymouth, hoping to give out a few leaflets for the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN). I was called up to the platform to speak next to RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

I am not even a member of the RMT so it was a bit of a surprise! But it showed the shared respect between the RMT and NSSN.

Between 80 to 100 people, mainly RMT members turned up to hear Bob speak and give out awards for lifetime service to the union. The atmosphere was brilliant.

Trade union members spoke about support for the 20 October demo and attacks on workers in the health and transport sectors.

I was introduced as a member of the teaching union NASUWT and the NSSN. I began saying how Virgin had just taken over Devon Children’s Service, so we might end up working for the same employer one day.

I reported on the NSSN lobby of the TUC to call for a 24-hour general strike and how the NSSN was helping trade unionists to coordinate



Bob Crow speaking at the NSSN lobby of the TUC photo Serena Cheung

strike action, expressing my hope that if the RMT had to strike over the McNulty attack on the railways then perhaps it could be alongside teachers, health service workers and others already balloting.

Of course it was Bob Crow everyone wanted to hear. He addressed the issues facing South Western rail-

way workers first. The McNulty report commissioned by New Labour cost £217,000 - but McNulty already knew what was wanted so he started off by writing the findings!

Bob warned what the proposals meant - no guards, no catering services, closures of branch lines, fare increases for commuter services

and the issue of zero hour contracts for maintenance workers - who he said were being treated like “donkey jackets hanging on the back of a door”.

But he also spoke powerfully about pensions and youth unemployment, making clear connections about workers being made to work longer at the expense of opportunities for the new generation. Speaking about students he asked: “Where are they going to live after they pile up £48,000 of debt? I’ll tell you...with you!”

Lib Dem Vince Cable and Labour’s Ed Balls came under the hammer too: Cable for supporting new attacks on employment rights and Balls for refusing to take the chance of promising to repeal Tory anti-trade union legislation at the TUC. “Why doesn’t the Labour Party promise to re-nationalise the railways?” he asked - it could be done for free when the franchises expired?

He said there were about 25 Labour MPs doing a great job - but what about the rest of them? He compared funding Labour to “paying someone to mug you” and ended up by warning that perhaps it was time to build a new workers’ party.

Workers die on tower cranes - Con-Dems cut safety regulations

Jane James

There have been several recent protests about the number of workers who have died or been injured while working on tower cranes.

The UK is one of the worst countries for tower crane accidents with 60 crane accidents, nine deaths and

25 serious injuries to date.

The Battersea crane disaster in September 2006, when a tower crane collapsed, led to the death of two people.

The inquest revealed that the wrong manual was being used to erect the crane!

The Canary Wharf disaster in 2000 cost three lives.

The crane register was introduced to ensure that these cranes had regular MOTs but the Con-Dem government is carrying out the wishes of big building companies by tearing up health and safety guidelines, including stopping the crane MOTs.

These only cost the building industry £61,000 a year.

The government has declared that ‘unnecessary’ workplace safety regulations are a barrier to economic growth.

Trade unionists need to keep up the pressure to ensure that health and safety is not rolled back while fighting for a new workers’ party which will campaign against deaths in the workplace.

Building the fight against fees, cuts and privatisation 'Clearly the NUS has a job to do'

Interview with NUS vice-president for union development

In 2010, tens of thousands of students took to the streets against the tripling of tuition fees in England. 2012's intake will be the first lot to face these fees of up to £9,000 a year, as the Con-Dems stop central funding of higher education.

A student studying for three years, with fee and living cost loans, could owe over £50,000 at the end of their degree if they study in London, or a mere £43,500 for studying outside London. No wonder student numbers have dropped by 57,000!

This year's NUS conference called for students

to march in London on Wednesday 21 November. This is an improvement on 2011, when the New Labour-led NUS leadership refused to call a demo, but should be just the start of mobilising the anger of students against the divisive 'free-market' in higher education.

At the 2012 National Union of Students (NUS) conference, Socialist Students welcomed the election of Vicki Baars as vice-president for union development as a step forward for the left.

Socialist Students spoke to Vicki.

What do you think the Con-Dems' 'vision' for universities would look like?

David Willetts' current strategy seems to be to drastically cut public funding, creating a huge range of problems, after which he turns around and says: 'I know what will solve this - privatisation'!

Do you think the NUS strategy of lobbying government ministers has been successful?

I've always been clear that lobbying ministers can never be our only strategy. I think that research can have an impact, but over time NUS has become more and more comfortable with just doing this side of things and not protesting.

I'm pleased that in the last couple of years that has started to change.

For many in NUS, I think having a Tory government has made them more comfortable with protests. They believe they're now less likely to gain the ear of ministers than they were under Labour. But I would hope that, even with a change of government, this new temperament would continue. Labour leaders Blair and Brown both headed regimes happy to do things contrary to the interests of students. Labour's introduction of top-up fees is the biggest example. In my view NUS's opposition wasn't strong enough. I think one reason for this is that many in the leadership of NUS are uncomfortable to protest while Labour is in power.

I hope that, following the demonstration on 21 November, NUS will keep up the direct action and build on the momentum that a big national demo helps to create.

What was your role in the 2010 student movement?

In 2010 I had just left being a saboteur at Leeds Met and this was my first year at NUS as an LGBT officer. My colleague Alan and I were heavily involved in organising the student

protests, after being involved in organising Pride demonstrations.

We went along to all the protests and argued on the NEC that NUS should not condemn students who took part in the Milbank occupation, as Aaron Porter (then NUS president) had done. We said we needed to stand with our students rather than victimise them.

Read Megaphone the magazine of Socialist Students



Order your copy for £1 including P&P, and join Socialist Students, by contacting 07749 379010
www.socialiststudents.org.uk

What do you feel were the successes of the movement?

While we failed to prevent the rise of fees and cutting of EMA in England, I think it would be wrong to say that 2010's movement won nothing. Wins in Scotland have so far saved a lot of student support funding and prevented the government introducing fees. Clearly Scotland's devolved government felt the hot breath of the student movement on their backs.

Since becoming vice-president for union development what have been your top priorities?

My main role is to help maintain and develop our student unions. I'm involved in helping to train activists

to lead the fight on their campuses.

One of my key priorities at the moment is campaigning on unemployment. For me this is about saying to the government: we're doing as much as we can to help make graduates employable - but what are you doing to create jobs?

What is your feeling on the 21 November demonstration's slogan 'employ, educate, empower'?

It's not ideal. I would have preferred slogans more like 'fight unemployment' or 'no to cuts'. The intention of the slogan is to say we want investment in education, the government to create jobs and for students to feel empowered by using their collective strength. So I think when you pick apart the slogan it's not quite as bad.

Whether NUS should call for free education still divides opinion within the union. What do you think about this?

I believe in fully funded education, completely free at the point of use. I think that it should be paid for by the highest earners and the rich through taxation, regardless of whether they are graduates. I was in favour of raising the slogan 'tax the rich' on the demonstration. But I know my fellow vice-presidents don't agree.

How do you view the student movement in the context of the wider struggle against austerity?

I'm very supportive of UCU and Unison in their struggle against cuts and job losses. I think sometimes that there are student union officers who have the 'wool pulled over their eyes' about their university management's intentions. Some vice-chancellors are determined to privatise almost all support services. Clearly NUS has a job to do in educating and politicising this layer of student union officers, especially at such a crucial time for education.



A repeat of the anger seen in 2010 is likely photo Sarah Wrack

Socialist Students says:

Reclaim NUS to fight for our education!

- For a fighting NUS, democratically controlled and run in the interests of students
- For a mass mobilisation of students on both the 20 October TUC demo and the 21 November NUS demo
- Support the Youth Fight for Jobs 13-27 October fortnight of action
- For 21 November to be the start of a mass campaign of

- demonstrations, walkouts, occupations and nationally coordinated action
- National action to defend international students at London Met. Solidarity with all international students
- For student unions to link up with the trade unions. For a 24-hour general strike against austerity that includes both workers and students

Stop the deportation of London Met students

Wyllie Hume

Students demonstrated outside London Metropolitan University on 14 September against the disgraceful threatened deportation of over 2,000 international students.

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) announced plans two weeks ago to send students back to their home countries after alleging that many were using the university to get visas and not actually studying.

A rally outside the university included speakers from the UCU lecturers' union, Unison public sector

workers' union, Youth Fight for Jobs and Education, and the students facing deportation.

There was great anger shown from the speakers and the chants on the demo, against the Con-Dem government and home secretary Theresa May.

But New Labour has hardly shown opposition. In fact, some of the racist, anti-immigration rules that are being used against the students were written into law by previous New Labour governments.

International students who are not accepted onto courses at other institutions have been told by UKBA

that they have 60 days before they must leave the country. Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Jobs participated in the demo explaining that in order to stop this, a mass campaign is needed including students from London Met but also other universities as well.

The demonstration was great for building confidence but what is needed next is walkouts, occupations, further demonstrations and even strike action from staff at the university who will inevitably face job cuts if the students are deported.

Protests have taken place in support of the London Met

students in Cardiff, Manchester and elsewhere.
See www.socialistparty.org.uk

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Stop press:

Irish students victimised

A county council is refusing to grant aid third level students whose parents have not paid the Household Tax. Socialist Party TD (MP) Joe Higgins has said: "Clare County Council are an example of victimisation of young people for the principled stand their parents have taken against this unjust and unpopular charge that is being boycotted still by some 50% of liable households... Hence we see more bullying tactics to squeeze money out of people. It will not work!"

Hillsborough disaster: TRUTH IS OUT, NOW JUSTICE

On Saturday 15 April 1989, on FA Cup semi-final day at Hillsborough football ground in Sheffield, 96 supporters of Liverpool FC died a horrifying death, being crushed by fans forced into overcrowded pens. South Yorkshire police and much of the press tried to blame it on the fans.

Last week's independent inquiry, nearly a quarter of a century later, pinned the blame clearly on the ground which failed to meet minimum safety standards. Football fans from the 1960s to the 1980s could tell of many near-disasters in overcrowded grounds with woeful facilities.

Clubs made huge profits but didn't improve their grounds for decades. The inquiry also blamed the "woefully slow" behaviour of the emergency services and the role of South Yorkshire Police (SYP). It showed that 116 police officers' statements about Hillsborough were "substantially altered" to remove criticism. Police-generated lies about fans' behaviour (spread by the Sun in particular) came from a Sheffield press agency, senior officers in SYP and a local Tory MP. Now the real truth is out, the families and the survivors of Hillsborough are vindicated and will want justice.



A debt of honour is owed to the families for showing that working class people, fired with courage and determination, can render the forces of the state accountable

Inquiry vindicates fans and families

Tony Mulhearn
Former socialist councillor, Liverpool

The Hillsborough Independent Panel report has ripped aside the tangled web of lies and cover-up woven by the South Yorkshire Police, the government and the lickspittles in the press who denigrated Liverpool and the victims of the man-made catastrophe in 1989 that was Hillsborough.

Kelvin MacKenzie, then editor of the Sun and Murdoch's bag carrier who peddles his poison to the highest bidder, was the most vocal with his tissue of lies about that tragedy. 96 football fans lost their lives, those deaths affected thousands of people. Many still suffer extreme trauma as a result of their experience. Some suffered personality changes and went to an early grave.

The families of the 96, who campaigned in the face of impossible odds for 23 years, greeted the report with relief and euphoria. The relief and sense of victory and exoneration was palpable throughout Liverpool.

46 could have been saved

Trevor Hicks of the family support group lost two daughters. He reported that, three family members fainted when the panel revealed evidence that with the correct support from the emergency services, 46 of the victims may have been saved.

This information added to the sense of anger and outrage which permeated the city. Of the 48 ambulances which rushed to the stadium, only two actually made it onto the pitch. Even the ambulance service tops were implicated in the subsequent cover-up.

The radio airwaves were alive this week as ordinary people expressed their outrage at the events following the tragedy. The police, the Sun, with Thatcher and her government implicated in the cover-up, were subject to excoriating condemnation. MacKenzie's apology and the Sun's later apology was contemptuously dismissed for the hollow gesture that it was.

I was one of thousands at St George's Plateau in Liverpool to pay tribute to the families and applaud their courageous campaign's magnificent

outcome.

The spectacle of the police, the government, and all those implicated, apologising and accepting culpability for the tragedy underlines the impact of this achievement.

Instructions for the cover-up no doubt came from the very tops of the state machine. South Yorkshire Police force's brutal anti-working class culture, which played a leading and pernicious role in crushing the miners in their struggle to defend their jobs and communities, was laid bare by this report.

Michael Mansfield QC, who assisted the families, clearly identified the link. The police authorities revelled in an atmosphere of impunity flowing from the anti-working class outlook of the then Thatcher government.

Liverpool's militant tradition

Liverpool was also the city where the Militant-led socialist council in the mid-1980s had resisted the Thatcher government's attacks by mobilising the support of thousands of working class people. By falsely accusing Liverpool football fans of being drunken hooligans, the ruling classes also intended to denigrate the city's tradition of militant struggle.

The campaign's next stage will be to call for those implicated in this cover-up to be subject to criminal law. Even the chief constable of South Yorkshire Police has been compelled to accept that those engaged in unlawful activity will be subject to prosecution.

Cameron's frank admission of the cover-up and his apology surprised many. But if he had attempted to continue the cover-up his government could have fallen, he had no choice in the face of the evidence but to admit the truth.

Parallels can be drawn with French author Émile Zola's article *J'accuse* (1898) where he exposed the French state's role in the anti-semitic frame up of Alfred Dreyfus. The furore which followed brought down the government.

The families are to be applauded for their courage and tenacity in the pursuit of justice. A debt of honour is owed to them for showing that working class people, fired with courage and determination, can render the forces of the state accountable.



photos Militant

Murdoch and MacKenzie's vile slanders

Ken Smith

It took Kelvin MacKenzie, former editor of the Sun, nearly 25 years to claim to be "sorry" for his paper's coverage of Hillsborough. The Sun admitted in 2004 that this was "the most terrible mistake in our history." But it took MacKenzie another eight years and last week's damning report to mumble out this insincere apology.

Nothing he ever says will atone for the impact of the Sun's disgusting coverage of the tragedy in 1989. Sections of the media believed - like the police and often in collusion with them - that they could act with impunity.

MacKenzie had form already. From the early 1980s, the Sun's editorial line was "make it short, make it snappy and make it up." Anything went in the drive for increased circulation. "Respectable" news values were thrown to the wind.

MacKenzie reserved his vilest falsifications to 'demonise' trade unionists, ethnic minorities, impoverished communities and cities such as Liverpool, and what he dubbed football "hooligans." The Sun's excesses are chronicled in the book *Stick it up Your Punter*, by Peter Chippindale and Chris Horrie.

Most vicious

But MacKenzie's role in the "reporting" of Hillsborough was the most vicious hooligan act in the sordid history of Britain's tabloid media. The Sun was not alone in regurgitating the lies that South Yorkshire Police peddled through a local news agency. Other media outlets repeated these claims but were more careful to stress that they were allegations.

MacKenzie, it seems, whipped up every vile prejudice to assist the South Yorkshire Police's attempted cover-up. The day before publication of the infamous edition of the Sun, MacKenzie laid out the editorial line. Even some of the Sun's worst gutter hacks advised him to be careful but he ignored them.

According to Horrie and Chippindale, MacKenzie knew the allegations were unproven - even before publication and the subsequent backlash - and had not sought out any evidence to back them up.

He also calculated that the paper could not be sued for libel by using the "Truth" headline rather than the first headline he drafted for that edition which was "You Scum".

Print unions

Previously the media and print unions were able to use their strength to exert a certain control over MacKenzie's behaviour. But by 1989, after Murdoch locked out and defeated the print workers, the media unions could no longer stop the publication of South Yorkshire Police's and MacKenzie's vile smears and slanders.

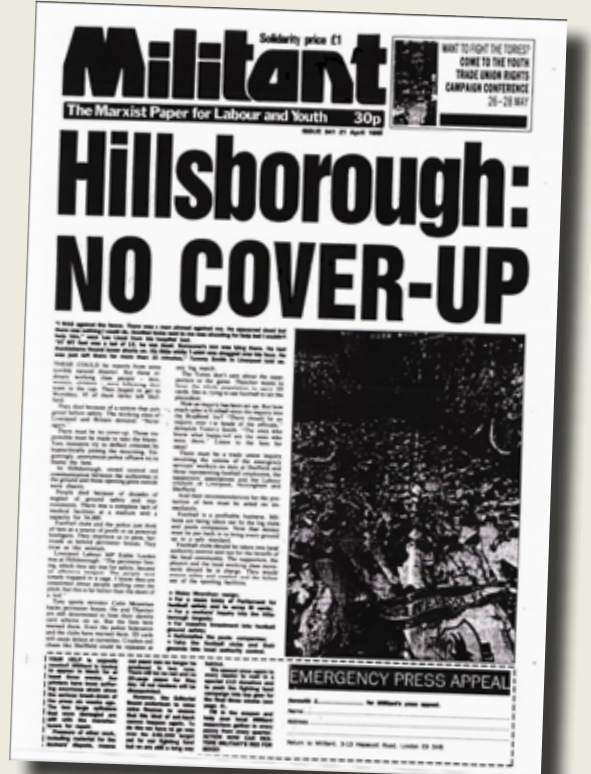
So it was left to the people of Liverpool to rise up in united anger to boycott the Sun. The paper's circulation in Merseyside fell by more than 200,000 (40%) within days. That boycott could continue for generations to come. It is the tenacious campaign of the families of the 96 and their supporters that forced MacKenzie's apology.

Police officers should now face criminal charges, and MacKenzie, Murdoch and others responsible at the Sun should face charges of aiding and abetting this criminal conspiracy.

See socialistparty.org.uk for more on the 'Murdochgate' scandal

What we said: 'Hillsborough: No cover-up'

Under the headline 'Hillsborough: No Cover-up' the Socialist's predecessor, Militant, carried the following front page on 21 April 1989



"I was against the fence. There was a man pinned against me. He appeared dead but there was nothing I could do. Another bloke next to me was shouting for help but I couldn't help him," says Les Lloyd from his hospital bed.

"At my feet was a lad of 13, he was dead. Someone's son was lying there. He had Huckleberry Hound boxer shorts on. His little white t-shirt was dragged over his face. He was just left there for more than 15 minutes," Tommy Smith in Liverpool told us.

These could be reports from some terrible natural disaster. But these ordinary working class people - men, women, children - were following their team in the cup. They hoped to get to Wembley; 95 of them never left Sheffield.

They died because of a system that puts greed before safety. The working class of Liverpool and Britain demand: "Never again." There must be no cover-up. Those responsible must be made to take the blame. Tory ministers try to deflect criticism by hypocritically joining the mourning. Disgustingly, anonymous police officers try to blame the fans.

At Hillsborough, crowd control and communication between the authorities in the ground and those opening gates outside were chaotic. People died because of decades of neglect of ground safety and improvements. There was a complete lack of medical facilities at a stadium with a capacity for 54,000.

Football clubs and the police just think of fans as a source of profit or as potential hooligans. They imprison us in pens, barricade us behind perimeter fences. They treat us like animals.

The Tories don't care about the supporters or the game. Thatcher wants to force the whole population to carry ID cards. She is trying to use football to set the precedent.

Now an inquiry has been set up. But how much safer is football since the inquiry into the Bradford fire [a few weeks earlier that killed 48 fans - Eds]? "There should be an inquiry over the heads of the officials," demands Tommy Smith. "The ones who know what happened are the ones who were there." Listen to the fans for once!

There must be a trade union inquiry involving the unions of the emergency services workers on duty at Sheffield and those

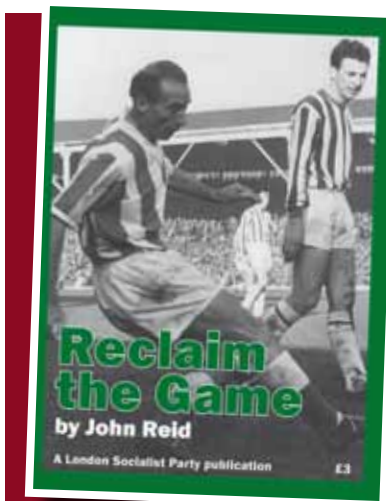
for you? He replied 'Yeah, how about some decent jobs for the lads in Liverpool! She didn't reply, but our family smiled for the first time. That wasn't reported on TV, was it?"

When the Liverpool football team visited the injured, families and hospital staff were in tears when one of the victims opened his eyes for the first time at the sound of his hero, Kenny Dalglish, speaking to him.

Thatcher's voice had an entirely op-

posite effect on another victim. He was heavily sedated, and hadn't spoken to his wife. But the loathing of Liverpool workers for Thatcher and her policies soon shone through.

As Thatcher arrived at the bedside, the fan's wife uttered "Oh no, I don't believe it. It's Mrs Thatcher." Thatcher asked "How are you?" Suddenly, the patient spoke out: "I was alright until I saw your f**** face. Now go on, f*** off from this bed!"



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●Cardiff Against the Cuts activists will call on councillors to pressure HMRC, as part of the lobby against cuts on Thursday 27 September, 3.30pm at County Hall, Cardiff Bay.

Amid the ranks of people signing the Socialist Party petition against the library cuts, there were some who had, given the many local cuts, mistaken what we were there for. Some asked if we were petitioning over the public toilet closures or campaigning against care services being stopped.

Hundreds of signatures have been collected, with several copies of the Socialist sold and £170 raised in support of the Socialist Party's campaigning work.

Alongside trade unionists, we will continue to put as much pressure on Hampshire county council as possible to prevent these closures and to gather the support of affected residents.

●Join the lobby of Hampshire county council
Friday 21 September, 1pm
Outside Hampshire county council HQ – Elizabeth II Court, Winchester SO23 8TG

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Marikana miners remain defiant

CWI reporters

The intentions of the bosses and state to drown the South African miners' militancy in blood – with the Marikana massacre of 16 August – and discourage further workers' actions, have spectacularly failed. On the contrary, their struggle for a living wage has spread like wildfire, with tens of thousands of miners now on indefinite strike throughout the Rustenburg region.

The platinum mines are almost fully shut down by workers' action, with workers at the largest company, Anglo Platinum, recently announcing an indefinite strike. Action has also spread to the gold mines, where tens of thousands more are taking action, all in the fight for a living wage and in solidarity with their brutalised brothers and sisters.

Fears are developing among the country's ruling elite as to what has been unleashed, as government ministers heap blackmail on striking miners for 'putting economic growth in danger', etc.

The ruling class will now proceed to do all within its power to try to defeat the movement, through divide-and-rule tactics and new repressive actions such as those announced on 15 September, when the Justice Minister, warned of an imminent and "very swift" crackdown.

This was followed the next day with a dawn raid by 500 police on workers' shacks near the Marikana mine. Later, police using helicopters and firing rubber bullets and tear gas attacked striking miners, women and children who had gathered in a nearby field.

Miners have shown in recent



The strike by Marikana platinum miners has ignited a political volcano in South Africa

days, with marches of tens of thousands to ensure the solidity of the strike, that theirs is the power to shut down the industry.

General strike

The organisation and strategy of the strikers has also seen big steps forward in recent days. Members of Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI in South Africa), have been central to the initiatives taken to unite democratic representatives of the striking miners in coordinating committees, to discuss the further spreading of the struggle and the next steps for its escalation.

Preparations for a general strike of the mining areas, one of the necessary steps emphasised by DSM, are being made.

The capitalist press in South Africa and internationally has com-

mented on the role of the DSM in the struggle, most notably that of DSM member Mametlwe Sebei, a trade union leader.

Le Monde, the Wall Street Journal and the BBC all have made explicit references to the DSM. The South African Times paper reported: "In North West, mineworkers rejecting the formal unions have formed a Rustenburg Workers and Communities Forum under the leadership of the Democratic Socialist Movement, affiliate of the Committee for Workers' International.

"Executive member Mametlwe Sebei yesterday tried to persuade miners that a general strike should start in Rustenburg and be followed by a national strike and march to the Union Buildings.

"This battle can be won only if we are united," Sebei urged at a mass meeting at Amplats."

The DSM also fights to link the growing wave of struggles to implementing socialist policies – such as the nationalisation of the mines under democratic control, in order to put the country's wealth and growing economy to work for the majority, as part of a democratic socialist plan.

See www.socialistworld.net for more detailed reports and analysis

●The CWI is making a special appeal for funds to the South African section. Please make cheques payable to Socialist Party and send to 'South Africa Appeal' PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Donations can also be made online – please make sure that you put 'South Africa Appeal' in the message box: www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate

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:



Obituary: Nicos Remoundos, founding member of Xekinima, CWI Greece

Socialist fighter against the military junta and capitalism.

Xekinima reporters (CWI, Greece)

Global warming: Capitalists skating on thin ice

Pete Mason

The National Snow and Ice Data Centre is expected to announce a new low in the extent of the arctic sea ice as the Socialist goes to press. The shrinking of the arctic polar ice sheet has shocked climate scientists around the world and is now only half the area of summer ice in the 1970s.

Climate change has this year already affected the production of food staples through extreme weather, forcing prices higher and threatening a repeat of the 'Arab Spring' throughout the neocolonial world. The loss of arctic ice could be making the situation worse.

Mainstream media reporting of the ice sheet collapse, now half the size it was a few decades ago, ap-

pears to blame ordinary people. 'Human activities' are responsible for 70-95% of the decline, the Guardian reports, citing a recent study. Yet calling the destructive activities of giant energy corporations Shell or ExxonMobil 'human' is a gross injustice to humankind!

David Nussbaum, chief executive of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) UK, says: "We can all take action to cut carbon emissions and move towards a 100% renewable economy" (Guardian, 14 September 2012), forgetting that Prime Minister David Cameron has just appointed climate change sceptic Owen Paterson as environment secretary.

The precipitous drop in the ice sheet extent affects food production due to a newly discovered mechanism. The polar jet stream in the northern hemisphere is weakened by the warmer arctic. Continental-

wide deviations in the jet stream allow heatwaves from the south to rise much further north.

"Ultimately this can result in 'blocking' events, such as the conditions that produced the terrible heatwave in western Russia during the summer of 2010," research professor Jennifer Francis told the Guardian (14 September 2012). Equally the arctic weather can spill out over Europe or the USA for weeks or months causing extreme weather events.

Arctic drilling

Dustbowl conditions are returning to the USA as a result of global warming, accelerated this year by the blocking of the polar jet stream. Great 100 kilometre wide yellow dust clouds rolled over the 1.5 million inhabitants of Phoenix Arizona twice in one week in July, despite vastly improved soil management since the 1930s, as four-fifths of the USA enters some form of drought.

Corn production is down by a quarter, yet ethanol production, fixed by legislation, is now likely to consume 40% of all corn production in the USA this year as a result of the extreme drought afflicting the USA. That's roughly 20% of worldwide corn production.

Meanwhile Shell is attempting to prospect for oil off the Alaskan coast, albeit delayed a year after a final test of its environmental protection equipment failed to meet the standards required to gain a full drilling permit. ExxonMobil is aiming to drill in Russia's arctic waters. Both are undeterred by the fact that western USA and eastern Siberia

are burning in the global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions.

More than 17,000 wildfires had burned more than 74 million acres of Russia's Siberian boreal forest by the end of August 2012, NASA reported (13 September 2012), the most severe in a decade, while the year-to-date total acreage burned in the USA is the most on record, exceeding 7.72 million acres, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported (7 September 2012).

These oil companies are not merely the unacceptable face of capitalism – they are its cutting edge, red in tooth and claw. The prospecting in the arctic must stop immediately before a new Deepwater Horizon type disaster happens. The whole energy industry needs to be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management and a new socialist plan of production immediately implemented based on renewable energy.

An ice free arctic in September 2020 seems possible, up to 80 years in advance of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predictions.

The most feared feedback event is wholesale methane gas releases, initially 100 times more powerful than CO2 and now bubbling up from the thawing arctic waters and permafrost, and producing recent spikes in methane readings.

The planet is in uncharted territory. Scientists' models did not predict the current ice loss. The runaway feedback effects of the loss of sea ice are impossible to predict, and were simply omitted for this reason from the reports of the IPCC.



Spain/Catalonia: Millions on the streets on 11 September

Another blow to the right-wing People's Party government.

Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Spain) reporters, Barcelona



Dutch elections: Liberals and Labour gain: Socialist Party stuck on 15 seats

New coalition government promises austerity measures – workers will resist.

Pieter Brans, Socialist Alternative (CWI Netherlands)



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We taught Boyson a lesson

Rhodes Boyson, the right-wing former junior Tory minister for education, has died. We remember his contempt for teachers, his indifference to large class sizes and to the need for decent school buildings.

During the Thatcher government in the middle of a campaign against education cuts, Boyson declared that a good teacher can teach a class of 60 in a bus shelter. This ridiculous comment implied that there was no substance to genuine concerns about the cuts, quality of education and class sizes.

In Nottingham at that time, our active campaign of FACE (Fighting Against Cuts in Education) at Claremont Primary School organised a 'teach-in' for a noisy group of around 70 pupils before school at the local bus stop (with parents ensuring safety from passing traffic). This was covered on Radio 5 Live and successfully and publicly pointed out the stupidity of his remark.

Enjoyable - yes. Lively - yes. A realistic place for a teacher to teach - no. The campaign also organised a 'strike' or stay away of our children against the cuts and a protest convoy to County Hall. Security locked or blocked the doors to prevent primary school children entering the building.

Yvonne Powles and Gary Freeman

Anger at failed Labour

There was renewed anger with the Labour Party at my recent union branch meeting. Unite along with other unions, is affiliated to the Labour Party, although individual members can opt out of paying into Unite's political fund. I am one of those.



This option is not actually obvious to members, but our branch ensures that prospective and current members are fully aware of their right not to pay into a Labour Party that has, and will continue to let the working class down.

Unite recently called for the union to "reclaim the Labour Party" which was met by groans from members. Our branch is divided, but many are sceptical - Unite is anti-cuts, so why does it continue to support Ed Miliband's Labour in its failure to protect working people from the ludicrous austerity measures?

Our branch will continue to fight against cuts, and to press Unite into a proper members' debate about its choice of affiliation. I urge all trade unionists in affiliated unions to do the same.

Kerry, Unite representative

Green shoots

Probably inspired by Ed Balls getting booed at the TUC when he said he supported the public sector pay freeze, the new leader of the Greens has offered to "work with the unions." Natalie Bennett says she wants to work with the TUC to

change Britain's political direction. "We will ensure decent pay and benefits for all who need them," she said.

Before making rash promises - shouldn't she have a word with the Green councillors who vote in favour of cuts? Or hasn't she noticed that those cuts are one of the biggest causes of unemployment, low pay and disappearing benefits?

**Margaret Graham
Walthamstow**

Johnson, not Boris

On reading the 6-12 September Socialist I was immediately drawn to your page three headline - 'Boris' workfare - no solution'.



An excellent article exposing this right-wing ideologue's latest attack on the young people of London.

However, the continual use by the media, including now the Socialist, of referring to him as 'Boris' helps him to cultivate the bumbling, cheery, harmless persona that has served him so well over the past few years.

You wouldn't have a heading about Dave's latest attack on working people so let's stick with Johnson as you would for Cameron, Osborne or Clegg.

**Ian Leaver
Leicester**

Bob Diamond sickened at greed

The following letter was sent to the Guardian

When I started my apprenticeship in the mid-1970s my new mates nicknamed me Bob. The first 15 years of my life, my mam carefully marshalled any derivative of my christened name to Rob or Robbie. I, grateful to be acknowledged by my future pals, simply felt relieved, hence Bob stuck with me.

Recent events in the banking world left me sickened at sharing the same name as Bob Diamond, CEO of Barclays bank, who unashamedly struggles to justify the rigged and naked self-interest of the banking business world he inhabits.

Now, I'd rather be called Gabriel Scally (Guardian, 4 July, 'A systematic destruction of civil society') out of respect for someone who stood by his moral principles and recently resigned from his Department of Health post, in order to speak out against the coalition government's future plans for the NHS.

Dr Gabriel Scally believes the government's intentions are an all-out attack on the commitment to a civil society that values the importance of decent health, education and welfare for all its citizens. This Bob Diamond stands alongside Gabriel Scally.

**Bob Diamond
Clinical Psychologist
Nottingham**

“From dole queue to corner and back again”

Scott Jones

Dylan Thomas was a poet, a writer, a husband, a father, a Welshman, a drinker and a socialist. Born in Swansea in 1914, he died in New York in 1953, overwhelmed by debt and drink - the classic proto-rock star.

Dylan Thomas has been robbed of his radical politics, but he was a poet of tremendous creative gifts and a man fully conscious of class and social conditions, a thinker with a grounding in Marxism, and a self-proclaimed revolutionary socialist.

At home in the 'lovely, ugly city' of Swansea Dylan's first association with socialism came when, in 1933, he met Bert Trick who became his friend and mentor. Dylan would visit Trick's grocer's shop in Brynmill, discussing poetry and politics in the evenings. In Return Journey he remembers: "Bert Trick ... in the kitchen, threatened the annihilation of the ruling classes over sandwiches and jelly and blancmange."

Thomas, as a lifelong internationalist, hated to be pigeon-holed as just a 'Welsh poet'. He said, "I am sick of all this Celtic claptrap about Wales. My Wales! Land of My Fathers! As far as I am concerned my fathers can keep it."

Wales

Thomas' view of Wales was always contradictory. In Swansea in the early 30s, thousands were out of work and many more suffered the means test. Thomas remembered these dark years:

"Remember the procession of the old-young men From dole queue to corner and back again, From the pinched, packed streets to the peak of slag In the bite of the winters with shovel and bag, With a drooping fag and a turned up collar, Stamping for the cold at the ill lit corner Dragging through the squalor with their hearts like lead

Staring at the hunger and the shut pit-head Nothing in their pockets, nothing home to eat. Lagging from the slag heap to the pinched, packed street. Remember the procession of



Dylan Thomas

the old-young men, It shall never happen again."

Dylan Thomas, like many others, looked to the left for answers. He was for a time a Communist Party (CP) sympathiser, but never joined, as he disliked the way CP poets changed what they wrote to support the latest line coming from Moscow.

When Russia was attacked by the Nazis in World War Two, the CP threw themselves into the war effort. In 1945, an anthology of left verse was published called New Lyrical Ballads. Thomas had no place in it, as his internationalism was beyond the pale. The British nationalism in these ballads would shock socialists today.

The poems Thomas wrote during the war are among his very best - 'A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London', 'Ceremony after a fire raid' and others are about the victims of the bombing of London, but they are never anti-German, only anti-war. In our age of war without end they are as powerful as ever.

Dylan Thomas wrote two screen-

plays after the war. The Doctor and the Devils, a horror story based on the body-snatchers Burke and Hare, who provided the infamous Dr Knox with bodies for his research. But Thomas shows the class nature of society and how there is one law for the poor and another for the rich.

Rebecca's Daughters, based on the toll gate riots in Wales in 1843, is a comedy with a serious message: governments only bring in reforms when they are 'afraid of a revolution'. Both scripts went unfilmed.

Thomas is sometimes considered a 'romantic socialist'. True, he saw no need to belong to a party - his view was that of the independent artist. However, Thomas saw that another way was possible. In 1934 he said:

"I take my stand with any revolutionary body that asserts it to be the right of all men to share, equally and impartially, every production from man and from the sources of production at man's disposal, for only through such an essentially revolutionary body can there be the possibility of a communal art."

Report from Salford

Uniting to save mental health services

Steven North

Salford Socialist Party

Following the success of the campaign to save day centres for the elderly and those with learning disabilities earlier this year, Salford city council will again be challenged on plans to make the most vulnerable pay for the crisis of capitalism.

Despite assurances given in the summer, the council and Greater Manchester West NHS Mental Health Trust will go ahead with proposals to cut jobs and remove key staff from community groups and drop-ins, before any consultation has taken place with the service users who rely on those facilities.

Staff and service users have worked together in the past to protect services and are well placed to

take the council on.

A public meeting has been organised and a joint letter sent to Salford's newly elected Labour mayor, Ian Stewart, asking him to reverse the decision immediately.

Staff are considering the possibility of industrial action to defend their colleagues who face redundancy. Service users have already formed themselves into a campaign committee, appropriately entitled United Service Users Committee - or USUC!

Both groups come together on 1 October in a meeting organised by Salford Against the Cuts to launch a campaign to press the Mayor to cancel the plans.

We believe the reason for the lack of consultation is that both council and Trust are worried that service users will not only want to retain

their groups and drop-ins, but will want to fight for the jobs of the care workers as well.

The campaign plans to link up with activists in Manchester who are already fighting against horrific attacks on their mental health services. We ask all readers to email Ian Stewart at citymayor@salford.gov.uk asking him to fulfil Salford's promise to vulnerable people and not to attack mental health services.

**Public Meeting to Save
Mental Health Services**

**Monday 1 October, 7-9pm,
Swinton Royal British Legion,
Cheetham Road, Swinton,
Salford, M27 4UL**

Slutwalk: there's NO excuse for rape

On Saturday 22 September thousands of women and men will participate in this year's London Slutwalk. The Socialist spoke to Anastasia Richardson, one of the organisers of the event.



Slutwalk 2011 photo Sarah Wrack

What are the origins of Slutwalk?

It started in Toronto in Canada when a policeman said that in order to not get raped women should 'avoid dressing like sluts'. Obviously there's never any excuse for rape and people started to march and since then there's been a really huge response. A lot of women came out saying we've had enough - the only way to stop rape is to put blame on the rapist rather than the victim.

What was the impact of last year's London event?

Last year 5,000 people came - so many people emailed us saying 'this is the first time I haven't felt blamed as a rape survivor for what happened to me'. In the crowd people were crying. It was an outpouring of people's experiences, which have been silenced for a really long time.

It's about people actually standing up and saying this has happened to me - I was raped. Victim-blaming is basically trying to say that rape doesn't exist. They're trying to say that secretly you wanted it; you were asking for it by wearing certain clothing or acting in a certain way; it doesn't really count because the woman deserved it anyway. There's all sorts of excuses such as 'if it's your partner then they have a right to do that anyway'.

So Slutwalk is basically saying, look, what happened was rape.

What is the impact on society?

Men aren't inherently violent - but if society is telling them they have the right to do this to a woman and society makes excuses - for any type of woman, it can be your girlfriend, someone you know. If you're being told that it's legitimate for you to do these things to someone - and if you do do these things to someone and the police don't prosecute you, and the girl doesn't report and your friends make excuses for you and her friends make excuses for you - everyone blames her.

Does this challenge the idea that women have achieved equality?

Well, we have come some way. It was a massive victory when rape became illegal; it was a massive victory when



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rape within a marriage became illegal. But still only seven out of every 100 reported crimes end in a conviction so 93 out of 100 rapists are being allowed to get away with it. So it's not really illegal.

Some people, even some who describe themselves as feminists, have criticised the name Slutwalk.

I think the name is very powerful. The message is - the only way that you're going to get taken seriously as a rape victim is if you were a virgin with a lily white past, and if you're white, upper class - those things also factor very much into it. Whereas, all the other women who were raped, it just happened to them because they were sluts.

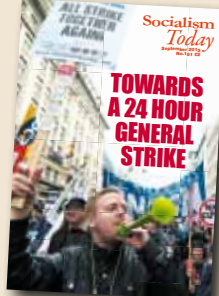
Slutwalk is breaking down those divisions and saying that we're not going to allow this to happen to anyone. The word slut is basically used as an excuse for rape. So if you stand together with other people and you say there's no such thing as a slut then you're saying there's no excuse for rape.

Do Tory policies reinforce sexism?

Poverty is a big part of why rape happens. People can't leave violent situations. They end up being dependent on people who could be violent. The Welfare Reform Bill, the abolition of a lot of individual benefits, abolition of the social fund, are making people a lot more vulnerable.

A lot of the cuts to women's services as well have really had a huge impact. I read that women's refuges, for

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women who've experienced violence are sending women fleeing from violent partners to sleep on buses or at the Occupy camp. So it makes people so much more vulnerable. Not to mention all the rape crisis centres who've had their funding cut.

What do you hope to come out of this year's event?

We're focussing on the legal system a lot this year, trying to change the way that rape is handled because it's just such a low priority in the justice system. The police don't collect evidence, they lose the evidence, they don't send off the tests, they don't interview witnesses, they don't make arrests, and that's when they're just being careless. A lot of times they actually try to undermine the people who are coming forward to report. It's in the news that an officer was actually falsifying rape victims' statements. We'd really like all of that to change.

SlutWalk London 2012

Saturday 22 September 2012

Meet at 12.30pm at top of

Piccadilly (near Hyde Park Corner)

See: slutmeansspeakup.org.uk for details

Reader's comment

Sexism – a product of capitalism

Katie Fields

A National Union of Students (NUS) 'Hidden Marks' survey showed that one in seven female students had been the victim of serious sexual assault or serious physical violence while at university or college. Other research shows that approximately 80,000 women suffer rape and attempted rape every year in the UK.

Sexual violence affects women (and men) of all backgrounds and ethnicities. It is perpetrated by a minority of men of all backgrounds and identities. It is widespread and embedded in capitalist society. Working class women suffer sexism in addition to the oppression that all working class people face.

Objectification

Sexuality is distorted by pornography which is more and more accessible, and at younger ages; male and female sexual stereotypes are foisted on us from birth; and women's bodies are objectified and used everywhere to 'entertain' and sell products.

Men who are sexually violent need to take responsibility for the role they play as perpetrators. But we can't, however, get rid of sexual violence just by punishing individuals.

Sexual violence against women is a product of capitalist society where people are conditioned to see women as inferior and to see women's bodies as commodities or objects and separate from their humanity.

Sexism aids the capitalist system. The family provides a base for the reproduction and bringing up of future workers and the servicing and care of current (and unemployed) workers and retired workers.

This work which, in the home, is usually carried out unpaid by women (who may also work outside the home) saves capitalism millions of pounds, increasing the profits of a few.

Austerity

Women also disproportionately suffer the impact of austerity. As women's unemployment increases, new employment regulations undermine job security, and benefits are reduced, cuts to women's services continue and the support for victims of violence and existing safety measures are at risk.

But, as for example on the public sector strikes of 2011, women will enter the struggle in huge numbers. Mass united struggles of the working class can win victories.

But a genuine and permanent end to women's oppression, including rape, is only possible after fundamental changes in the way society is structured. This requires a conscious movement of the working class, women and men, and drawing in the middle class, to get rid of the current system based on exploitation, class privilege and inequality.

The personal is political

The Campaign Against Domestic Violence, initiated by the Socialist Party's precursor, Militant Labour, in 1991, showed how a 'women's issue' was an issue for the labour movement. The campaign, which united trade unions, women's groups, community groups and individuals, aimed to educate about why domestic violence happened and show how it could be taken up as an issue in trade unions and local authorities, for users of services and for employees experiencing domestic violence in the home.

The campaign put forward concrete demands for workers and users of public services, but also raised the political perspective of changing society to end inequality and oppression.



What action programme to combat sexism should we as socialists put forward?

Here are some suggestions:

- An independent investigation into the response of the police to sexual violence, with involvement of the trade unions and women's campaigns
- A campaign against sexual violence and sexual exploitation of women, with trade unions at the centre, which raises awareness; encourages reporting; demands confidential reporting centres; monitors cuts; and campaigns on a national level against every cut and reform which increases women's risk of sexual violence
- Investment to ensure the Home Office meets its commitment to provide a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in every police force area as a start to building up the services required
- No cuts to support services on campuses. Invest in lighting and other safety measures. For student unions to campaign to raise awareness and challenge sexism
- For a full programme of sex and relationship education in schools, that debunks myths about rape
- No to all cuts in jobs, services, benefits and pensions. Build a mass struggle in opposition to austerity, with a 24-hour general strike as the next major step after the 20 October TUC demo



Women's bodies are objectified and used to sell products, here train tickets

RAPE IS NO JOKE



Helen Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

Like most young women I was shocked by reports of misogyny and rape jokes at the Edinburgh festival. That a comedian would suggest the raping of an audience member who heckled his rape joke; that famous comedians such as Jimmy Carr continue to laugh about sexual violence towards women and that Russell Brand sexually harasses female staff is utterly disgraceful.

Portrayed as 'ironic' their sexist jokes can actually normalise sexism, making cat-calling, sexual harassment of women and similar jokes somehow acceptable. It can also further perpetuates the bullying of women who call out people making inappropriate jokes as 'prudes' and lacking a sense of humour.

How can a woman feel safe walking home at night if she fears that the men she passes laugh about raping women?

This is why the I support Socialist Students' new campaign, 'Rape

is no joke'. For the 80,000 women raped every year, rape jokes undermine their horrible experiences. Such 'humour' plays a role in the very high number of women who do not report being raped to the police.

But women shouldn't have to stand alone against this. We need to stand together against sexism in comedy with comedians who want to sort out the industry as well as students and young people who want to stop rape jokes.

Socialist Students is calling on comedians and venues to sign pledges that say: "I agree with the aims of Rape Is No Joke to change the culture of acceptance of rape



jokes in the comedy circuit. These jokes add to a wider culture that too often doesn't take rape or rape victims seriously. It is important to make a stand to say that rape is nothing to be laughed

at. I pledge to only host comedians who/ agree not to use rape jokes in performances"

But sexism, unfortunately, goes much further than rape jokes. There's no denying things have come a long way for women in Britain over the last century – winning the right to vote, access to abortion, contraception and – in the eyes of the law at least – equal pay.

But vicious austerity puts many of these steps forward at risk.

'Rape is no joke' is part of a wider campaign against sexism and misogyny in society. Fear of sexual violence affects women everyday – and can mean women feel scared to walk home alone at night

or change their style of dress, their transport routes or their lifestyle through fear of sexual assault.

Socialist Women are marching on Slutwalk 2012 to fight for rape to be dealt with as the serious subject it is. We want decent support services and resources. We also want a change in attitude.

We face the fight of our lives – to defend the rights and the welfare state that working class women and men built and fought for. Over the years, when women have moved into action on workplace and education issues they start to recognise and challenge discrimination which affects them as women as well as as workers and students.

Today women are at the forefront of the battles over public sector pensions and jobs, as well as against the cuts in education. Collective action, such as a 24-hour general strike will also help to undermine sexist attitudes.

See page 11 for more on Slutwalk and fighting sexism

Rape is no joke: rapeisnojoke.com
Socialist Students: socialiststudents.org.uk

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!