

ON 20 OCTOBER

TUC demos in London, Glasgow and Belfast

LET'S GET A MILLION ON THE STREETS AGAINST AUSTERITY

then let's all strike together to kick Con-Dems out

24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

**TUC
name
the
day!**



London: Assemble along Victoria Embankment from 11am
See: **afuturethatworks.org** for details
And **shopstewards.net** for NSSN campaign resources

Cut out and use this poster to let everyone know about the demo

the **Socialist**

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South Africa: Solidarity with miners

Workers' struggles continue throughout the industry

On 18 September, after six weeks of defiant strike action - when over 40 miners were killed by police acting on behalf of the mining bosses - Marikana platinum miners in Rustenburg, South Africa, won a significant 22% pay increase.

UK conglomerate Lonmin, the mine owners, also had to recognise the power of the workers to organise themselves independently of them and their stooges in the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Lonmin struggle has fuelled a strike movement by 75,000 miners throughout the industry

In the following articles, members of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, an affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International and the Socialist Party's counterpart in South Africa), explain their important role in the continuing miners' struggle.

The battle of the South African miners is reaching a crucial stage with the movement escalating and the employers starting to introduce disciplinary measures, including the closure of striking miners' hostels and widespread sackings.

The workers, who continue to fight in the Rustenburg area, successfully launched a Strike Coordinating Committee, now made up of the leadership of each of the 15 shafts 'illegally' on strike.

Mineworkers in other provinces outside of the North West province, where Rustenburg is located, have called upon the Committee to visit them to give them the opportunity to become part of the strike movement. This includes goldmines in Carletonville, in the Gauteng Province - the industrial heartland of South Africa, where workers have been on strike and had refused to be addressed by the NUM president.

The KDC West Goldfields strike committee in Carletonville has agreed to put the issue of affiliation

to the Committee to their members for a mandate. There have also been similar calls from mineworkers in the provinces of Limpopo and the Free State.

Alarmed by the manner in which its biggest and richest affiliate, the NUM, is being bypassed by the Coordinating Committee, the general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), Zwelinzima Vavi, has elbowed the NUM leadership aside and intervened to overturn the NUM's denunciation of the workers' demand for R12,500 (£928) monthly wage.

Trade union branches can donate to the Strike Coordinating Committee:

Bank: Standard Bank, South Africa
Account Name: Workers Defence Fund

Account Number: 300495986

Branch: East Gate
Branch Code: 018 505
Swift Code: SBZAJJ



A leading trade union activist and Democratic Socialist Movement member from Rustenburg, South Africa, will be speaking at Socialism 2012 in London (see page 11) on the miners' general strike and the political tasks facing the South African working class.

Support the struggle

At a several thousand-strong rally of striking Anglo Platinum miners last week the five platform speakers included two miners' leaders, DSM comrade Mamelwe Sebei, the main leader of the strikes, and Alec Thraves who brought greetings from the Socialist Party of England and Wales and the CWI - whose message was received with loud cheering and cries of "Amandla" (Zulu for power).

South African radio and television interviewed comrade Alec and the Socialist Party's support for the strike was transmitted across South Africa.

The DSM's role in mobilising support and publicity for the 400 workers who occupied the Samancor Chrome mine shaft was applauded by a 50-strong meeting of the Coordinating Committee in Rustenburg.

DSM members are travelling thousands of kilometres every week across the Rustenburg region and beyond, helping to coordinate the action of the striking miners. The DSM is appealing to members and supporters of the CWI to help finance this activity.

Make donations payable to Socialist Party and send to 'South Africa Appeal', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Online: Put 'South Africa Appeal' in the message box - www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate

Sickened by Labour conference? Build the anti-cuts alternative!

Ronnie Job
Swansea

One further downside of being sick and off work is that I've been able to watch some of the Labour Party conference. Anybody else who's had a similar misfortune, watching Labour Party conference - not being off sick, won't have needed to see much to answer the question posed in the last issue of the Socialist, 'Can Labour give a lead in the fight against austerity?', with a resounding 'No!'

In the run-up to conference, Len McCluskey, leader of Unite, called on his union members to join the Labour Party to reclaim it for trade unionists and the working class. He also predicted to the press that Labour would have to listen to the unions and his union in particular because Unite has backed Labour to the tune of £6 million in the last few years.

Any Unite members watching the conference would have wondered what they got for £6 million of their

hard-earned subs.

Ed Balls' speech blew any idea that Labour is listening to the unions out of the water. He bragged about how he had told the TUC conference that Labour would not commit to reversing any Tory cuts and that Labour in power would have made, and will make, cuts.

Balls-speak

He compared the Labour Party of today to that of 1945. Here I thought he might say that Labour would defend the NHS Clement Atlee's administration set up. But no, he preferred to concentrate on the cuts they made, like bringing in prescription charges.

He called for a cross-party consensus on re-building Britain when it seems to ordinary people that there is a consensus from the parties in power - that the working class must pay for the current crisis of capitalism.

When McCluskey spoke many of the Labour Party members who ap-

plauded Balls weren't in the room. When the leader of my union, Dave Prentis of Unison, spoke the hall looked practically empty. It was a graphic demonstration that Labour is not listening to the unions.

So to McCluskey and Prentis - stop throwing away our subs and instead build a real alternative! Imagine what the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC, the electoral coalition that the Socialist Party participates in with leading left trade unionists) could do with the resources of these huge unions behind it.

Apparently in his speech Miliband will tell us how he is 'one of us'. Yeah right! Can you see him making difficult decisions at the end of each month about buying food or paying bills? Is he worrying about his house being repossessed or looking for a pay-day loan from the likes of Wonga? I don't think so!

In contrast to the Labour Party the Socialist Party insists that our members who are elected to positions in trade unions or politics

Bob Crow slams Labour and calls for a political alternative

Responding to the adoption of Con-Dem policies on public sector pay by the Labour front bench at the conference in Manchester, RMT general secretary Bob Crow said:

"Millions of workers have had their pay frozen for years now and have seen their real standards of living decrease by 16% while boardroom pay has gone through the roof. You would have thought that the Labour Party might do something to side with those taking a battering and against those dealing it out but you would be wrong.

Labour and the government are now positioned like Tweedledum and Tweedledee; whichever one you vote for you end up with the same kick in the teeth for the very people that make this country tick

and that is a disgrace.

Who are those nurses, teachers and public service staff going to vote for now that Labour has made it clear they have abandoned them?

The case for a political party rooted in the trade unions and with a clear socialist agenda is now overwhelming as Ed Miliband and Ed Balls signal their desertion of the working class and their adoption of a pro-business, pro-EU and pro-austerity programme."

Bob Crow is a member of the TUSC national steering committee and the general secretary of the RMT union which, at its annual conference this June, agreed to formalise its relationship with TUSC.

See www.tusc.org.uk/news030712.php

receive only the same wage as the people they represent. If you elect a Socialist Party member under the TUSC banner you know you truly are electing "one of us".

Even if I hadn't already been off

sick, watching Labour Party conference would have made me nauseous. It makes me all the more determined to build TUSC, the anti-cuts political alternative, in the future.

Squatting conviction paves way for rise in homelessness

Paul Kershaw

A 21 year old homeless man who had moved to London from Plymouth looking for work has become the first person to be jailed under new legislation that makes 'squatting a residential building' a criminal offence. Ironically the jailed man, Alex Haigh, had previously worked as an apprentice bricklayer.

The homeless charity, Crisis, estimates that 40% of homeless people have squatted at some time and believe that the new law will result in a further increase in rough sleeping.

Already, before the new law, rough sleeping in London has risen by a massive 43% in 2011/2012 compared to the previous 12 months – part of a desperate housing crisis that reflects the lack of affordable housing, increased unemployment and job insecurity. This is being worsened by vicious changes to benefits which hit low-paid workers as well as the unemployed and sick.

Housing crisis

Recently published research undertaken last autumn (by Ipsos Mori), before the worst of the changes, showed that a third of benefit claimants in London private rented accommodation had tried to negotiate a lower rent but only 31% of them succeeded.

They also reported that nearly four in ten landlords in Brent, Westminster and Hackney had already "taken some action (eviction, termination or non-renewal of a tenancy) because of the new measures". This is evidence of social cleansing in high rent areas of London showing the importance of Youth Fight for



Jobs' 'Forced out' campaign.

Rather than tackle the roots of the housing crisis, the lowest peacetime rate of house building since World War One for instance, the Con-Dems criminalise the homeless.

Hugh Haigh, Alex's father, was upset at the severity of the sentence given to his son. "They have made an example of him. To put him in that prison environment, I don't understand it. If he broke the law, he should be dealt with, but it is like putting someone who has not paid their taxes into Dartmoor prison." Certainly no bankers, at the root of this crisis, have been jailed.

Ill-informed debate

The press has given prominence to cases where a homeowner who 'goes on holiday, and returns to find his home squatted'. People will be sympathetic in such cases but they are extremely rare.

When the legislation was being

rammed through parliament by Grant Shapps, now Conservative Party chairman, 160 leading legal figures wrote an open letter saying

43%
Increase in rough sleeping in 2011/12

the new law change was not needed and accused ministers of fostering 'ill-informed debate' misrepresenting the powers already available.

There are 930,000 empty homes according to the Empty Homes Agency. If these were let at affordable rents and if the banks were nationalised and directed to support a massive programme of house building, bricklayers like Alex Haigh would have work and the need to squat would disappear.

Council tax benefit - new and not improved

Becci Heagney

Most councils are now in the process of consulting on the Con-Dems' new Council Tax Support Scheme – the new and not improved way council tax benefit will be paid.

Labour councillors told a recent consultation meeting in Nottingham that the fairest thing to do is to cut the benefit for everybody by 20%. This didn't appear to be 'fair' to the people present at the meeting, some of whom said they are living on less than £50 a week and are being asked to pay between £4 and £10 a week towards their council tax.

People in Plymouth could be forced to pay an extra £249 a year. Liverpool City Council is consulting on whether to cut 17.5% from everyone or make extra budget cuts elsewhere to protect the benefit.

The changes to council tax benefit are planned for around the time when universal credit is introduced. As part of this, housing benefit is being cut for people living in social

housing. If you've got a spare room, you'll receive a 14% cut in your benefit, if you've got two spare rooms it will be 25%.

For those in privately rented accommodation, the local housing allowance (which the amount of housing benefit you receive is linked to) is being frozen too. That

In the words of councillor Chapman: there's a food bank down the road if we're hungry

will mean that the amount of benefit you receive will bear no relation to the amount your rent is. Again, you'll be forced to pay an extra £10, £15, £20 a week.

Jobseeker's Allowance is £71 a week (£56.25 a week for under-25s) – how far can this money be stretched?

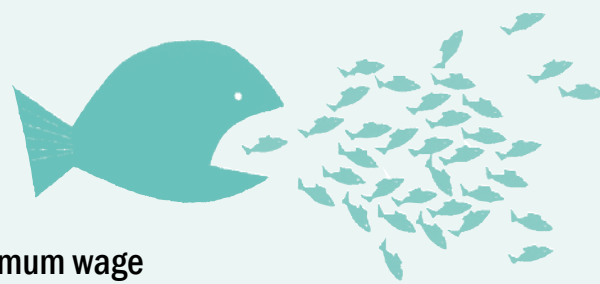
By the time you've topped up your rent and council tax, will there even be any money left for food or other bills? People on low incomes are already struggling. Will there be more parents skipping meals to be able to feed their children?

In December the coalition will decide whether it will freeze benefits or link uprating to earnings – both will be a cut.

Outrageously, in the words of Councillor Chapman, Labour councillor for Bulwell, the most deprived area in Nottingham, there's a food bank down the road if we're hungry and there's a good Credit Union which will provide cheap loans if we can't afford to pay our bills.

These cuts need to be stopped. Unemployed people, people with disabilities and people on low incomes who receive these benefits need to link up with public sector and private sector workers who are fighting to defend their jobs, pay and pensions in a united show of strength against this government – a 24-hour general strike against austerity.

Them...



Minimum wage

Breathe a sigh of relief everybody, the hard times are over – the minimum wage has been increased... by 11p an hour... for over 21s. For young people the minimum wage remains frozen –

11p
Increase in the minimum wage for over 21s

it's a shame the cost of bills and food hasn't. According to the Low Pay Commission, the freeze is to make sure there is no incentive for young people to leave education early – except for there being no EMA and fees being £9,000 a year that is. Even the 11p for older workers represents a 1.8% increase as opposed to at least 2.9% inflation – so a wage cut in real terms.

How many 'scroungers'?

Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that the average person in the UK thinks that 30% of claims for disability benefit are false. In fact estimated fraud by those on Disability Living Allowance is 0.4%. Where have people got such a wrong impression from then? The Tory propaganda machine and the constant headlines in the Daily Mail and similar about 'scroungers' and 'benefit cheats' for a start. And why? As it's such an insignificant number it's obviously not to warn all us hard working tax payers that we're being ripped off. Much more likely that it's about turning the 99% against each other and getting us behind the Con-Dems' brutal attacks on disabled people.

Pensions for property

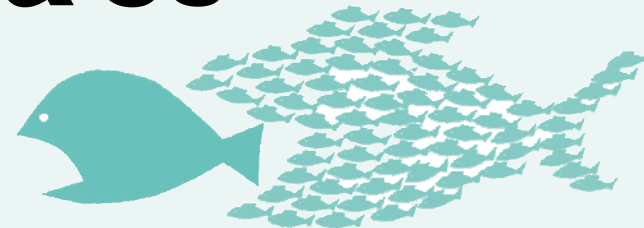
After a tough few weeks of bad polls and Youtube spoofs, Nick Clegg is desperate to re-gain ground. His solution? 'Pensions for property'. In place of a deposit, parents and grandparents approaching retirement will be able to promise that the lump sum they are entitled to on retirement will go straight towards the cost of their children's homes. This taking-from-peter-to-give-to-paul approach will only further impoverish pensioners and not make any significant dent in the housing crisis. An online poll by the Telegraph showed 92% think it's a bad idea. Even trying to exploit the huge fear people have over their housing situation won't save the Lib Dems now!

Kick out the fat cats

West Coast Main Line is due to be taken over by FirstGroup from Virgin Trains in December after First bid £1 billion more than Virgin for the franchise, likely to be paid for through cuts in staffing, pay and service quality. However, according to the Observer, there is a growing belief that First won't be ready in time, so the state company Directly Operated Railways (DOR) will have to 'step in for a while'. DOR already runs the East Coast Main Line after it failed in private hands. Since being renationalised, East Coast punctuality is at its best for 13 years, with better passenger numbers and satisfaction. It has also, during this time, made almost £200 million in profits. £200 million is also the figure that Virgin boss Richard Branson has personally made out of (lossmaking, taxpayer-subsidised) privatised railways! Kick the fat cats off our trains – renationalise the entire rail network but properly under democratic workers' control and management.

Bob Severn

...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

@ tweets this week

Dave Nellist

BBC today at conference: 4G sale £4bn for 100k affordable houses? when #Cov-entry alone has 24k on the waiting list #dropintheocean

Phil Dobbin

@davenellist & estimates say that 100k people will be eating via food banks in near future. We've had the circus, how about some bread?

Tony Saunoris

State handouts to the Royal family will also be affected by changes to benefits? They have been claiming for rather a long time

Helen Ridett

Seeing gushing tweets about the #GreenParty's blatant + unashamed support for capitalist economics...guess what? Capitalism just isn't green!



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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Kick private profit out of education



On one of the Barnfield College picket lines photo Steve Glennon

On 2 October, lecturers at Barnfield college in Luton were on strike against an 'unlimited hours' contract. The college already sponsors academies and free schools and now the principal is apparently keen to change it into a profit-making institution. The plan is to increase annual hours and cut the number of staff to deliver them.

Steve Glennon spoke to Shane Hall, regional support officer for UCU, on the picket line.

"The strike is going very well, we

have more people out than we expected. We have pickets on ten gates at three campuses.

"The threat of the principal's plan to create 30,000 extra teacher hours, which would result in redundancies, stirred staff into action. All staff were sent a letter yesterday saying they had one week to sign the new contract or they will be deemed to have terminated their contract.

"The principal, who is the darling of the Tories, will also have the right to change the contract at any time

without consultation. We are fighting for the college to return to the negotiating table. An increase from 21 hours to 26 hours is not workable, it could even be 35 hours."

- Staff at K College in Kent are due to strike for half a day on 8 October, against cuts. The UCU and NUT teaching union members will be protesting outside a governors' meeting in Tonbridge against threats to 110 full-time teaching and support workers' posts.

Save our workplace nurseries!

Around 30 parents and children who use the nursery at the Revenue and Customs (HMRC) site in Nottingham protested on 27 September against its proposed closure.

This was part of a national day of action to save the nurseries at eight sites across the country.

Civil service union PCS members are angry about the closure as they feel that the sites will be sold off to or rented by a private company.

They are not being told by HMRC why they are being closed.

Parents on the protest told the Socialist how beneficial it is to have a nursery at work. They can bring their children there and manage their working hours to be able to take them home at a reasonable time.

If they need to find alternative childcare, it will cause massive disruption to their and their children's lives. And that's if they can find a place elsewhere!

There was much support from other workers at the site and from people walking and driving past. PCS will be discussing the next steps in this campaign to save the nurseries.

Becci Heagney
Nottingham Socialist Party



At the Leicester HMRC protest photo Karl Cross

while most other nurseries have six month waiting lists and are likely to be more expensive.

These closures will cost nursery workers their jobs. Some HMRC staff may be forced to either reduce their hours or give up work because

of the lack of childcare facilities.

Many reps were angry that HMRC calls itself a family-friendly employer but can't even provide something as basic as childcare.

Iain Dalton
Leeds North West

Leeds

Around 30 PCS reps and activists protested outside Peter Bennett House in West Park, Leeds on the same day against the proposals.

Parents have been given only 12 weeks' notice of these changes

No to slave labour in universities

Jenny Thatcher

PhD student, in a personal capacity

Postgraduate research students are increasingly being used as slave labour to cut teaching costs at universities. PhD students are being used as teachers to replace more expensive senior staff.

For example the University of East London (UEL) is advertising volunteering jobs, including teaching and lab assistants, which would clearly require someone who has spent several years in higher education.

This is another disgusting example of the exploitation of UEL students and staff. The timing is appalling. UEL staff are fighting increased workloads, are in fear for

their jobs and are taking two-day strike action soon.

It is another means of reducing paid work opportunities at UEL. To make it worse a UEL student union sabbatical officer has posted this on the UELSU Facebook as 'a good opportunity for students'

A senior academic recently commented in a meeting with PhD students that if they wanted teaching experience they should shadow their supervisors, ie work for free. A number of PhD students have already had their wages cut from £47 to £17 an hour. Some have even signed contracts for £47 but are being paid the reduced rate.

But UEL PhD students across different schools are having an emergency meeting to discuss the organising of postgraduate teachers at UEL.

Crossrail flashmob blocks London's Oxford Street

As we reported last week, 28 workers including a Unite steward and safety rep have been dismissed from the Crossrail Westbourne Park site in west London. The unionised workers employed by EIS Electrical were searched and removed from the site at the instruction of Bam Ferrovial Kier (BFK), the consortium of contractors building Crossrail.

Crossrail is going to be one of the largest infrastructure jobs in the whole of Western Europe – if it is unionised the workforce will earn good wages and the job will be safe.

The importance of this was underlined when a recent accident at

Westbourne Park caused the site to be closed.

Around 50 construction workers and their supporters blocked Oxford Street in central London on 26 September, where there is a large Crossrail site.

There was a lot of support from passing shoppers and workers when large banners protesting at the sackings and blacklisting were unfurled. See: www.shopstewards.net for a video.

Watch this space for news of further 'flashmob' protests. There are also daily protests at Westbourne Park, 6.30-9am.

Indefinite strike call brings results for Doncaster bin workers



The mass meeting discusses the company's offer photo A.Tice

Alistair Tice

On 28 September, Doncaster bin workers, employed by Sita UK, voted 70 to 50 to accept a revised pay offer and return to work. This follows two days of strike action and notice of indefinite strike action.

The workers, all members of Unite, were demanding a £1 an hour pay rise to bring them parity with Sita staff in West Yorkshire.

Before the strikes, Sita insisted their 1.7% pay offer was final: "Let me make this crystal clear, there is no more money" repeated one manager in negotiations.

However after a very militant picket which turned back scab bin-wagons, workers rejected a self-

financing productivity deal and agreed to go on all-out strike.

This forced Sita to concede a 3.2% rise for this year, with no strings and backdated to April, with inflation-rate pay rises in the following two years.

One worker said that he had worked on Doncaster bins for 17 years and this is the biggest annual pay rise he had ever had.

That said, nearly half the workers voted against this deal believing that the strike had Sita on the run and more could have been achieved by striking into next week.

Even so, this is a partial victory and will give confidence to a group of workers only recently unionised and still in the process of building a branch uniting all three depots.

Building the fightback in the universities

As students arrive at their university campuses this year they are being met by the most vicious assault on the right to an education seen in generations. But there is also a new mood of defiance growing on the campuses. Over the past two weeks Socialist Students has been at the heart of preparing students for a long, hot autumn of protest.

We've had great support for our campaigns calling for a general strike and in solidarity

with international students at London Met.

We have held successful meetings at universities and colleges across the country which have met with a great response. Meetings have taken place in places such as Leeds, University of East London, Newcastle and Cardiff where the meeting was so packed we had to have an overflow room!

Below is a small flavour of what's been happening.

Sheffield

Sheffield Socialist Students got off to a flying start this year. All the students who were involved last year have been keen to build on campus.

Our first meeting of the year attracted 23 people on 'Capitalism is crisis and the case for socialism'. Ten of these were new to Socialist Students. Our second meeting was just as big, with many of the same new faces, giving us hope that Socialist Students will continue to be the most effective political campaigning society at University of Sheffield.

Despite only being registered as a society this year, Sheffield Hallam University Socialist Students have also started as they mean to go on. The society held campaign stalls throughout freshers week and the first meeting was attended by eleven students.

Both Socialist Students groups in Sheffield plan to push ahead with our involvement in the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign to bring back EMA student payments and for a big

student turnout to the TUC demonstration on 20 October.

Chaz Lockett
Sheffield Socialist Students

Queen Mary

Losing library staff through forced redundancy, tuition fees sky-rocketing to £9,000 a year, security cover reduced to three staff on campus for the night shift... It's not really any wonder we've had such a positive reception at the beginning of this academic year - there really is an appetite for change!

Over 100 students gave their details over the course of the freshers fair. One student told us Socialist Students seemed to have 'a lot more going on' than other political societies as we're the only group with a whole society meeting every week, two active campaigns, a calendar bursting with socials and film screenings, not to mention the demos and meetings that are being held

off-campus.

Our first meeting of the new academic year - titled 'What is socialism?' - was attended by 15 people and had some fantastic discussion.

There was also a great debate at this month's teetotal social, The Un-bullingdon Club, which we centred on the new Rape Is No Joke campaign. Everyone contributed and we hope this grows more popular over the coming months!

Ellen Kenyon Peers
Queen Mary Socialist Students

Birmingham

Socialist Students took part in all three freshers fairs in Birmingham.

At Birmingham City University, we had an official stall and huge interest. We got 120 contact details from students keen to get involved. This is hardly surprising, with the backdrop of the tuition fees increase as well as cuts of 80% made to the teaching budget.

Covering the freshers at Aston



photo Suzanne Beishon

was the most troublesome as security stopped us from leafleting anywhere on campus. This shows some student unions see themselves as money-making organisations rather than bodies which fight for students' interests. Despite these setbacks, students came to our informal meet-

ing on the day, as well as many more who provided their contact details for the mailing list.

At the University of Birmingham hundreds of leaflets were snapped up by interested students.

Safina Bi
Birmingham Socialist Students

Marching against austerity

Youth Fight for Jobs Scotland, together with the PCS Young Members Network, is organising a March for Jobs and Public Services against Austerity. The march will begin at Stirling Castle on Wednesday 17 October and end by joining the mass demonstration called by the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) on Saturday 20 October in Glasgow. Ryan, the chief steward of the march said:

"I work for a small firm that provides security. I have a zero hours contract. Every job I've had since leaving school has paid a wage I can't really live decently on. I'm 23 so I will get an increase to £6.19 an hour when we are marching. Even with this, (the highest wage I've ever earned) I have to choose which bills I can afford to pay each month.

"I think the demand for a massive public home building and renovation programme to solve the housing shortage and put skilled workers and those who want to learn a trade back to work is important.

"I'm not naïve enough to think the politicians will listen to our demands. Look at what they've had to do in Egypt to change their lives - it's going to be a long struggle to build a mass movement to change society but this march can play a role in getting young people involved. "We

need to build a fightback side-by-side with the trade unions. They have got to do more in industries like mine. I've joined Unite and I hope some of what we're doing will show the leaders that young people want to get involved."

Scottish March for Jobs and Public Services against Austerity Stirling to Glasgow 17-20 October

Contact Youth Fight for Jobs Scotland to get involved, for info and to support the march:
www.scottishmarchforjobs.wordpress.com
youthfightscotland@gmail.com
Twitter: YFJ Scotland

Youth Fight for Jobs Northern Ireland are also marching for a future, Belfast, 6 October. Call 07941841092 or email niyouthfightforjobs@gmail.com

Anniversary pamphlet
Organising the lost generation: Jarrow to London 2011 March for Jobs

Order now for £6 plus £1 postage (usual price £9.99) at leftbooks.co.uk or phone 020 8988 8777



Partial victory for international students at London Metropolitan

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national organiser

A court ruling has granted a partial reprieve to over 2,000 international students at London Met who had been threatened with deportation. This followed the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) earlier decision to revoke the university's licence to teach those from outside the EU.

The 22 September ruling allows London Met to seek a judicial review. The result is that international students will be able to remain for one year or until the end of their courses if they are due to finish before the end of the summer.

Socialist Students welcomes this decision, which represents a partial victory for the excellent campaign waged by London Met's staff and

students to stop deportations and reverse the UKBA's license revocation.

But this is not the end of the road. The court's decision leaves open the possibility of deportations taking place in one year's time and gives no guarantees that London Met will be able to recruit international students for next September.

Huge campaign needed

The need for a strong campaign, fighting for full restoration of the licence, is still needed. Both international and home students currently arriving for freshers week need to be ready to build a huge campaign to defend London Met and the right for all to study.

In addition, the campaign must take up the threat of a huge programme of cuts and privatisation being made by the

university. We must not allow vital support services to be handed over to the profiteers.

The demonstration held on Friday 29 September, attended by over 60 people, showed real potential to build the fightback and gather new momentum in the autumn term.

In many ways the government is attempting to use London Met as a test case for some of their most destructive policies in higher education.

This is made possible by a university management who is willing to carry out the Con-Dems' every whim. For this reason the struggle to defend London Met is central to the battle to defend higher education against the government's general assault. The campaign should be a national priority for the National Union of Students. This fight isn't over.

Suspended student union president continues fight for reinstatement

Shana Begum, elected president of Bolton University Student Union and Socialist Party member, was suspended by university management four months ago, just as students were leaving for the summer break.

Rather than allowing one of the union's elected vice-presidents to take over as acting president while the university's allegations are investigated, management has instead installed a totally unelected member to take over Shana's responsibilities. Also, in an unprecedented move, union trustees have been informed that the university is suspending the block grant given to the student union.

Shana said: "Students returning to their studies at the University of Bolton this year are attending an institution where student democracy has been totally shutdown. I have been suspended on spurious grounds, after being re-elected for a second term in office by an overwhelming majority.

"I am determined to defend student democracy. This blatant attempt to silence me is, in my opinion, a result of my determination to represent students with complaints against the university and raise uncomfortable questions about the treatment of international students and other groups.

"This matter isn't going away.

These are the actions of a university management anxious to silence anyone who tries to challenge their agenda."



The fight of all our lives - for a 24-hour general strike

NUT activists prepare for action



Lobbying the TUC photo Dave Gorton

Delegates from 23 different National Union of Teachers (NUT) associations met in Leeds on 29 September for the first steering committee of LANAC – the Local Associations Network Action Campaign.

LANAC was launched after two packed meetings of NUT delegates at the annual conference. It brings together affiliated NUT Associations on the basis of a founding statement which included the following aims:

- To continue to work at every level in the NUT for the earliest possible return to collective industrial action in opposition to the attacks on pensions and for a calendar of action that can secure further concessions from this weakened government.
- Develop a fightback on workload.
- Working to ensure that the joint NUT/NASUWT initiative includes joint national strike action; clearly and explicitly addresses the issue of pensions and demands the reopening of talks with government; leads to the development of rank and file links between the NUT and NASUWT including across schools; is not used to justify further unnecessary delay in taking action alongside other trade unions seeking to build coordinated strike action; includes far more effective sanctions than those in the existing NASUWT 'action-short-of-strike-action'.

Delegates welcomed the fact that the last objective had already been secured, with the jointly agreed ac-

tion instructions already securing confidence-boosting victories.

Delegates reported that while the action short of strike action was starting to achieve small victories, and bringing new reps and school groups into activity across the country, teachers were rightly asking when the national strike action was to be called.

Regrettably, there was, as yet, no sign of agreement on this, particularly from the NASUWT leadership. It was agreed to publicise model petitions and model motions for school groups and NUT Associations to pass, calling on the NUT executive to urgently seek agreement for dates for joint strike action with other unions including, if necessary, without waiting further for the NASUWT. In the absence of nationally-called action, LANAC is, however, also keen to develop the possibilities of locally coordinated strike action to oppose unacceptable appraisal and observation policies being imposed by schools and/or local authorities.

Plans were agreed to circulate stories of local successes and to produce LANAC leaflets to help build the action short of strike action campaign, while also calling for dates for national strike action to be set. Details of the 8 December LANAC conference will be circulated as soon as the venue is confirmed.

For a full version of this report see: electmartin1.blogspot.com

On 27 September, London Socialist Party and Socialist Students members met to discuss the cuts and austerity which we are currently experiencing.

Young women came who had met socialists on the Slutwalk; public sector workers and trade unionists new to socialist ideas came to the meeting; students came from UEL, Kingston, Roehampton, UCL, Essex – just some of the universities where socialist students have been meeting with great success in the freshers fairs.

We heard from the regional secretary of the RMT about the fight for a 24-hour general strike, and from Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates about the need to get big numbers of candidates against austerity for the council elections in London in 2014.

The meeting drew inspiration from the miners' struggle in South Africa and the battle of oil workers in Kazakhstan. We heard about the new Socialist Students campaign

Rape is No Joke and the determination of a new generation of young women to fight sexism at the same time as fighting the cuts.

The continuous struggle that capitalism has forced on the 99% of people has made the working class search for alternative solutions and systems. This was reflected in the meeting.

Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe introduced the discussion on plans for the autumn and the important roles of the trade unions and the anti-cuts movement within them.

The TUC demonstration on 20 October will pave the way in uniting the working class to fight the current austerity measures. It will be a vital part of the campaign for a one-day general strike against the Con-Dems' attacks on the working class.

- For a video of Peter Taaffe's speech, see the Socialist Party website: www.socialistparty.org.uk

On my way to the London meeting on 27 September I caught an insight into the anger of students.

Initially, the young people sitting opposite me on the tube train engaged in normal, everyday life gossip, but suddenly and spontaneously, the topic changed and they began discussing the march against austerity on 20 October. My red socialist ears were burning and I interjected, asking them if they were marching. They emphatically said they were.

They were students and, although not suffering as a result of the latest fee hikes personally, they were angry at the

government for raising the cost of tuition for those starting this year and the burden that is being placed on young people starting university.

One told me that her Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was cut a few years back. She explained her anger at the government for removing it and how it has impacted on her life. We then began to discuss the desperate job situation, especially for young people.

This is just a small insight into the anger being felt by working class people in Britain.

Richard Shattock
Hatfield Socialist Party



photo Paul Mattsson

Support the Socialist

The Socialist has a record of reporting on workers' struggles across England and Wales and internationally. We now see it as vital that we reflect the mood that exists for the TUC to act urgently on the general strike motion.

We have published many articles by leading trade unionists – Socialist Party members and not. We welcome debate and discussion about this crucial step – can your branch contribute?

The model motion, letter and petition from the National Shop Stewards Network can be used to build this campaign.

We have increased our page count

in the run-up to the 20 October TUC demo to accommodate this important material.

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photo Paul Mattsson

Model resolution for a 24-hour general strike

For trade union and anti-cuts organisations. When this is passed, please tell the Socialist:

editors@socialistparty.org.uk

This [body] 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 alarmed that a relentless barrage of even more austerity cuts is coming down the line, and will continue into the foreseeable future.

Millions of workers, young people, the sick and disabled people face a lifetime of severe hardship through cuts to pay, conditions, benefits and services – the horrendous situation facing people in Greece could be our future if we don't stop the Con-Dem attacks.

We believe austerity cuts must be stopped, and that the labour movement has the potential to force a massive U-turn from this Coalition government of the rich, if our trade unions were to organise action decisively together.

We urge all members, friends and families to come to the TUC demo on 20 October. Let's campaign so this day is seen as the beginning of a new stage of action.

We urge all unions participating in the demo to follow up with a further coordinated 24-hour national strike of both public and private sector workers, making direct calls to youth and students, the unemployed, and community campaigns to join in.

We, therefore, agree that this branch will organise a local/regional meeting to discuss how to progress these ideas put forward by the PCS and POA at the TUC.

We also call on the national executive of our union to call on the TUC general council to urgently meet to name the date for the biggest possible coordinated strike.

• For material backing a 24-hour strike, including petitions and leaflets, please see the National Shop Stewards Network website:
www.shopstewards.net



- 1926 General Strike: Workers Taste Power, by Peter Taaffe £7.50
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Reasons to join the 20 October demo, reasons to build for a 24-hour strike

South West NHS workers want action against 'pay cartel'

Tom Baldwin

A series of big and angry meetings of health workers across the South West has shown the scale of anger against plans to break up national bargaining and slash their terms and conditions.

Twenty of the NHS trusts in the region have signed up to a 'consortium' planning to force through regional pay. Health unions are referring to this as the 'South West pay cartel' and have organised meetings across the region including of over 100 people in Exeter and 300 in Bristol.

The cartel's plans have been drawn up in secret and behind the backs of trade unions. Staff and patients only found out from a leaked document that the trusts had paid £10,000 of taxpayers' money each to sign up. The details of the attacks themselves are eye-watering.

The proposals contain attacks on pay, both basic and shift allowances. If implemented they will force staff to go to work when unwell under plans not to pay the first three days of sickness. Other attacks mentioned include lengthening the working week and reducing annual leave. Added together they represent a cut of 15% in workers' terms and conditions!

No wonder staff are angry about this. It's not just the attacks themselves but the secrecy, hypocrisy and contempt for workers and their unions that the management have revealed. Senior management are excluded from the proposals. One consortium idea is to make paying increments performance-related while managers in Gloucestershire have just had the performance-related part of their contract bought out.

The document makes it clear the extent they are willing to go to break the unions and enforce the new contracts. A nuclear option is outlined – sacking all 64,000 workers affected and forcing them to re-sign contracts on the worse conditions. Staff recognise how serious this is, if national union bargaining is broken now it will open the door to even worse attacks in the future. Bosses from other regions are also watch-



Attacks on health workers need to be fought by the whole trade union movement photo Paul Mattsson



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

stepping up this campaign of action have gone down well. Many reps have reported that their members are even more motivated to fight this than the pensions dispute last year.

There were also warnings that this time the union leaderships must match members' determination. A regional demonstration and a well-built for consultative ballot for industrial action would raise confidence and prepare the unions for immediate action if the trusts move to implement these plans.

The biggest rounds of applause have gone to those speakers who have put the pay cartel in the context of the government's whole austerity agenda.

The pay cartel should be a warning to all workers. Ultimately these attacks on public and private sector workers can only be defeated by the combined resistance of the whole trade union movement – that fight-back should start with a 24-hour general strike.

Tom is a prospective Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for the November Bristol mayoral election
www.tusc.org.uk

ing carefully.

At the meetings trade union members in the NHS have been joined by some members of the public who understand that this is an attack on the service as well as the staff. Cheaper staff and a weaker union spell bigger profits for the private companies eyeing up our NHS.

Unions have so far organised a petition and a series of lobbies. At the meetings any suggestions for

Cut the Con-Dems - not our NHS!

So much for David Cameron's general election pledge to 'not cut the NHS' - our health service is in the middle of a £20 billion 'efficiency drive' - ie cuts.

Since the 2010 election, nurse and midwife numbers have gone down by 6,000. Waiting times have gone up - 68,000 London patients at 16 large trusts had to wait over four hours in the first six months of 2012, compared to 28,400 in 2010. More hospitals are facing downgrades and closures. In England, these cuts are part of getting the NHS ready for the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act, which will end the NHS as we know it. Robin Clapp, from Bristol, gives a taste of what the Con-Dems' plans mean.

For years and years I've campaigned against NHS cuts and sold copies of the Socialist outside of the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI). Very often afterwards I've gone for a cup of tea in the café run by the WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service), always receiving a warm and supportive response from these elderly women - surely ideal role models for Cameron's "Big Society"?

But hospitals are changing and no longer have a place for humble cafes staffed by volunteers. The WRVS shop has been boarded up and a massive Costa Coffee stall now stands imposingly in front of the main entrance.

This is the first stage in a massive redevelopment of the site. All around the hospital there are signs of building. New wards perhaps? A new cardiology unit?

No of course not. It's all to do with constructing a new "Welcome Centre" which is the euphemism for a

mini shopping mall.

Priorities

With NHS workers being placed on zero contracts, threats to the BRI's A&E unit and a hardnosed management seeking to force workers into tearing up national pay and conditions in favour of regional pay, it seems that the priority at the moment is to ensure the effective delivery of a new retail space. Even the site building workers I've spoken to are cynical and angry about this and can appreciate the absurdity of hospitals renting out much needed space to turn themselves into shops.

But that's the logic of privatising the NHS - if the Tories succeed, you'll be able to buy an expensive coffee, cardigan or cell phone on the way in, while needing to have your credit card ready to purchase your medical treatment at the reception desk. Like in the US, they'll want to feel your wallet before feeling your pulse.



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Save Greater Manchester mental healthcare

Matt Kilsby

Salford Socialist Party

More than 100 service users, trade unionists, workers and members of the public attended a public meeting on 1 October to discuss and build the campaign to save mental health services in Salford and Manchester.

As previously reported in the Socialist, Greater Manchester West NHS Mental Health Trust is pressing ahead with proposals to cut jobs and remove vital drop-in services and community groups for service users across Salford. This is before service users are consulted.

In Manchester, a 20% funding cut will cost around 40 jobs and affect over 3,000 service users.

After the meeting was addressed by Steve North, Socialist Party mem-

ber and secretary of Salford Unison local government branch, angry service users queued up to explain why these attacks on mental health services are so despicable.

Vee Ball, a carer for her husband and prominent activist in the recently formed United Services Users Committee, told the meeting that the services under threat are absolutely vital. If not for the drop-in centres and community groups, there would be no respite for carers and service users. Vee added that "our campaign to keep our services is about saving lives".

The meeting was clear that we need to unite our campaign across Salford and Manchester to ensure that the working class and the most vulnerable in our cities are not made to pay the price for the failure of capitalism.

ON 20 OCTOBER

TUC demos in London, Glasgow and Belfast

LET'S GET A MILLION ON THE STREETS AGAINST AUSTERITY



then let's all strike together to kick Con-Dems out

24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

EUROPE: CLASS STRUGGLE RETURNS WITH A BANG

Huge response to general strike in Greece

The Greek working class has put up an incredible struggle against the vicious austerity measures raining down on them. Since 2010 Greece has been rocked by 17 general strikes, three of them lasting 48 hours. A prime minister has been removed and a government brought down. After some quiet months a one-day strike was called for 26 September.

The Independent newspaper reported on new sections of the population joining the action: "Hospital doctors, pensioners, teachers and shopkeepers were among the demonstrators that participated in

over 60 rallies throughout the debt-ridden country. Even the president of Greece's police officers participated in the trade union march in Athens alongside uniformed colleagues from the fire department and coastguards."

The following day Andros Payiatsos, leader of Xekinima spoke to the Socialist. Xekinima is the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers' International, CWI, the world socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

See more on socialistworld.net

After a quiet summer is the Greek struggle back on the agenda?

One of the biggest strikes and demonstrations in the recent period in Greece took place on Wednesday 26 September. There have been small sectional strikes all along but nothing on this scale in the recent months. We estimate about 100,000 in the streets of Athens, which is big, and many tens of thousands in other cities in the rest of Greece.

The mood was good on the demo. It was quite determined and rather optimistic – this is in contrast to the mood in the previous period. After the victory of New Democracy in June and the formation of the new government a lull developed because there was a feeling of 'we can't get rid of them' following the elections.

But this lull was partially overcome by the size of the demo. Also the Greek people are watching with intense interest what is taking place in Spain and Portugal. This has given them hope.

Given the situation people must have little confidence in the government?

New Democracy is in deep crisis and its supporters are deserting the ship. Prime Minister Samaras was elected on the basis of forcing the Troika to renegotiate the memorandum but in fact he's heading in the other direction.

Is the effect of austerity on people's lives a factor?

It's a desperate situation for the masses because the situation already is extremely bad. According to the EU statistics of July 68% of the population lives below the poverty line – this is a staggering figure. But it's realistic – we know because we live here.

Unemployment is now officially at 23.6%. This official figure, of course, hides all those who have just given up looking for a job. And youth unemployment is an unbelievable 55%. This is an absolute catastrophe for Greek society.

Then, in these conditions, they try to impose further cuts of €11.5 billion in the course of two years – this is more than 5% of the GDP of the economy.

Unsurprisingly there is a mass exodus into migration and into the countryside; back to the villages where people can survive by living with their families and maybe cultivating a bit of a living from the land.

All the youth are thinking of leaving the country. It's a mass phenomenon – there are no youth, particularly university students who can see any point in staying in the country – although they want to stay in the country. Even left activists who want to stay and fight – they

The Guardian newspaper reflected some of the anger:

Echoing a view held by many Greeks, Penelope Angelou, an unemployed mother, said passing the measures would be tantamount to a 'parliamentary coup'.

"These parties were given our vote back in June because they promised to re-negotiate the terms of the loan agreement," she said, referring to the onerous conditions of the bailout accord Athens signed with its 'troika' of creditors – the EU, ECB and IMF – earlier this year. "We are all tired," she said. "This is the third year of non-stop cuts and tax increases which have made us poor and divided us as a society. And they have not solved our problem. The recession is going from bad to worse."

have no options as this is not just poverty – this is absolute emiseration.

Can you comment on reports that the opposition movement has reached the police and army?

For the whole of September we have seen protest action by state forces. Sections of the police have gone on strike including protesting against the riot police. Yesterday there was a press statement by the firefighters who said 'we refuse to be used by the state to suppress demonstrations'. This is a crisis in society and in the economy and it is even reflected in the security forces and we have seen demonstrations by army officers.

What way forward does Xekinima suggest?

We call for a clear plan of a programme of repeated sectional and general strikes and mass occupations of workplaces with the concrete aim of bringing down the government.

This is the slogan we have used for the past weeks and especially yesterday. It is going down very well. You can hear it everywhere.

We especially appeal to the public utility unions which are at the centre of the storm.

The initial response of the Greek people to the call for a 24-hour general strike was, 'this is nothing, this is ridiculous,' we can't bring the government down with one 24-hour general strike and they won't come down even with one 48-hour general strike. 'We need something much much more than that.'

So there is a mass tendency in the direction of an all-out strike. If the union leaders were to call it they would get a



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They've been using violence since the 6 May elections every day – attacking migrants, attacking lefts, attacking LGBT people, etc. This has been creating an impression that they are a very determined force which contributes to why some people go behind their banner and support them in the polls. But it's starting to consolidate a resistance.

For the first time we have had a number of counter demos that have pushed them back which is very important. This is the first time they are starting to feel defeat. On one occasion we had migrants mobilising against them and pushing them back when they tried to attack them. This is very important, but needs to be linked to a wider movement.

Xekinima's national initiative to build mass anti-fascist local committees and campaigns is very successful with some fantastic effects. We think that the movement is beginning to respond. We hope that we'll be able to push them in a corner but at the end of the day the perspectives for Golden Dawn and the far right mainly depends on the role of the parties of the left.

We are fighting to push these parties in a more leftward and determined direction, while at the same time striving to build support for Xekinima and the ideas of revolutionary socialism – this is the only way the crisis can be solved.

huge response – but they won't. They just want to let off steam.

You can also say now that nearly the whole of the left – excluding the majority in the leadership of Syriza – accepts the programme (which we initially posed from the beginning of 2010 when the debt crisis came to the fore) that the debt cannot be paid, that the banks have to be nationalised, that the commanding heights of the economy have to be nationalised, and it has to be put under democratic control of society. It's also accepted by millions of people whether they take part in the demonstrations and strikes or not.

The question now is how to build a movement on the ground to bring the government down and to replace it with a left government which will be pushed by the mass movement to implement this programme.

We also explain the need for the whole of Southern Europe to be united in huge and invincible struggles.

The far-right Golden Dawn has been rising in the polls. What does this signify?

Golden Dawn are the only force in society which is rising in the polls. Apart from Golden Dawn, all the parties are falling in the polls.

While in some polls Syriza is now the most popular party because New Democracy has fallen more, the fact that the left is also falling in the polls is something which should warn the parties of the left.

But at the same time it's correct to say that Golden Dawn itself may have gone through its, let's say, golden period.

Below is an extract from a CWI statement

Capitalist politicians across Europe returned from their summer cruises to unleash further attacks on working, young and unemployed people, with renewed vigour. In Portugal, Greece, Britain, France and elsewhere, new austerity measures have been announced.

Meanwhile, Portuguese workers and youth have provided us with autumn's first victory in struggle against such brutal measures.

Über-austerity packages were agreed in Spain and Greece, further steps in the process of bleeding us dry in an attempt to overcome capitalism's crisis.

But these attempts are clearly failing to meet even the capitalist politicians' aims of reducing deficits and returning to growth. Economic data shows how deepening recessions and slowdowns to a 'zero-growth' position are hitting not only the struggling peripheral 'PIIGS' countries, but are affecting the so-called "strong core" countries, such as France and Germany.

Economic disaster

As this economic disaster unfolds, the lords of the system seem no more clued-in as to how to manage or solve it, and are divided among themselves with no clear idea of how to proceed (though they all agree on slashing our living standards).

The increasingly accepted inevitability of a Greek exit from the Eurozone, as well as increasing speculation about the exit of other countries, shines a light on this. While governments and big business are desperate to avoid such a break-up, they see no lasting way of preventing it.

On the other hand, millions all over Europe are drawing the conclusion that workers' struggle is the only means to resist and avoid a ruinous path. This was shown when on Saturday 29 September a simultaneous explosion of revolt from below rocked the Iberian peninsula of Spain and Portugal, while tens of thousands took to the streets of Paris the next day.

On 15 September the biggest demonstration since the 1974 Portuguese revolution shook the previously 'stable' coalition government to its foundations. It was followed five days later by a 'vigil' of tens of thousands outside the Council of State meeting to demand the government's resignation.

On the following Saturday, with hundreds of thousands attending the protest called by the Portuguese TUC, the CGTP, the streets of Lisbon rang with demands for the expulsion of the 'Troika' and for a general strike to kick the government while it's down.

The Portuguese government was forced to withdraw its attacks on workers' wages through increased social security payments, alongside new parallel tax breaks for bosses. This comes as the first retreat by a cuts government faced with mass mobilisations, and should be a source of confidence for workers and youth continuing to fight back across the continent.

This outcome, although a temporary and partial victory, must be lauded across the continent, as a fitting rebut-

tal to those who maintain that the dictates of the markets and big business are unchallengeable.

Madrid saw an eruption of rage against the Rajoy government. Tens of thousands encircled the parliament, demanding its fall. This, the second 'surrounding' within five days, is the latest protest in an intense period of mobilisations – with up to half a million marching in Madrid behind trade union banners on 15 September, and a general strike in the Basque country on 26 September.

Then on 30 September over 50,000 took to the streets of Paris against the EU's rotten austerity treaty which enshrines cuts policies into national law. This followed the events in Greece on 26 September.

There, all those suffering perhaps Europe's worst devastation of lives and livelihoods under the boot of austerity and the Troika, provided one of the most powerful displays of workers' power in recent years, a colossal general strike.

Even outside of these countries, in themselves epicentres of the fightback in Europe so far, a new stormy phase is opening up, shown by the British TUC's decision to consider general strike action – which would be the first of its kind in over 80 years!

The Committee for a Workers' International calls on all forces in the European working class movement and the left, to unite around a coordinated programme of struggle, to translate this organic Europe-wide revolt against austerity policies into an organised European-wide blow to capitalist governments, the Troika and the markets and bondholders.

Calls from the leaders of the European Trades' Union Congress (ETUC) for European-wide actions and initiatives have drawn tens of thousands of participants. However, these actions, called under pressure from below, have mainly been of a symbolic character.

Missed opportunities

There have been a whole series of missed opportunities. For example, a European trade union leadership serious about organising an international fightback could have relatively easily, through the movement's international structures such as the ETUC, coordinated the Spanish and Portuguese general strikes to take place on the same day. Not seven days apart.

This action could have been extended to Greece and Italy where the general strike, in the face of capitalism's offensive, has been consistently fought for by militant trade union activists. This would have had an electrifying impact, and could have transformed the situation.

It would have both showed the power of our class, mobilised in its international strength and dimensions, and immeasurably boosted working class people's confidence. It could have begun to combat the isolation of workers in countries like Greece, whose heroic resistance to Troika austerity provides an inspiration.

As has been shown in Britain with the example of the National Shop Stewards' Network, organised opposition from below can force even the most conservative trade union bureaucracies into action.

An international day of struggle in the coming months could feature a coordinated general strike in Spain, Portugal,



The CWI believes that the trade unions must adopt a programme that begins with the need to reject the payment of the illegitimate national debt – an instrument of capitalist blackmail which the rich are responsible for, but try to hang around our necks.

This must be linked to a call for massive investment in public works and jobs programmes, funded by massive taxes on the idle trillions held by the super-rich.

The nationalisation of the banks and commanding heights of the economy, under the democratic control and management of the working class, could al-

low for this wealth to be put to work in the development of an economic plan for the regeneration of national economies and the European economy, create jobs and guarantee a decent future to the young generation.

The euro and capitalist EU, as shown by the new quasi-legal commitment to austerity enshrined in the "fiscal pact treaty", is no mechanism within which such a solution can be fought for. A coordinated struggle across Europe, against EU/Troika austerity and for a socialist alternative, would show the basis for an alternative European democratic socialist confederation of countries.

Greece, Italy, Britain and elsewhere, with mass solidarity demonstrations and actions in all countries.

As European capitalism languishes in chaos and crisis, such a day would send a mighty message of strength and determination from a united working class movement, which must be armed with an alternative to the attacks and misery imposed by the capitalist EU. This could also bring the spectre of an all-European general strike, to mobilise the full power of our movement on a continental scale, within reach.

Youth suffer

Workers and youth will continue to resist, faced with the social nightmare of mass unemployment and growing impoverishment, including of the middle classes. This makes itself felt particularly among the young generation, with youth unemployment taking on massive proportions (over 50% in Greece and Spain), and the spectre of mass emigration returning to countries like Portugal and Ireland.

The promises of a better future, or of a short-lived period of 'sacrifices' which would give way to economic growth, are being shattered by the day. Governments, elected on the basis of such promises, are quickly thrown into crisis. In recent months, governments in the Netherlands and France joined the list of those already disposed with.

Mass radicalisation and the search for political alternatives to the austerity consensus have been reflected in the rise (and setbacks) of the Dutch Socialist Party, and the Front de Gauche in France. This followed the rapid rise of Syriza in Greece, to challenge for power in the June elections. In Portugal, the parties of the anti-capitalist left (Left Bloc and Communist Party) are scoring a combined 25% in opinion polls, putting a struggle for power on the basis of a united front, within reach.

Following the transformation of the former Social Democratic workers' parties into completely capitalist formations in the last decades following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the CWI has consistently explained the need for new mass parties of the working class to be built.

Formations like the Front de Gauche and Syriza are potentially crucial steps in this direction. This necessity is now ever-more sharply posed, as the situation of capitalist crisis places so bluntly on the table the need for workers and youth in struggle to mount a challenge for political power to implement an alternative socialist programme.


The ominous gains made by 'Golden Dawn' in Greece, show the danger of the fascist and racist far right partially filling the vacuum left open if the working class movement and left do not show a clear way out. This must also be actively resisted in an organised way across Europe.

A woman wearing a visor and sunglasses is smiling and holding up a protest sign. The sign is red and white with the text 'RAP IS NO JOKE' and a graphic of a red lipstick smudge on a white circle. Other signs are visible in the background, including one that says 'SLUT on vs WITHOUT' and another that says 'STOP THE BLM'. The photo is credited to Paul Mattsson.

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Thousands march for an independent Scotland

Matt Dobson and Ryan Stuart,
Socialist Party Scotland (CWI,
Scotland)

Over 10,000 people took part in the March and Rally for Scottish Independence in Edinburgh on Saturday 22 September.

Many were Scottish National Party (SNP) activists and supporters. However, the demonstration was also a broad cross-section of Scottish society, with a significant mobilisation of workers, trade unionists and young people.

Socialist Party Scotland activists spoke to many young people who were on their first ever political demonstration. Young people especially are being denied a future by the Con-Dem cuts aided by the SNP and the other big business parties.

Understandably, with an agreement likely between the Tories and the SNP leadership for a single question referendum, many young people will back independence as a way of changing society and fighting back against the savage austerity attacks.

But their voice will, on Saturday's evidence, find a very pale reflection

in the Yes campaign.

The turnout showed that although support for independence is still based on a minority, (according to latest polls 30-40%), it is growing and is gaining ground among radicalised sections of the population who have borne the brunt of austerity cuts.

Rhetoric

First Minister and SNP leader Alex Salmond, opening the rally, contrasted the record of the SNP in power, with no tuition fees for Scottish students, free NHS prescriptions and protection from the "worst of the austerity cuts", with that of the Con-Dems in Westminster.

Salmond spoke to his audience with a radical speech that tacked to the left. After spending the last few months making overtures to big business, promising low corporation tax and a haven for business investment, he instead focused on attacking the Tories and presented a social democratic image of an independent Scotland.

Understandably this got an enthusiastic response from the crowd, as did every anti-austerity point made by other speakers.



Rallying for a yes vote in Edinburgh on 22 September photo M Dobson

The content of the rally, although full of anti-Tory rhetoric, showed the lack of a clear and independent voice to represent the interests of the working class in the Yes campaign.

Critical reference was made to the SNP leadership's U-turn over an independent Scotland being part of Nato. But none of the speakers highlighted the record of the SNP in government in passing on the almost £4 billion of the Con-Dems cuts.

The demonstration was held two days after the SNP's draft budget was put to the Scottish Parliament which included yet another effective pay cut for public sector workers and other cuts.

Fighting austerity

It is clear that constituent parts of the Yes campaign are buckling to the pressure not to criticise the SNP or the campaign's pro-big business orientation in the hope that 'unity' will win a Yes vote. This includes the Greens and the remnants of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).

Despite the SSP's material calling

for an "independent Scottish socialist republic" and opposition to austerity cuts, co-convenor Colin Fox's speech would have reinforced illusions that an independent Scotland under the SNP would be free from austerity.

Fox even claimed that all Scotland's wealth and resources would be "in the hands of the people" if a Yes vote was delivered, without raising demands for public ownership and nationalisation.

This comes after the SNP leadership has bent over backwards to reassure the oil and gas multinationals that their investments would be protected and that profits would be easier to make with lower taxation!

Workers and young people, through their own experience of the SNP's forthcoming austerity plans, will increasingly question the SNP and those giving them radical cover. In the run up to the 2014 referendum, the SNP leadership's pro-capitalist policies and their preparedness to pass on the Con-Dem cuts can limit the impact of the Yes campaign and may become a barrier to a swing behind a Yes vote.

Socialist Party Scotland's leaflets got a positive response. We called for an independent socialist Scotland, and proposed a conference to set up a mass campaign involving trade unionists, young people and community campaigns to demand the powers of independence are used for the '99%', the majority in society.

We also called for a political alternative to the main parties of cuts, a mass working class party that would stand for public ownership of the economy, wealth redistribution, an end to the anti-union laws and a massive programme of job creation.

Many of the people present at events like this, who have been recently politicised, could be drawn towards the idea of socialism and the building of a new workers' party as an alternative to the parties of big business, including the SNP.

To read the above in full and other articles on the independence question in Scotland, see www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk



Socialists on the march photo M Dobson

Scotland: Lamont throws Labour Party into crisis

Philip Stott
Socialist Party Scotland

On the eve of the UK Labour Party conference, Scottish Labour leader, Johann Lamont, threw the party north of the border into a crisis after calling for an end to the "something for nothing culture" in Scotland.

Supported by Ed Miliband, in Lamont's sights were free tuition for Scottish students, free prescriptions, the council tax freeze, free personal care for the elderly and free travel for pensioners. In other words almost every relatively progressive policy that has been introduced by the Scottish parliament, many of them by the Scottish National Party (SNP).

According to Lamont, universally available benefits have to end and a return to means testing, in these times of austerity, is vital to ensure the undeserving "don't get what

they don't need". Her announcement to establish what has been dubbed a "cuts commission" to look into unpicking these hugely popular policies is a desperate attempt to attack the SNP.

Lamont could have taken the SNP head on for their utter capitulation to the Con-Dem austerity agenda. Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond and finance minister John Swinney have passed on almost £4 billion in cuts to the people of Scotland over the last three years. Cuts to local government have cost more than 30,000 jobs. Scotland's public sector workers have seen years of pay freezes under the SNP.

She could have demanded, as championed by the Socialist Party and the Scottish Anti-Cuts Coalition, a return of the billions stolen from working class communities to pay for the bailout of the bankers and big business.

Instead, Labour's leader has sig-

nalled her support for a vicious extension of the cuts agenda and the tearing up of those modest but important advances that still survive in Scotland. In doing so she could also sound the death knell of Labour in Scotland, particularly if these policies were to form the basis of Labour's platform in the run up to the 2014 independence referendum. Labour suffered a catastrophic defeat to the SNP in the 2011 elections to the Scottish parliament - their worst election result in 80 years.

Workers' party

This desperate embracing of right-wing, anti-working class policies, has already produced consternation among trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party and some resignations from Scottish Labour. It has also allowed the SNP leadership to pose as defenders of progressive policies that "protect the poor and the

working class".

Just days after his budget that deepened the cuts, Swinney described Lamont as "Osborne in a kilt" after he himself was rightly described as such by the PCS and other unions.

Not surprisingly, the Tories and a host of right-wing commentators have enthusiastically welcomed this huge lurch to the right. Tory leaders in Scotland, Murdo Fraser and Ruth Davidson, welcomed Lamont's conversion to "their cause".

The Spectator magazine, a bastion of right-wing ideology, was over the moon at Lamont's declaration of war against the "something for nothing" culture.

This speech, alongside Scottish Labour's 'Faustian pact' with the Con-Dems devil in the anti-independence 'Better Together' campaign, will undermine further Labour support in Scotland, in particular among the working class.

The crying need for a mass working class party that is prepared to fight the cuts, advocate public ownership, radical wealth redistribution and socialism has never been more important.

We would appeal to all those who support these ideas to join with the Socialist Party Scotland. While building our party we have also been working consistently with anti-cuts campaigners, socialists and trade unionists as part of the Scottish Anti-Cuts Coalition and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Lamont's speech underlines again the dead-end that Labour represents for those trade unions that are affiliated to the party. The need to break from Labour and help launch a new working class party that will oppose austerity tooth and nail, whether from the Con-Dems or their SNP and Labour helpers, is now urgent.

Algerian war of independence 1954-1962

Colonialism, national liberation and revolutionary struggle

Cédric G  r  me
CWI

Fifty years ago, in 1962, the 'Algerian war', one of the longest and bloodiest anti-colonial conflicts, ended with the victory of the Algerian fighters against French imperialism.

Algeria had been under French colonial rule for 132 years. It was the 'flagship' of the French colonial empire. A policy of racial segregation and massive land dispossession was to the detriment of indigenous people. The vast majority of Algerians were kept in crushing poverty and suffered systematic wage discrimination, which guaranteed huge profits for French big business.

At the outbreak of the conflict in 1954, one million European settlers - 79% of them were born in Algeria - coexisted with nine million Algerians. There was also a large community of Jews.

At the top of the settlers' ladder were the rich Colons, a tiny clique of people who wielded economic and political power. The overwhelming majority of the settlers, however, were poor. By the 1950s, their average living standards were 20% lower than in France.

Following World War Two nationalist militancy and struggles rose steadily throughout the country, in the context of pro-independence struggles erupting internationally.

This coincided with unprecedented waves of workers' strikes and an overwhelming desire for social change. In many cases, these disputes involved Algerian and French workers.

On 1 November 1954, the FLN launched a series of guerrilla-type attacks in different parts of the territory, targeting the bases of the colonial power. 'Front de Liberation Nationale' was a nationalist organisation composed of radical activists who, fed up with the growing conservatism and reformism of the traditional nationalist forces, had decided to 'light the fuse' of a general revolt against French rule.

The French army responded with systematic terror, involving burning down villages, creating makeshift concentration camps, summary executions and torture on a mass scale. This violence exposed the brutal face of French capitalism - the so-called France of 'human rights'.

Shockwaves

From the beginning of the colonial revolt, explosive labour disputes and waves of mutinies among con-



Police and army confront a general strike depicted in the film, *Battle of Algiers*

French left

The dominant view on the Algerian question within the 'socialist' SFIO (French section of the Second International) can be summed up through the words of a SFIO deputy who declared: "We want the men of Algeria to be more free, more fraternal, more equal, that is to say more French."

One of the key points on which the Third, Communist, International, differentiated itself from the Second International was in its unconditional support for national liberation struggles against colonialism. But the Stalinist degeneration of Soviet Russia had shredded these principles.

While in the 1920s the French Communist Party (PCF) had taken a leading role in organising opposition to the Spanish-French Rif war in Morocco, by the 1950s this party had become a subservient appendage to the diplomacy of Stalinism, championing 'national defence', alliances with pro-capitalist forces and attempting to curb both workers' and anti-colonial struggles.

Despite the pro-independence activism of many of its members and supporters, the PCF voted, in 1956, in support of the 'special powers' given to the government led by the 'socialist' Guy Mollet, intensifying repression in Algeria and sending hundreds of thousands of conscripts to the battlefield.

script soldiers who refused to go and fight for 'French Algeria', affected dozens of French cities and towns.

As the war went on support for the colonial regime was declining at lightning speed. The financial consequences of the war began to create a budget deficit that spiralled out of control.

The unparalleled savagery deployed on Algerian soil by the authoritarian regime of Charles de Gaulle - who had taken power in France through a parliamentary coup in 1958 - could not end the war.

The offensive launched by the French troops in 1959 had almost

finished the ALN, the armed wing of the FLN, as a fighting force. But the heavy price, politically and socially, was directly affecting the French ruling class's confidence and capacity to continue the war.

The mass pro-FLN demonstrations of December 1960, with the urban Algerian masses spontaneously pouring onto the streets in favour of independence, on a scale far exceeding what the FLN predicted, marked a turning point.

Moreover, in April 1961, the mass of French soldiers rebelled against an attempted coup by the generals. De Gaulle had to struggle desperately to regain control of the army. In Blida (North), conscripts seized the main military base, arrested their officers and raised the red flag of revolution!

De Gaulle knew he had to act or risk losing control. By that time the issue had become one of managing an orderly retreat for French imperialism. This is what ultimately happened with the signature of the 'Evian agreements' between the FLN and the French government in March 1962, opening the path to an independent Algeria.

The lack of a party advocating a programme for working class unity, in France but also, crucially, in Algeria was a key factor in channeling the anti-colonial struggle along nationalist lines. The Algerian Communist Party increasingly lost pub-

lic support as its leadership echoed French Communist Party - PCF - policy.

The FLN sought to take power by military force, with an army essentially based on the peasantry and the deprived urban population. Significantly, the six FLN founders all came from a rural elite impoverished by colonialism; their world was rural Algeria and none of them had had any prolonged interaction with the working class movement.

Instead of orientating their efforts to build a common fight of all workers and poor, and of trying to split the European settlers on a class basis - including making guarantees to the European minority that their rights would be respected - most FLN leaders had a purely nationalist outlook, and had no programme to develop the country once independence was achieved.

Their methods included bombing public places frequented by working class and middle class European civilians. Such actions contributed to divide Algerian and non-Algerian workers, and to push settlers en masse into the arms of pro-colonial reaction. By the autumn of 1962, 99% of European settlers had left the country in fear of reprisals, one of the biggest population migrations of the 20th century.

No solution

Despite the courage and heroism of many pro-FLN fighters and supporters, their efforts did not lead to the changes they had hoped and fought for.

Following independence, the regime that took power in Algeria was a one-party state under the thumb of a mighty military machine. This was a direct product of the military structures and methods adopted by the leaders of the FLN.

Indeed, the mass, democratic involvement of the working class - the only collective force capable of overthrowing capitalism and building socialism - was viewed by the emerging military bureaucracy of the FLN with suspicion and as a threat to its own power.

Balancing between capitalism and Stalinism, the Algerian regime was able to keep a "half way course" for a while, involving partial nation-

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.

alisations that helped developing infrastructure, healthcare and education. But as result of the fall of the Stalinist bloc, it moved further to the right and embraced mass privatisation and neoliberal counter-reforms that led to a profound disaster for the mass of the population.

Algeria today

Today, despite its rich oil reserves, most Algerians are blocked from any semblance of decent living conditions. For the majority of Algerians, whose country is buffeted by poverty, corruption and violence, on the 50th anniversary of independence, there is hardly anything to celebrate.

The capital Algiers has been classified as among the least viable cities in the world. The notoriously retrograde 'Family Code' enshrines the status of women as minors for life. Electoral contests are falsified, housing conditions are appalling, police abuses widespread.

The post-independence generation now constitutes the great majority of the population, and feels nothing but anger towards the corrupt elite in power.

In the light of the recent mass struggles that have engulfed the North African region, the time has come for this new generation to relearn the lessons of the struggle for which about a million of their ancestors sacrificed their lives.

Background reading on the Algerian revolution

Algeria: France's Undeclared War

Martin Evans, £20

A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62

Alistair Horne, £11.99

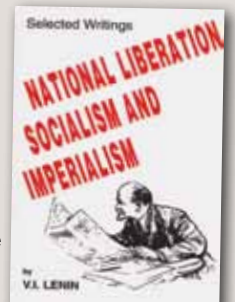
European Revolutionaries and Algerian Independence 1954-1962 edited by Ian Birchall for Revolutionary History. Vol. 10 No 4, £20

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De Gaulle (middle) and pro-French forces in Algeria, 1958

“The most unkindest cut”

Arts and culture workers need to fight back

James Ivens

“This was the most unkindest cut of all.” Mark Antony on Brutus’s murder of Julius Caesar. Which of the Con-Dems’ cuts is most unkindest is not mentioned – in part because Shakespeare died 394 years before the coalition formed.

But if arts and culture workers are to save their industry from assassination, more than stirring rhetoric is required. Public sector union PCS, representing culture workers, says: “as much as 90% of the cuts threatened have yet to occur.” With private investment in the arts continuing its decade-long decline, how are cultural bodies to survive?

The answer is they aren’t. A recent casualty is this year’s Manchester Comedy Festival, cancelled outright in August. Festival creator Don Ward lays the blame squarely at the coalition’s door: “With a clean sweep, government cuts have wiped out funding for a lot of festivals.” The same is happening to cultural organisations of every stripe. For many it is permanent.

Last year, the Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) launched

the Lost Arts campaign. “Campaign” may be too strong a word. Website www.lost-arts.org seeks to be a catalogue of cultural bereavement. This has its place; but what is the FEU actually doing? Constituent unions published reports and supported

Public sector union PCS, representing culture workers, says: “as much as 90% of the cuts threatened have yet to occur.”

motions calling for increased funding and an end to exploitation. But they have yet to match their words with action. And so we suffer on.

It’s not just our careers at risk – or our benefits and services, either. With the economy flatlining, and bosses shedding staff and slashing pay, it’s our day jobs too.

With vanishing cultural gigs and nothing in between we have one hope. Fight every job loss and every funding cut that businesses and politicians make. September’s annual Trades Union Congress historically

voted to support prison officers’ union POA’s motion calling for “far reaching campaigns including the consideration and practicalities of a general strike”.

Last year’s enormous N30 strike saw millions of public sector workers walk out over pensions. The action won concessions. Imagine what could have been gained if a second, larger strike had been called.

In July, comedian Stewart Lee slammed what he called “the cultural bankruptcy of late capitalism”. If we are to become culturally solvent once more, we need an end to cuts across the board. We need a fully funded arts sector, and support for all its workers.

We must kick out the government and its austerity policies, and start planning our nation’s considerable output for the good of all, not the profit of a few.

Arts and culture workers must support the TUC’s 20 October demo. We must put pressure on our unions and the TUC to name the date for a general strike, with another threatened after if we don’t win our demands. This is the fight of our lives. Stewart Lee is right – let’s make capitalism ‘late’.



PCS members taking action at the National Gallery photo Paul Mattsson

Do you have something to say? Why don’t you send us a letter about what is happening to you in this long recession? What do you think of what this government is doing? Do you think the unions and Labour should be putting up more opposition? Have you got comments on articles in the paper? Send your news, views and criticism in around 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don’t forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Councillors must resist all Tory cuts

Southampton

Nick Chaffey, Southampton Socialist Party, wrote the following letter to the Independent in reply to an article by Owen Jones

Owen Jones is right that Labour councillors must refuse to implement Tory cuts but he is wrong when he uncritically echoes Labour councillors’ timid response that they would be replaced by Eric Pickles and his cronies if they did so.

Firstly Labour councillors would be heroes for taking such a stand and gain huge support. Secondly they would face no financial or legal penalties for doing so. The maximum penalty, if the government dared go so far, would be to remove councillors from office for five years. New elections would hardly return Tory councillors to carry out cuts.

If shadow secretary for Local Government, Hilary Benn, made a clear commitment that an incoming Labour government would restore council reserves and any borrowing made to protect services, the Tories’ plans would be sunk. Facing mass opposition, Eric Pickles would not be able to march in triumph to take over council chambers countrywide. The road is clear.

That Labour councillors almost to a man or woman do the Tories’ dirty work suggests anyone relying on being rescued by Red Ed’s cavalry will likely end up surrounded by the wreckage of the austerity agenda.

In Southampton, two Labour councillors bravely refused to betray their election commitments and opposed voting for Labour cuts and the closure of their local swimming pool. Their reward has been huge support from their community, council workers and their unions Unite and Unison.

Have Southampton Labour group seized the moment to fight back? Sadly no. The rebel councillors were suspended for three months, gagged while the Labour group prepares a budget to implement £28 million cuts next year. Some protection from the cuts!

Over the last two years anti-cuts candidates under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition have stood across the city putting the case for an alternative to cuts, building support for a community based budget to meet the needs of the city fully funded by central government. Developing mass support for such a stand offers the only way to halt the cuts.



Southampton council workers fighting the cuts photo Paul Mattsson

Hull

Mick Whale

secretary Hull NUT teachers’ union

The battle lines to fight the next round of cuts are still being prepared in Hull. As we reported in last week’s Socialist, Hull council trade unions have sent out an open letter calling on Labour councillors to join with the unions in a joint campaign against the cuts.

The letter has been well received by some Labour councillors and council workers alike. Before any follow-up lobbying, some of the councillors have agreed with the need for a campaign.

While this has been going on, however, the authority’s officers have been preparing a cuts package. Scandalously, one cut to bin services appeared in the local media before being discussed with either the workforce or the trade unions. The Labour cabinet has put this proposal on hold after a strong response from the unions.

In the council cabinet meeting on 1 October, veteran Labour councillor Terry Geraghty pointed to the cuts in the NHS and local authority and stated that unless Labour did something to fight the cuts, “we might as well pack up and go home because there will be nothing left locally for Labour to run”.

Unfortunately, the cabinet focussed on the disproportionate weight of the cuts on poorer northern cities. While this point is correct, it would be a disaster if Hull were to be arguing for its cuts to be born by cities in the south! This would play into the hands of the Tories who would try to divide workers in the south from those in the north. Anyway, this argument misses the fundamental point that, even equally apportioned, cuts would devastate Hull. Socialists have pointed to the £800 billion lying idle in the bank accounts of big business – money they refuse to invest believing there is not enough profit in it. This shows that no cuts are necessary.

The trade unions and those Labour councillors prepared to fight the cuts will meet in the next week or so to determine exactly how the campaign should be organised. Watch this space!

Tory education policy: 'This is just about making cuts isn't it?'

Interview with a trade unionist

The Con-Dem government's agenda for education is being revealed more starkly. On top of cuts in resources and the privatisation of education, teachers are under attack. Students are suffering. The Socialist spoke to Martin-Powell Davies, a member of the national executive committee of the National Union of Teachers and secretary of Lewisham NUT, about the current issues in education and the way to build a fightback.

What do you think the Tories' general strategy for education is?

I think that under [education secretary] Michael Gove, the Tories have revealed their agenda far more blatantly than any previous government. Tony Blair and New Labour, at least on paper, argued that education was a good thing for society as a whole.

Now it's quite clear that elements of the right of the Tory Party have abandoned this idea. They have consciously decided that there is no point in spending money and, in their eyes wasting resources, on young people who they are never going to be able to provide a decent job for, or a decent future.

The government seems to see teachers as a barrier to their policies and that teachers are partly to blame for some of the failings in the education system. What is your response?

We've seen these attacks across the globe. We've seen the same from Obama's education policy makers in the USA.

Education is riddled with problems but those problems aren't about bad teachers.

If it wasn't for the hard work of teachers over years, things would be in a far worse state. Teachers' unpaid overtime, working 50-60 hours a week, has been the sticking plaster that has managed to keep schools together. It has covered up a critical lack of spending and lack of staff.

Gove and the government want to continue to make those attacks so they want people to blame teachers.

What is the background to the industrial action by NUT members starting on 3 October?

Teachers' pay and conditions are set nationally using the School Teachers Review Body. This is supposedly independent but it generally rubber stamps what the government of the day has asked them to do.

We suspect the review body is going to come out sometime this term with an even stronger link between teachers' pay and performance. This could mean that not only would you not get a pay rise but you could have your pay cut if you didn't meet the government targets.

At a recent meeting in a primary school, when we discussed this threat, one of the young teachers there correctly said: "This is just about making cuts, isn't it?"

What do you think about Gove's introduction of the English Baccalaureate exam as a replacement for some GCSEs?

As socialists we understand that any exam system is about rationing opportunities. It's about deciding which child gets sent in what direction whether it's to university, college or future employment.

There was a recognition, certainly when GCSEs were introduced, that the old O level/CSE division blocked off opportunities for too many school leavers. Opportunities had to be widened so that every child had the same examination system, under the GCSE. It was a reform that reflected the general pressure to support equality of opportunity and comprehensive education.

And it was actually brought in by a Tory government.

Even then elements of the Tory right argued against it. They said it was opening up opportunities for people who didn't really require them.

Now that right-wing agenda has come to the fore, demanding cuts that previous governments wouldn't have considered.

There are always educational arguments about what should be in a curriculum, what's the role of course work, whether it should be an end of year exam or a modular exam. But what Gove is actually saying is that he wants exam grading so that it rations the number of top grades.

What are the dangers of the creation of academy schools?

Academy supporters want to pretend that by turning a school into an academy it's therefore going to be better. There is absolutely no evidence for that.

Why should taking a school out of a local authority and giving it to a private company to run make it better?

The history of privatisation has been that services have got worse. But the academy agenda is also about getting rid of local authorities and getting rid of and undermining teacher trade unions.

The majority of teachers are in a trade union. The density of trade union membership is one of the highest in any profession. The government recognises the potential power of teachers to oppose these reforms and to inspire other workers to fight their policies.

By breaking up local education authorities into individual academies and privatised academy chains, they also want to attack the trade unions, making it harder for there to be national pay and conditions. And increasingly they attack trade union facility time.

The difficulty we have is that often the only people really fighting for democratic local authority services, whether it be schools, bin collections or anything else, are the trade unions and the public.

The Labour local authorities aren't fighting for council services. In many ways they are quite happy to see them privatised. And of course it was a New Labour government that brought in university tuition fees. It started to cut the EMA allowance for 16 to 19 year olds and it started academies.

Many people then think: 'Our school might as well be an academy because our local authority doesn't care about education.'

But councils don't have to be this way. That's why we have to fight for anti-cuts candidates in council elections and this is why we've got to support initiatives like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Because then you could elect councillors who could change the direction of the council and make sure schools are run as we would want them to be run - with proper funding and resourcing and equal opportunities and genuine comprehensive education.



Campaigning against academies in north London photo Paul Mattsson

What sort of education system should we be campaigning for?

The English school system has become an exam factory. There is very rarely teacher training that discusses how children learn or about child development and educational psychology. It is simply a matter of - how can we deliver the exam targets that are being imposed on us by government?

There's constant pressure on teachers but also on students. Many young people are being labelled as failures from a very early age. Even those who succeed in exams are under enormous pressure.

What we want is a system where children enjoy learning and that means providing resources. Class

sizes are at 30 and in some London schools it's beginning to go over 30. You cannot meet the individual needs of students in that kind of environment.

The demand which the Socialist Party and the unions have raised is that class sizes shouldn't be 30 they should be a maximum of 20.

One of the broken promises of the last government was that Gordon Brown promised to close the gap between the funding per pupil in state schools and those in fee paying private schools. That's long been forgotten. But what's good enough for the children of the wealthy should be good enough for every child.

How can we fight for these type of resources in education?

From 3 October the NUT are embarking on a campaign of action short of strike action. This is starting to win victories and give people confidence that union action can work. In one of our Lewisham schools, there was due to be a staff meeting on the first day of the current action against rising workload. That meeting exceeded the number of meetings in our guidelines, so I told the head that I would be telling NUT members not to turn up. The meeting was cancelled.

Teachers are beginning to realise that rather than just accepting attack after attack, we can stand together and refuse the constant barrage of new initiatives and demands on our time. If we stick together we have got the strength to push things back. But we now need to build from the action short of strike action to national strike action.

One older teacher recently said

to me, quite correctly, that the problem is that we're still stuck with a contract which doesn't limit our weekly working hours. We must fight for a contract, as the NUT is campaigning for, that sets a 35-hour week for teachers.

We need a contract that says we should have 20% non-contact time so that we can properly plan during the working day rather than in the evenings and weekends. We must reduce class sizes. We must stop the government putting pension ages up to 68 and more. Until we begin to do that, our workload will continue to be intolerable.

Teachers are enjoying the solidarity of standing together to change things in our schools. But they know that we have to stand together nationally, hopefully alongside other unions, in firm national strike action. Only that will bring lasting change for the better for teachers and the young people that we teach.



Protesting at the GCSE grading scandal photo the Socialist

DEFEND THE NHS

Action against Profit From Illness!

A Private Finance Initiative is like a long-term, high-interest mortgage. But, in this case, when you've finished paying the mortgage, the house belongs to the bank!

PFI means that a private company pays the initial cost of building, say, a hospital – but then public money is used to pay back the private company several times over. At the end of the deal, the private company still owns the hospital.

Many NHS Trusts are making drastic cuts to 'balance the books', while still having to pay billions of pounds for PFI deals. Socialist Party members from Mansfield and North Derbyshire write about one of those trusts – Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS.

News that Sherwood Forest Hospitals are fast running out of money confirms what the Socialist Party warned on the day the PFI deal was announced in 2005 under the then-Labour government. PFI stands for 'Profit From Illness'!

Trust regulator Monitor has said Sherwood Forest Hospitals need "significant changes, including re-configuration, beyond efficiency savings to remain financially sustainable beyond the next three years". In other words - massive cuts with health workers' jobs and patient services sacrificed to keep paying for the trust's PFI scheme.

But the so-called 'efficiency savings' or 'cost improvements' – fancy words for cuts – aren't enough to stop the trust, which is losing £36 million from 2011 to 2015, 13% million of its annual income, running out of cash.

'Reconfiguration' could mean another trust taking over. It is also possible a private company could be brought in to run the trust. As when Circle Health was handed Hinchbrook Hospital in Huntingdon, the company would be virtually guaranteed a profit to be paid out

from money that should be used for healthcare!

The trust board talk of the "rationalisation of the estate" – which surely means running down services to prepare for an eventual sell-off of property, either to developers or possibly private health companies.

Instead of "rationalisation", the trust should open the books. Let local people see where our money has been going. How much is the PFI company, Skanska, really making from the 30-year deal?

Thousands of local people have stopped at Socialist Party campaign stalls and signed petitions opposing PFI. A massive campaign is needed, centred on health workers' trade unions, other unions, community groups and local people. This campaign to defend the NHS must be linked to the fight against all cuts and privatisation.

Health workers and all supporters of the NHS should join the 20 October TUC demos in London, Glasgow and Belfast. As well as preparing for action if the government doesn't back down on its plan to destroy the NHS, health workers should support the call for a one-day general strike against austerity.

Socialist Party public meeting
Save our local hospitals
No cuts to pay for private profits
Wednesday 10 October, 7.30pm
Ladybrook Community Centre,
Ladybrook Lane, Mansfield



See page 7 for more on the NHS and how we can fight back photo Paul Mattsson



Vultures Circle

According to the Mirror, Circle Health, the first private business to take over a whole hospital, Hinchbrook, has donated over £1.4 million to the Tories.

The Hinchbrook contract is worth £1.2 billion over ten years, and Circle is looking to get over £8 billion of NHS deals.

Circle's Christina Linnet, who worked for Andrew Lansley before he became the Con-Dems' first health secretary, is now shortlisted to become the media chief for Lansley's replacement, Jeremy Hunt.

Another Tory MP, Mark Simmons, gets an annual salary of £50,000 from Circle for ten hours 'work' a month.

Who represents us?

But don't expect Labour to be any better! The 1997-2010 Labour government massively expanded PFI in the NHS, while also overseeing the privatisation of non-medical services such as portering and cleaning. Both parties are wedded to the big business capitalist system. We need a new party to fight for the NHS and for ordinary people against the interests of the big corporations.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which stands in elections against all cuts.

See www.tusc.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!