

Tories promise more pain...

KICK OUT THE 'NASTY PARTY'!

Dave Griffiths

West Midlands Socialist Party

There's a whiff in the Birmingham air. The Tories met here in a state of panic. It's all going wrong!

The Con-Dem government faces humiliating failure. As if normal people needed telling, the economy is not even standing still but shrinking. Why? Because they're strangling the economy as they hammer our living standards.

The Tories did try to detoxify their 'nasty party' image. But, when in crisis, the nasty party releases its hounds! They want to intensify the attacks on the poor and vulnerable, with another £10 billion of benefit cuts.

So 'we're all in it together', unless you're a worker, unemployed, a woman, a pensioner, young, need a home, or want a same sex marriage.

Having no answer to their crisis they want to get ordinary people - desperately trying to survive - to start blaming and fighting each other.

Disgracefully, Chancellor George Osborne said: "How can we justify someone young on benefits having a flat when someone twice their age in work is still at their parents unable to afford a home?"

The real question is how can he justify the failure of the free market to 'supply' affordable homes for all?

They want to deny younger people a home. They want to cut benefits to families. Having cheated and bullied the disabled and sick, now they want to tell children 'you shouldn't have been born' by limiting child benefit. Rights at work are to be undermined on the orders of big Tory donors, especially venture (code for 'does little useful') capitalist Adrian Beecroft who wants bosses to be free to fire at will.

The Tories are beleaguered by hostility from working people. But now even their



photo Senan

friends are deserting them. Support among big business bosses has dropped from 77% to 55%. 65% of Tory voters oppose reduced tax rates for the wealthy.

Other 'friends' have their own plans. Desperate Lib Dems are trying to create distance to avoid electoral oblivion, and when London mayor Boris Johnson arrives... Well, when one toff has what another toff wants...

This is a weak government that we can kick out. So, on 20 October, we should flood the streets to show our opposition to Con-Dem austerity. The trade unions and TUC must step up the fightback to bring down this government. The call for a 24-hour general strike received huge support at the recent demonstration outside Tory conference (see pages 7 and 10).

The bosses' free-market system made the crisis and they want us to pay. Labour leader Ed Miliband offering to be an alternative Tory party with 'one nation' Toryism is no answer. All three parties claim we're one nation while they all divide it more - between them and their rich mates against the rest of us. If you want a real alternative, then join the socialists.

- **Join the TUC march against austerity on 20 October - London, Glasgow and Belfast**
- **For a 24-hour general strike to kick out the Con-Dems**
- **Build a new mass workers' party**

the **Socialist**

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what we think

Labour Party conference - not fighting austerity

Income will not return to pre-crisis levels until 2020 and Tory leader David Cameron says there is no 'plan B' – just unrelenting austerity. Contained in that fact is unbearable suffering: children without enough to eat, with the Con-Dems' cold cruelty encapsulated in the recent news that a baby starved to death in Tory-run Westminster; the elderly choosing between food and fuel; and families unable to pay their rent as benefits are slashed and wages stagnate.

Many working class and middle class people will have hoped that Labour Party conference showed there is a party ready to fight this. Media commentators, particularly Polly Toynbee, went into paroxysms of ecstasy during the conference, particularly after leader Ed Miliband's 70 minute speech on 'One Nation' Britain, claiming the slogan from the Tory prime minister of the late 19th century Benjamin Disraeli. In fact, Miliband uttered the phrase 44 times!

Speaking without notes he attacked the bankers – but also denied he was 'Red Ed'. The conference revealed a party with no plans to provide a lead in the fight against cuts – far from it. One demonstration of this is Labour's apparent complacency about the welfare state being destroyed over the next three years – willing to wait patiently for a 2015 general election rather than seeking any of the many opportunities to push for a vote of no confidence.

Perhaps the most revealing speech of the Labour conference was that of shadow chancellor Ed Balls, continuing his theme from TUC Congress where he made it clear that a Labour government would continue with austerity measures. Labour, he confirmed, would continue the pay freeze, would maintain Thatcher's anti-union laws and would not commit to renationalising the railways.

Reversing government policy on all these issues would be immensely popular. In particular, amid the farcical Con-Dem retreat on the West Coast mainline soon after the announcement of further hikes in fares, renationalising the railways has enormous support among working class and middle class people. In Manchester, Balls was unrepentant, almost boasting that he would make "tough decisions... it's not my job to make everyone happy", stating that Labour would continue the cuts.

Unfortunately, some of the trade union leaders, even those who argue against austerity, remain tied to Labour. "Ed Miliband made it abundantly clear that Labour will get us off the miserable path dug by this government. His speech marks the long-awaited rebirth of a radical social democracy in this country. We can now start hoping once again. In particular, working class people can feel that the party is back on their side." This is the verdict of Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary, and echoed by other union leaders like Paul Kenny of the GMB after the Labour leader's speech.

Considering that the union leaders went into conference attacking the Labour leaders for their stated intention to stick with the Con-Dem cuts, including the pay freeze, many union members will be asking what's changed to signal this conversion? But perhaps of more importance, what will be the effect on their strategy going forward?

Two days before the speech, Len told the Sunday Times: "Of course we are trying to influence the party again. It really is a question of us having to go to our activists and get them to join the Labour Party. The answer we get back is 'why?' and we have got to be able to say that we are trying to win Labour back for our core values: a belief in collectivism, a belief in fairness, justice, equality, decency and respect and to kick the new Labour cuckoos out of our nest."

However Len and Co must look reality square in the eyes and acknowledge that nowhere during this conference was there evidence of the trade unions' influence on the party. In fact, a motion was passed which merely 'noted' the pay freeze in the public sector. Instead of proposing a programme to defend workers and trade union members, the conference seemed to be looking at how to defend the jobs of Labour councillors!

Council cuts

One of the most nauseating moments was the sight of Tony Benn's son Hilary praising Labour councils who have all implemented the Con-Dem cuts: "Now while Labour councils are fighting for a fair deal for their communities, they are also facing impossible, agonising choices. But with a quiet and steely determination, they are making those choices not because they don't care, but because they do. To choose is to express our Labour values and to show that we can make a difference to people's lives... however tough it gets... we don't write people off. We stretch out a hand and pull each other up."

Not one Labour council has made a stand against the cuts. But some Labour councillors are starting to rebel: in Lambeth, Southampton and Hull. Those who have voted against cuts are now suspended from their Labour groups with the threat of de-selection before the next council election. It is their anti-cuts battle that the leaders of the affiliated unions should put themselves at the head of.

The Socialist Party does not share Len McCluskey's belief that Labour can be reclaimed for working class people. Every time Len senses a glimmer of hope with 'one nation Ed', Miliband's action ridicules him. After a delegate shouted out a defence of comprehensive schools during a 15-year old Academy school

student's speech, the Labour leader showed a refusal to condemn privatisation in education when he later tweeted: "The person who shouted during the speech by a year eleven pupil was totally wrong and doesn't speak for Labour. The hundreds who applauded her do."

During the Blair and Brown years the affiliated unions were powerless to check, let alone reverse New Labour's neoliberal direction. This speech confirmed that Miliband is essentially no different from his predecessors. Trade unions backing anti-cuts candidates in elections would put far more pressure on Labour from the left than the current strategy of the Labour-affiliated unions, in a similar way that Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Left Front pushed François Hollande leftwards during the French presidential election.

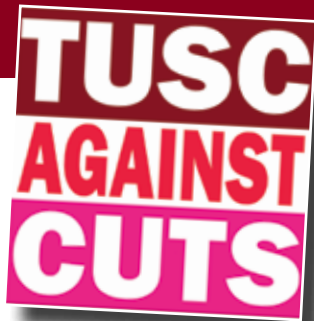
But reclaiming the Labour Party for the working class would require a mass influx of workers, organised around a campaign to remove the Blairites and recreate the party's democratic structures. A socialist programme would need to be adopted, including opposition to all cuts. The Socialist Party has concluded that this is not possible – and that instead what is required is the creation of a new mass party of the working class.

If such a party stood on Unite's programme of opposing and reversing all the cuts, abolishing the anti-union laws, etc, it would provide a positive pole of attraction for all those millions of people opposed to the Con-Dems' austerity.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an attempt to build a bridge to such a party. Plans to build it should be stepped up, including holding meetings and debates on the issue of political representation and developing supporters groups inside the unions.

See debate with Owen Jones in October's Socialism Today, the Socialist Party's magazine: www.socialismtoday.org, see p11

Anti-austerity candidates selected for November contests



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has announced its candidates for the Mayor of Bristol election and the Manchester Central parliamentary by-election that will take place on 15 November.

Manchester Central will be contested by Alex Davidson, the vice-chair of the PCS civil servants' union North West Region and a former member (2011-12) of the PCS Public Sector Group Executive Committee. TUSC's candidate for the Mayor of Bristol is Unite member Tom Baldwin, a previous TUSC candidate in local and general elections, who is set to be the youngest candidate in the field.

The TUSC national steering committee, meeting on 3 October, also agreed to seek nominations for a TUSC candidate in the Croydon North by-election, caused by the death of the

sitting MP.

The date for this election has yet to be formally decided but, assuming that it too will be 15 November, applications to be a TUSC candidate in Croydon need to be submitted quickly.

Application forms are available on the TUSC website at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/candidates.php>

TUSC was set up in 2010 to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates against the pro-austerity establishment parties.

It is a coalition with a steering committee which includes, in a personal capacity, the RMT general secretary Bob Crow, the general secretary of the POA prison officers' union, Steve Gillan, and national officers and executive members of the PCS civil service union, the Fire Brigades Union, and the National Union of Teachers. The Socialist Party and the SWP are also represented on the committee.

TUSC is a federal 'umbrella' coalition, with agreed core policies that include a clear socialist commitment to "bringing into democratic public ownership the major companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned

to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment".

Help fund TUSC's election challenge!

Just to appear on the ballot paper in the Manchester and Bristol elections will cost TUSC £1,000, and a further £750 for two pages in the manifestos booklet that will be distributed to every household in Bristol for the mayoral contest. So that's £1,750 before a single leaflet has been printed.

Can you make a donation to the national election fund? There's a PayPal facility on the TUSC website (www.tusc.org.uk/donate) or you can send cheques, made payable to the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London, E1 4JP.

Let's make sure TUSC isn't held back from making the biggest possible impact in these elections!

Why I support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

As a socialist, I see the history of the working class intertwined with the personal history of my own family.

My family has been involved with the labour movement since its early days. My grandfather was a lifelong Marxist and Labour Party member, attending classes of the socialist and Marxist John Maclean at the turn of the century.

In 1917 my grandmother joined the Labour Party to campaign for a better life for ordinary people. This was one year after my mother, her seventh child was born. She had eight children and became a single parent- she had a hard life.

In 1924 my mother broke her leg and my grandmother broke the only chair in the house to make a splint. An older boy in the street carried my mother part of the way to the hospital as they only had enough fare to take the tram part of the way. There was no NHS in those days!

In 1929, my grandmother stood as a Labour councillor in Heaton Ward, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

She campaigned against unemployment, for better housing, for the right for all to free secondary education and the opportunity for a university education. My mother had passed her 11 plus but there wasn't enough money for a uniform to send her to grammar school.

Grandma called for public control of gas, water and electricity. She made socialism her life's work and was five times president of the Northumberland Labour Party Women's section in the

1930s.

She must have been euphoric when the 1945 Labour government was elected and brought in the Welfare State.

My mam and dad were also lifelong members of the Labour Party as well as supporters of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist. They were horrified when Thatcher came to power, knowing what painful cuts the Tories are capable of inflicting on the working class.

I joined the Labour Party Young Socialists in 1968 and have been a socialist all my life, working for a better life for ordinary people

I can see the hopes and dreams of generations of my family being brutally destroyed by this Lib-Con government. The gains that the working class have made through the tireless campaigning and sacrifice of generations of ordinary people are being stolen from us to serve the interests of the rich and powerful.

Enough is Enough!

Three generations and 100 years of campaigning for a better life for ordinary working people and the Tories are callously taking all this away from us.

We need a party that will stand up for the interests of the working class. We have heard much from all the main political parties about claiming to stand up for the forgotten middle class. But who is standing up for the working class?

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition truly defends the rights of ordinary people.

Heather Rawling, Leicester

No welfare cuts Benefit booze-ups are a Tory fantasy!

Sean Dempsey
Jobcentre worker

The welfare system has been in the news again this week with Tories threatening a further £10 billion in cuts to the welfare budget. Debates among big-business politicians rage in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff as to what to do about the cuts in funding from Westminster.

The debates are not about resisting the Tory attacks, of course, just about where the axe should fall.

Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont has called for the removal of universal benefits and the reintroduction of the hated means test.

At Stormont, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin are at loggerheads about the Welfare Reform Bill's passage through the Northern Ireland Assembly.

This Bill echoes its Westminster counterpart, introducing changes such as stopping contributions-based Employment Support Allowance (ESA) after one year. This will directly impact families trying to support someone with a chronic illness. Such families, with one wage earner, could easily earn too much to qualify for income-based ESA and therefore have to bear the cost of treatment with no government help, especially as the roll back of the NHS continues apace.

It is comforting for such families to know, I'm sure, that the Tory policy wonks are really earning their crust however. Their most recent idea came ahead of the Tory conference in Birmingham, where test bal-



photo Paul Mattsson

loons were floated about controlling how benefits claimants spend their money.

Already this has gained interest from private companies such as Mastercard, who hope to gain a fat cheque for administering the scheme. The object would be to prevent claimants spending money on alcohol or cigarettes or anything else which the government deems an inappropriate purchase for a benefits claimant.

This demonstrates the extent to which the Tories are lost in fantasy land. Jobcentre workers are ever more frequently dealing with people who are having to spend some of their £71 a week Jobseeker's Allow-

ance (JSA) on rent.

And they aren't renting palaces. One man I spoke to was living in a hostel and still had to use some of his JSA to top up his capped Housing Benefit. That this man managed to feed and clothe himself, never mind travel to interviews with a smile on his face, was surprising enough.

Vicious slurs like this gratify the likes of the Daily Mail editorial staff, and outrage ordinary people by implying that in a time of hardship there are people who are living large while the rest of us struggle. The only people living large are the super-rich and the Tory cabinet of millionaires. They must be stopped.

Politicians line up to attack abortion rights Defend and extend the right to choose

Elaine Brunskill

Many women will have felt chilled at Jeremy Hunt's comments that he would back the time limit on abortions being halved from 24 to just 12 weeks. Coming from any politician these comments would be worrying, but as an article in the Mirror points out: "Although the health secretary was expressing a personal view, it carries extra weight because his job puts him in charge of abortion services."

If Hunt's comment was an isolated attack it would be bad enough. However, a momentum is again growing within the ranks of the Tories to push back the right of women to decide when and whether to have children. Maria Miller, the minister for women, who describes herself as a "very modern feminist" had already thrown her views into the ring, arguing the time limit should be reduced to 20 weeks. This is the

woman whose parliamentary record includes voting to deny lesbians fertility treatment. Her previous role saw her closing Remploy factories, destroying thousands of lives.

Dorries

Nadine Dorries, who waged a high profile anti-choice campaign, '20 reasons for 20 weeks', entered the furore by tweeting: "Maria Miller understands the importance of recognising some women are traumatised by the abortion process, that's real feminism". Dorries is on record as saying her personal preference would be 13 weeks.

Over the weekend David Cameron and home secretary Theresa May stated they favoured a reduction to 20 weeks.

Maria Miller has claimed her views for a limit of 20 weeks are science-based, citing that babies born at 20 weeks are surviving. However, figures show that only 1% of babies

born at 22 weeks gestation survive, and many who do suffer serious disabilities.

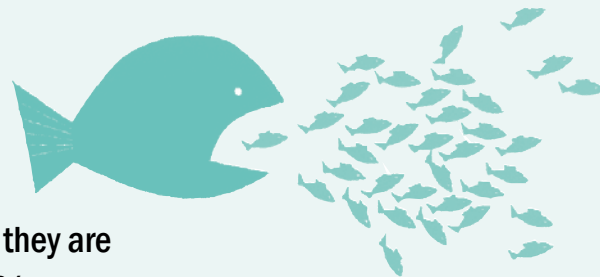
In England and Wales the vast majority of abortions take place before ten weeks. However, it is crucial to defend 24 weeks, as many women who seek late abortions are in extremely vulnerable situations, including very young women, who often don't recognise the symptoms and women who are menopausal with irregular periods. Also, some medical conditions cannot be detected before 21 weeks gestation.

Women from many backgrounds, but particularly working class women, understand that safe, free and legal abortion is a life and death issue. Tory cuts in abortion rights would lead to potentially fatal backstreet alternatives.

The Socialist Party will fight to ensure any attempt by Tory politicians to introduce legislation to reduce the time limit to 20 weeks, never mind 12, will be met by mass opposition.

Tories...

To 'celebrate' the Tory party conference, Them & Us takes a look back at the lowlights of the Tories' time in government:



Who they are

54% Tory MPs went to fee paying schools

38% Tory MPs went to Oxbridge

27% Tory MPs have worked in finance (compared to 7% of the general population)

1/4 Tory MPs are private landlords

23/29 cabinet members are millionaires – the richest, Tory leader of the House of Lords Lord Strathclyde, has assets and investments worth £10 million including a £2.3 million house in Westminster



What they say

Chancellor **George Osborne**, apparently invoking the spirit of Marx at the Tory conference: "Today we set out proposals for a radical change to employment law. It's a voluntary three way deal. You the company: give your employees shares in the business. You the employee: replace your old rights of unfair dismissal and redundancy with new rights of ownership. And what will the Government do? We'll charge no capital gains tax at all on the profit you make on your shares... Owners, workers, and the taxman, all in it together. Workers of the world unite."

Tory chief whip, **Andrew Mitchell**, reported ranting at police officers outside Downing Street, said: "Best you learn your f***ing place...you don't run this f***ing government... You're f***ing plebs."

Quickly proven to be untrue, **Cameron** said: "I think the last one I bought was from the West Cornwall Pasty Company. I seem to remember I was in Leeds station at the time. The choice was to have one of their small ones or their large ones. I've got a feeling I opted for the large one and very good it was too."

From one of their own! Tory MP **Nadine Dorries** told the Financial Times that government policy was "being run by two public school boys who don't know what it's like to go to the supermarket and have to put things back on the shelves because they can't afford it for their children's lunch boxes." She has since called for a 'Kill Cameron' strategy.

Tory treasurer, **Lord Fink** said: "I don't see why the UK should not compete for jobs that at present are going to the Cayman Islands. I lobbied George Osborne when the Tories were in opposition. I have long felt that the British government loses jobs to tax havens by allowing the Revenue to have these rather archaic rules."

What they've done

Increased the cap on university **fees** to £9,000 a year and scrapped EMA student payments for 16-19 year olds

50p **tax** rate for top earners scrapped – a recent poll showed 71% of the population think the government should abandon this policy, including 65% of those who voted Tory in 2010

Opened the door to huge privatisation in the **NHS** through the Health and Social Care Act as well as attempting to make £20 billion 'efficiency savings' – just recently G4S have been handed a £13 million contract to handle NHS Patients' Transport in Great Yarmouth, despite their disastrous management of security at the London Olympics

Massacred **welfare** benefits – including increasing to 35 the age at which someone is entitled to enough housing benefit for their own flat and stopping child benefit for households where someone earns over £40,000 a year

Attacked public sector **pensions** to force people to pay more, work for longer and get less – leading to a huge fightback and series of strikes by public sector workers

What it means for us

In 2011 there was a **15%** increase in the use of pawn shops

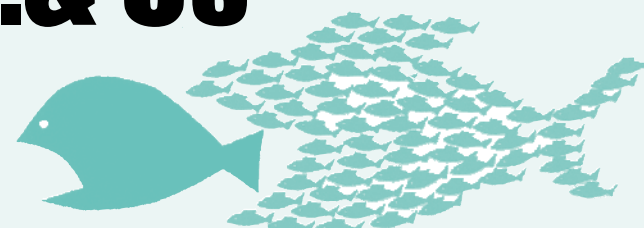
There has been a rise of up to **20%** in thefts of meat from supermarkets

128,697 families were given emergency food supplies by charity organisations last year. There are now more than 200 food banks across the country, with more opening every week

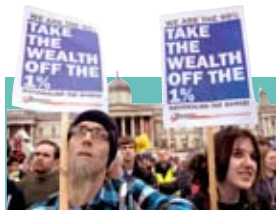
Last year there was a **32%** increase in young Londoners sleeping rough

We are getting more and more angry and ready for a fightback

...& Us



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



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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Fighting the construction industry blacklist

Blacklisting of workers in the construction industry has recently been exposed for the scourge that it is. Workers have had their livelihoods taken away just because they are trade union activists or even health and

safety reps. Paul is an electrician in Hull Unite No1 branch. He is on the Blacklisting Support Group steering committee. He has written this account of fighting the blacklist.

I discovered I was on the Consulting Association's blacklisting file run by Ian Kerr in March 2009. I was on the list, along with just over 3,000 other construction workers. This is just under 1% of the UK construction workforce.

These workers have all had information gathered illegally by this man, who passed it to 40 of the UK's largest construction companies. He charged a fee and each company paid an annual subscription. He was making a profit out of preventing people from working. It is obscene to put it mildly. Four companies had used this company to find information about me. None of the information was correct. To have people make assumptions about

your character purely for your trade union beliefs is surreal and wrong.

I contacted Unite the Union to see if I could pursue these companies to employment tribunals. They agreed but getting just one to a hearing is hard enough, let alone four, and the legal process is long and strict.

After two years of effort I was only successful in getting Balfour Beatty Engineering Services to a full tribunal hearing in February 2011.

The hearing lasted two days. The verdict was in my favour. I'm one of only a handful of people on this list who has had any kind of success. This is not from lack of effort on other workers' part, more has to be done for every person on that list. The Blacklisting Support Group, run

by rank and file members, is working tirelessly to that end.

The trade union movement has to support a national campaign to ensure everyone on that list gets justice. After three years there has still not been a fully organised national campaign.

Ian Kerr, the person at the centre of this scandal, was only fined £5,000. The companies involved got an information embargo from the last Labour government.

We've committed no crime but had our human rights abused and livelihoods affected. This should not be able to happen in a so-called civilised, democratic country. The people on this list should be applauded for fighting on in one of the hardest working environments - the construction sites.



Protesting at a construction bosses' beano photo the Socialist

Workplace nurseries saved in HMRC

A PCS member

Following a month of solid and well-organised campaigning, two workplace nurseries in the revenue and customs civil service department (HMRC) have been saved from closure. PCS union members in East Kilbride and Cardiff have achieved a massive victory.

This is in spite of the department categorically stating the decision could not be reversed.

In the current climate of blaming the poor and low paid for all the worlds' ills, this victory shows we can fight back against these types of attacks.

Six other nurseries are now under threat of closure by 30 November but PCS members in Leicester, Leeds, Salford and Nottingham are continuing their campaign.

Boosted by the victories in East Kilbride and Cardiff, they will be organising more protest actions over the next week - culminating in a further day of action on 17 October.

PCS members in HMRC will be taking their protest to Whitehall to coincide with a planned lobby of parliament on the day.

With 80% of the cuts still to come, parents, and women in the main, will be expected to bear the brunt. We need to be developing campaigns and key demands within the trade union movement to take up these issues.

We will build on this important campaign and make it increasingly difficult for our employer to roll back all the gains made for family friendly workplaces.



The campaign in Leicester photo Steve Score

- For more information www.pcs.org.uk/hmrc
- Messages of support can be sent to: cliveb@pcs.org.uk

Leeds solidarity with Crossrail battle

Around 20 construction workers and their supporters held a protest outside the Leeds Arena construction site on the morning of 5 October, in opposition to the victimisation of trade unionists on the Crossrail construction project in London.

The Leeds site is being built by BAM, one of the companies in the consortium responsible for cancelling the contract of subcontractors EIS and removing 28 workers from the Crossrail site in Westbourne Park. This includes a Unite steward and safety rep.

If this were nothing to do with attacking trade unions, these workers should be immediately transferred (TUPE'd) to the new contractor responsible for finishing EIS's part of the job.

The protest heard speeches from a number of construction electricians, and we distributed Socialist Party and Unite leaflets to workers going on to the site.

• Protests against the sackings at Westbourne Park are continuing every day at the site, with weekly protests at other Crossrail sites.

Iain Dalton

First Cymru bus strike

Scott Jones
Usdaw shop steward

On 1 October bus drivers and engineers in South Wales took strike action over pay, despite a recommendation not to from their union, Unite. It was the first strike of its type in eight years and was a new experience for many of the users of First Cymru buses.

The response was tremendous. I work at a supermarket and many of my colleagues use the bus to travel to and from work, myself included. Despite the strike meaning we had to make other plans, my workmates supported the drivers and understood their decision with comments like: "Good for them" and "They de-

serve a decent wage". While travelling on the buses before the strike I told the drivers that I supported them.

I was pleased to hear I wasn't the first person to do so. Passengers are worried about a worsening bus service as letters in the local paper have shown.

They believe that the workers taking a stand against the bus company can arrest this decline.

On the day itself the striking workers made Socialist Party members feel welcome on their picket lines.

The overall response to the strike gave me a real lift as I'm sure it did to the workers on strike and in the lead up to and fight for a general strike this is great news indeed.

In brief

Lorry drivers' strike

Workers at the Tesco distribution centre in Doncaster are on a 48-hour strike from 9 October. The workers were transferred to Eddie Stobart Ltd (ESL) in August and then on 5 September they were issued with 90-day notices of termination of employment. The drivers voted by 90% to strike and for action short of a strike.

Amnesty International

Workers at Amnesty International UK are striking on 10 October in a battle over management's cost-cutting pro-

gramme. Staff have agreed to a pay freeze but management still wants to cut £2.5 million. Their union Unite is demanding meaningful negotiations over management's plans.

University strike

Lecturers organised in the University and College Union (UCU) are set to take strike action at the University of East London (UEL). The strike is over attacks on working conditions. UEL management are trying to increase the lecturers' already overstretched workload. Management also want to strip the lecturers of their right of appeal if

they have been bullied or want to challenge unfair workloads. This isn't the only attack that lecturers are facing. As we reported last week, many PhD students are being used as cheap labour to drive down teaching costs. UEL is now charging new students the Con-Dems' £9,000 a year tuition fees. But this doesn't mean extra funding for staff and students at UEL. Socialist Students supports the strike by lecturers at UEL. Despite what university management will say, the lecturers' strike is defending students and defending education.

Bin workers' strike threat

Bin workers in Bromley, South London, walked out on 4 October over the sacking of four colleagues. Unite members have vowed to 'take action for as long as it takes' to get the jobs back.

120 workers at Veolia Environmental Services will be balloted for strike action unless the company reinstates the four.

Four workers were sacked on 3 October for 'gross misconduct' for allegedly accepting a tip for removing excess rubbish.

After the walkout a mass meeting agreed to return to work as a goodwill gesture but unanimously agreed to ballot for strike action, vowing that any action would be of

a 'prolonged and sustained nature'.

Onay Kasab, Unite regional officer, said: "Unite is proud to back workers willing to stand in solidarity with wrongly sacked workers.

"The sacked four had more than 100 years of service between them and were described by Veolia as 'hard working' - it is a bitter blow for them to be sacked in this way.

"Our members have a very clear message to Veolia bosses: reinstate the four or we will strike for as long as it takes to get the jobs back.

"The ball is in Veolia's court, it can end this dispute and avoid prolonged disruption to Bromley's rubbish collections but it needs to get around the table and talk to Unite."

The hidden homeless

“Sofa surfing is my lot”



At the Tory Party conference the idea of cutting housing benefit for under 25s has again been raised. Not content with sowing divisions between old and young, Cameron and Osborne tried to turn young workers against young unemployed people by questioning whether young people should be able to claim housing benefit if they've never worked. These toffs understand nothing of the situation facing working class young people. James Ivens explains the impact of the housing crisis.

I live in transit. Since July my kit bag and I have toured half a dozen couches and floors. Like “countless thousands” more, according to the charity Crisis, I am part of the growing ‘hidden homeless’.

Britain's housing problem continues to spiral. Its roots stretch back to Thatcher's ‘right to buy’ legislation. Sales gutted council stock. Private landlords extort huge sums from

workers with nowhere else to go. There is a cap on benefits, but not on rent!

And that's not all. Dancing against this backdrop is the cruel can-can of squat clearance. Housing charity Shelter has uncovered at least 288,000 long-term empty homes in England.

The coalition has criminalised the more than 20,000 people living in some of them. In this time of rising costs, repossessions and redundancies, it's astonishing anyone has a home at all!

Social housing

Sofa surfing is my lot. Like many other young people, rocketing rents and insecure employment have forced me into friends' front rooms. A colleague has been sharing a bed with his ex for months. Other friends crowd in subtenants to keep each other off the streets.

I live in the most expensive city in Britain. My latest day job is yet another casualised, menial and poorly paid position. The remnants of the benefit system are of little help. Even with support from my parents, I can't always afford rent.

What little social housing remains



A competitor in Youth Fight for Jobs' Austerity Games attempts the property high jump photo Paul Mattsson

is prioritised for the most vulnerable. But the result is ghettoisation of those most in need of social integration. Even this is under attack. Labour wants to kick anyone not in work down to the bottom of the list. The Con-Dems want to disqualify households with a joint income of over £40,000 from council homes.

You would think by now a light bulb might have pinged on over Labour leader Ed Miliband's head:

build more social housing! You would be wrong. True, Jack Dromey, shadow housing minister, wants a construction programme. This would “put unemployed building workers back to work, create jobs” and provide homes - all good stuff. But the proposed 25,000 new builds are not enough for nearly two million households in waiting. And since it clearly works so well, Labour wants them handed over to the pri-

vate sector!

Young people and families desperately need quality, affordable housing. The Socialist Party calls for decent publicly owned homes to be built for all, rent caps not benefit caps, and an end to council house sales.

The main parties seem set on putting us all on the streets. I can think of a couple of houses in Westminster sorely overdue for eviction notices.

More success for Socialist Students

Exeter

Exeter Socialist Students has had a fantastic start to the new academic year with over 50 students signing up.

At well-attended meetings we have discussed topics ranging from economics and theory to how we can take the lead in campaigns across campus such as Rape Is No Joke and the TUC demo on 20 October. Recently two Spanish members volunteered to lead a discussion on the situation in Spain laying the foundations for Exeter Socialist Students to launch a solidarity campaign for young people across Europe fighting back against government austerity.

We have been invited to take part in the university debating society's Question Time event and are leading the ‘yes’ campaign for the student referendum on whether or not the Exeter Student Guild should take action for the NUS day of action on 21 November.

We hope to develop the Youth Fight For Jobs campaign in Exeter. We are already planning stalls outside job centres. We are also developing a local college branch of Socialist Students that can lead the campaign on the democratisation of their student representation committee.

Carlus Hudson



photo Senan

Mercader” [the Soviet agent who murdered Leon Trotsky] on sight of our stalls. Two other Labour Students did apologise for this, but Labour must feel threatened by Socialist Students to make them stoop so low! **Siobhan Friel**

Liverpool John Moores

Holding our first stall at Liverpool John Moores University, we enjoyed the unprecedented help of the Green Party.

Two members of the Greens were outside with clipboards and some leaflets. A student, after speaking to one of the activists for nearly half an hour approached our stall with a look of puzzlement on his face.

He came over and said: “I’ve been told I should speak to you.” A bit confused, I asked who by, to which he replied “them over there” referring to the Greens. When I asked why they had sent him and his friend to come and speak to us, he simply said: “we

asked were they about fighting back and are they against the capitalist system...he said we should probably speak to you because you want to fight back”!

John Cosgrove

Hertfordshire

At the University of Hertfordshire it was evident that a new socialist society was needed. From my experience as a student, the existing societies are inactive. Socialist Students had already been campaigning and had enthusiastic support from students angered by the government's attitude towards young people over the tuition fee increase and the dire level of unemployment facing university graduates.

So this year we were determined to set up an official Socialist Students society within the university. At the freshers fair we collected well over the 15 signatures required to become an official society as well as selling many copies of the Socialist Students magazine, Megaphone, and the Socialist.

Those who say that students are apathetic are very much mistaken. **Richard Shattock**

Queen Mary, London

Up to 40 people attended a Socialist Students and Tamil Solidarity meeting on Monday 9 October. Frances Harrison, former BBC correspondent for Sri Lanka, read from her new book, Still Counting the Dead.

The largely Tamil audience reflected the growing thirst for political explanation and ideas in this community that has suffered such a huge loss. Only days before a UN representative had acknowledged that the death count from the recent bloody and brutal war on the Tamil people in Sri Lanka could be 75,000.

Almost everyone signed up to help build Tamil Solidarity on campus as a political and activist-based society.

Keerthikan



Over 300 young people and trade unionists took part in the March for a Future called by Youth Fight for Jobs & Education Northern Ireland. Neil Moore, secretary of the campaign, said: “The march was a powerful statement that young people and workers can and will unite across the sectarian divide to fight in their common interests. We got a fantastic response on either side of the peaceline. Youth Fight for Jobs will be building on this success by launching a campaign against the Assembly's plans to cut EMA for school and college students. Students here have already beaten the politicians on this issue and they can do it again.” The organisers extend their thanks to all who took part in and supported the march, in particular Unite the Union, NIPSA, PCS and INTO photo Youth Fight for Jobs Northern Ireland

● Join the Scottish March for Jobs and Public Services against Austerity, Stirling to Glasgow, 17-20 October. Contact Youth Fight for Jobs Scotland: www.scottishmarchforjobs.wordpress.com, youthfightscotland@gmail.com

JOIN THE HOT AUTUMN OF PROTEST!

Youth Fight for Jobs and Education fortnight of action 13-27 October

We're in for the fight of our lives. Fee hikes, EMA scrapped, youth services cut to the bone, housing benefit cut and attacks on our democratic rights. This is the record so far of the Con-Dem coalition. And if the Tories aren't stopped they'll take anything we have left over.

That's why we are getting organised and fighting back. Youth Fight for Jobs and Education is kicking off the hot autumn with a fortnight of protest. We want to use the protests to build momentum for the TUC demo on 20 October and to build support for the demand for a 24-hour general strike. This autumn we are saying we won't be a lost generation, we are fighting their system and demanding a future!

Get involved with the protests, meetings and other campaign activities planned across the country during the fortnight of action by contacting Youth Fight for Jobs:
Web: www.youthfightforjobs.com
Phone: 020 8558 7947
Email: youthfightforjobs@gmail.com
Twitter: follow @youthfight4jobs
Facebook: Youth Fight for Jobs



Arguing the case for a 24-hour general strike

The Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester branch of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) passed a motion at its committee urging the TUC to set the date for a one-day general strike in line with the POA motion carried at Congress. I didn't feel too optimistic about getting it passed when members asked questions about the legality of it. I explained that so many unions have ongoing disputes that it would be possible to have a legal partial general strike. Also that it is un-

likely that the law could be used if all unions took action anyway. And if there wasn't a large number of workers demanding a general strike the motion wouldn't have been passed.

The motion was passed unanimously and everyone present signed the NSSN petition asking the TUC to name the day.

Clive Walder
Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester branch CWU, personal capacity



Leeds 30 November 2011 photo Iain Dalton

NUT executive seeks to build coordinated action

At the last meeting of the NUT national executive, a motion was unanimously agreed that started to build on the motions passed at TUC Congress supporting coordinated national strike action.

The NUT agreed to write to other TUC affiliates to explore the practicalities of building joint action on pay, pensions and jobs.

The motion also called on NUT negotiators to firm up and clarify with the other main school teachers' union NASUWT how to build from the action short of strike action that both the NUT and NASUWT are engaged in at present.

The resolution calls for dates to

be set for a programme of national strike action.

This will be vital given the serious further attacks that could soon be coming - on top of the attacks already faced - from the Public Service Pensions Bill and from the attacks on pay likely to be included in the report to soon be issued by the School Teachers' Review Body.

No specific proposed dates for action were agreed, but progress on these discussions will be reported to the next executive meeting in early November.

From the blog of Martin Powell-Davies:
electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk/

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.

Can your branch take out a subscription for five or more copies? See www.socialistparty.org.uk/txt/255.pdf

Can you pay for a greeting/ ad from your branch or a group of your members?

This will help us with the additional costs of expanding the paper and make sure that these reports and articles reach the widest possible trade union readership.

Please send reports, updates, comment pieces and letters to: editors@socialistparty.org.uk



photo Socialist Party Wales

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

Why we're marching on 20 October

The plebs are revolting on 20 October - that is how the millionaire government will see it. You could write their press releases in advance: 'the protest is pointless, we will not change our policy.'

For us it is not pointless. It is a matter of life and death. The many proposed NHS cuts indicate this. The Tories plan to replace the 28 cancer networks and 28 combined heart and stroke networks with 12 of each. The 700 staff working for the 56 networks will be cut drastically, some estimate they will go down to fewer than 100. Obviously they will be able to do far less to promote take-up of new forms of surgery and help patients throughout their treatment and recovery. People will die.

And for the rich? Well they can still buy their way to the head of the queue so who cares?

Come out on 20 October to answer that question.

Derek McMillan
Brighton Socialist Party

I look forward to hearing the clank of the letterbox on the arrival of my copy of Network, our union Usdaw's magazine. I am unfortunately unable to participate actively and so Network is my link to the union.

Evidence documenting the attacks on our members by this vicious Con-Dem coalition is clearly shown. JJB Sports job cuts, attacks on employment tribunals,



March again on 20 October photo Elaine Brunskill

pensions, etc, etc. The magazine is full of the campaign to raise awareness of violence against our members, first introduced by the health and safety executive and is commendable. However, where is the union's support for the TUC-led campaign against poverty and austerity?

It is a disgrace that only ten words, hidden in the interview of TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady, give publicity to the demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Belfast on 20 October.

Udaw general secretary John Hannett should hang his head in shame at this omission which creates a split between shop workers and other trade unionists in the pri-

vate and public sector unions.
Robbie Segal

I am a registered blind person who is also the full-time 'informal' carer of a person with a severe mental illness and I am in the process of being assessed for Employment and Support Allowance.

I filled in the Work Capability Assessment questionnaire two weeks ago so I am feeling rather insecure at the moment, wondering what the outcome will be and what decision will be made. The form did not ask any specific questions about sight loss. If I had not taken advice from the RNIB, a charity for visually impaired people, I would not have known how best to fill it in.

At the start of the Tory Party conference we are once again hearing Osborne call for more welfare cuts - so once again, no doubt, the disabled and unemployed will be vilified in the right-wing media as work-shy scroungers!

As I mentioned, I am also a full-time carer. Even though I am saving the government approximately £1,300 a week, this is not classed as a job. It was not taken into account during my assessment even though any decision taken about me will have a profound effect on the person I care for, not to mention the stress they will face when their time comes to be scrutinised!

I am also dealing with the slow deterioration of the little sight that I have. Last year when I was given training to use a white cane this was cut short due to the trainer being on a temporary contract that was not renewed. Despite all this, I and other disabled people am to be used as scapegoats for this crisis of capitalism while the millionaire friends of the Con-Dems walk away scot-free!

This is why, hopefully, I shall be going on the march on 20 October and I urge other disabled people to do the same. The TUC need to make this event as accessible as possible to enable this to happen as disabled people will NOT sit in the dark and allow themselves to be bullied by this vile coalition any longer!

Anonymous for fear of persecution

The call for mass, coordinated strike action

Civil service union PCS vice president John McNally spoke at the lobby of the Tory Party conference on 7 October. He finished his speech with an explanation of why we need to build for a 24-hour general strike:

"This government has no mandate for these cuts and we are entitled to oppose them by all means at our disposal, including civil disobedience. But the best way to defeat them is by mass, coordinated industrial action across the public and private sector.

30 November last year showed our potential strength – if we had followed up with further coordinated action we would have defeated them, or at least won concessions on pensions.

The surrender by some that followed sent out a message of division, despair and defeatism. But now we have an opportunity to send out a message of hope and defiance.

20 October must be more than another protest march – it must be the platform on which we build mass, coordinated action on the widest front across the public and

private sectors.

Campaigning works and action gets results. That is the lesson of recent strikes in the civil service where thousands of jobs have been won.

Every union in the TUC has a legitimate trade dispute on pay, pensions, privatisation or a related issue. So, let's hear no nonsense about the difficulties or legalities of organising coordinated industrial action.

The TUC must – as a matter of urgency – get all its affiliated unions into a room and agree a date for joint mass coordinated action as soon as possible after 20 October.

A 24-hour general strike as a start to an effective programme of coordinated industrial action can stop the austerity programme in its tracks.

Let us fight for our members and our class with the same determination the Tories fight for their class."



The joint action on 30 November showed what was possible photo Elaine Brunskill

Solidarity with workers fighting cuts in Europe

Greece: escalating the action against austerity

Correspondents from Xekinima
(CWI in Greece)

German chancellor Angela Merkel is expected in Greece on 9 October. She will be greeted by an increasing bitterness and anger against the destruction of the Greek economy and living conditions of working people. An escalation of the struggle is developing from below. It has the potential to bring down the Samaras government and challenge capitalist austerity.

The Samaras government of New Democracy with the participation of its fake "left" allies (Dimar and Pasok) are preparing cuts that will lead to untold misery for millions of workers, pensioners, the poor and the unemployed.

Official unemployment stands at 23.6% (real unemployment is more like 30%) and among young people is 55%. Gross Domestic Product has fallen by 22% since the beginning of the crisis. The 'national' debt is estimated to be 179% of GDP in 2013.

The Greek people have no choice but to try to stop the criminal plans of the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) leaders. That can only mean trying to bring down the government that collaborates with these criminals. A series of important unions have started



The general strike in October 2011

adopting precisely this militant programme based around the need for occupations and 48-hour general strike action, escalating towards an indefinite general strike to bring down the government.

Speaking at a union conference last week, GENOP/DEI (electrical workers' union) president, Nikos

Fotopoulos, spelled out the necessary programme: "workers' occupations of the main ministries, public agencies, all the banks, all tax offices, the airports and ports" and a "coordinated call for repeated 48-hour general strikes and massive daily rallies at Syntagma Square" (the main square in Athens outside

the Parliament).

A number of union federations are now starting to move in a similar direction, calling for repeated 48-hour strikes. The national union of doctors in public hospitals has called for an indefinite general strike.

If a significant section of the unions took militant action with strikes and occupations, even without the agreement of the national Confederation of Greek Workers (Greek TUC), it would spread like wildfire.

Leadership obstacle

The main obstacle is the official leadership of GSEE (the main union confederation) and ADEDY (main public sector workers' confederation). Nikos Fotopoulos and other trade unionists are calling on the GSEE and ADEDY leaders to take the initiative and call for coordinated action. But it is clear that the GSEE and ADEDY leaders will not call for such action.

But if decisive strike action was initiated by the militant federations, it would encourage the rest of the union movement to move in the same direction. The three to four main union federations that have called for militant action should initiate strikes and occupations.

The potential is there for a social eruption and strike wave which

has not been seen since the fall of the military junta in 1974. The only choice that the leaders of the militant unions have is either to take decisive action themselves, or to leave this responsibility to GSEE knowing that they will not take action.

The current conditions in Europe mean it is entirely possible to coordinate industrial action among European workers, especially in South Europe. In Portugal and Spain, we have seen clashes with the police and the security forces resorting to rubber bullets to contain the protests.

In other countries, while the movement is not as advanced as in Portugal and Spain, there is boiling discontent just under the surface.

This is not only in countries like Italy and Cyprus but Ireland and Britain, where significant trade union and social struggles are already developing.

All of these events are unfolding from below while the unions are still largely led by well-paid bureaucrats who do not experience the agony of millions of workers and have no desire to lead militant action. But despite the treacherous role of such union leaderships, the movement is going forward and learning from experience.

See also socialistworld.net, the website of the Committee for a Workers' International, CWI

'The Greek people feel that they're under some kind of occupation'

Eyewitness report from Athens

Andros Payiatsos, Xekinima (CWI Greece), spoke to the Socialist immediately after the protests against Merkel's visit.

We had a very big demonstration of around 50,000 in Athens today. This was despite the unions only calling a three-hour strike. They should have called at least a 24-hour strike to mobilise people. A three-hour stoppage, given the kind of struggles we've had in Greece in the previous period, is a joke, not an attempt to

give Merkel a serious message.

Secondly, central Athens was cut off from public transport, it was impossible to go to the centre other than by foot. A 'red zone' was created, where there could be no rallies, meetings or demonstrations.

The demonstrators' message to Merkel was that this crisis cannot continue anymore, that the Greek people feel that they're under some kind of occupation, and that this has to stop. The central slogans were "Merkel out", "Troika out".

It's the first time since this crisis started that any significant EU official has visited Greece. Greece has been blamed by the EU for everything. This represents a certain change; an attempt to support the Samaras government. This government faces a real problem. Society is thoroughly opposed to its policies. On top of that they want to add almost £12 billion of new cuts.

The government has been negotiating for weeks and they don't agree among themselves, or with the Troi-

ka. So Samaras invited Merkel with the idea she would provide support and aid his propaganda that 'Europe and Germany will assist us', and we'll be out of the crisis and not out of the EU and not out of the eurozone.

On the front of our paper and on the leaflets we distributed Xekinima calls for an all-out general strike and a wave of occupations to bring the government down and kick the Troika out. This we link to the need to coordinate the struggles with the rest of southern Europe, particularly

Spain and Portugal.

We're putting forward the alternative of a government of the left in the service of the working class and the people. This essentially implies Syriza, which is the biggest force on the left, has the main responsibility. Of course it has to be a government with socialist policies. If we have a left government that doesn't attempt to follow socialist policies but tries to manage the crisis of the capitalist system, it will be a disaster for the left and for the working class movement.

SOUTH AFRICA:

‘What are we doing about this government that is killing us?’

The struggle for a new mass workers’ party with a socialist programme

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. The Marikana strike action has spread throughout the mining industry provoking the anger of the bosses and African National Congress (ANC) government ministers alike. On 5 October Anglo American Platinum fired 12,000 miners striking for better wages but with little hope of replacing these workers. The strikes and the government response have also ignited a political volcano among South Africa’s working class with the demand for a new mass workers’ party finding an increasing echo. In the following interview Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) member Mametlwe Sebei - who is playing a leading role in the miners’ Strike Coordinating Committee - explains the political tasks facing the workers’ movement. The DSM is an affiliate of the Committee for a Workers’ International - CWI - to which the Socialist Party is also affiliated.

Extracts from an article on the Daily Maverick, a South African online news site, 4 October, by Mandy De Waal.



Mametlwe Sebei photo Daily Maverick

The industrial action isn’t only about better wages, says Mametlwe Sebei, a leader in SA’s Democratic Socialist Movement, which is helping to coordinate independent strike committees in Rustenburg and beyond. “We are campaigning for a new party, for a labour or socialist party to emerge,” says Sebei, who added that the Democratic Socialist Movement was mandated to draw up a resolution that can be voted on by mine workers to make a case for a party. The paper, which has not yet been circulated amongst workers, would also highlight the programme and ideology of what would be a new socialist, labour party. “This is not an idea that emerged from us at the Democratic Socialist Movement, but in actual fact it has emerged on the ground,” says Sebei. “That is not to say that we haven’t been consciously campaigning for this, but the circumstances and conditions in Rustenburg have rapidly

changed consciousness. What the workers are asking is: ‘What are we doing about this government that is killing us?’ The ANC has never represented the working class, and even though this country has been built on the blood of mining workers, neither does Cosatu [the main trade union federation].” “The illegal strikes show that the NUM [National Union of Mineworkers - the largest affiliate of Cosatu] has consciously acted against the mandate it has been given by the workers, and if anything they are the conscious agents of the mining bosses. NUM through Cosatu is knotted into the tripartite alliance that of and by itself ties itself to the interests of the mining bosses who are represented by the ANC.” A case in point, believes Sebei, is the sponsorship of Cosatu by Patrice Motsepe, who ranks as the fourth wealthiest man in South Africa with a net worth of some R22.75 billion [£1.6 billion] as at March 2012, according to Forbes. Motsepe has interests in platinum, gold, coal, iron and manganese through African Rainbow Minerals, the company that helped build his billions, and was one of the first big Black Economic Empowerment winners post democracy, when mining rights were only granted to ‘empowered’ companies. In its profile, Forbes talks about how Motsepe is labelled as an ‘oligarch’ in this country.

“We are saying that the entire mining industry, and the rest of the economy, must be brought under democratic control and the management of the working class.”



Marikana platinum miners celebrate winning a significant wage increase following a bitter strike struggle

“Motsepe has been sponsoring Cosatu for years. If you look at the report for the congress before this one, Motsepe was the biggest donor. This means that Cosatu is highly compromised,” says Sebei. “A debate has emerged about whether it is time to reconstitute the labour movement,” says Sebei. “This is a debate that is emerging within our own ranks, but the events of Rustenburg and the workers’ own action in defiance of mine bosses and NUM show that the move to earnestly rebuild the labour movement from scratch has begun. The workers will reclaim the labour movement for their own control and their own struggle, and I think that is a warning to Cosatu and to the rest of the other unions in Cosatu who think that they have a God-given right to lead the workers.” Sebei said that the Democratic Socialist Movement was campaigning for a new socialist, labour party to emerge. “We need to be able to build a mass political party that will unite all the workers in the mining industry with all other workers in all other industries, but also with all communities in struggle, and with youth in campuses... this is an idea that has found its echo in Rustenburg and beyond.” The call for a mass political alternative, which Sebei said would be based on the ideas and programme of socialism, would be given a loud voice on 13 October 2012 when workers, activists and youth march from Church

- 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

“The mineworkers’ rejection of their traditional negotiators has allowed rivals such as AMCU and the Committee for a Workers International, a communist group, to recruit platinum miners and lead the strikes.” Sunday Tribune, South Africa

SOCIALISM 2012
A South African miners’ leader 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.

Black History Month

From apartheid to Marikana - the struggle for social justice continues

April Ashley
Socialist Party and black members’ rep on Unison national executive (personal capacity)

The victorious strike of the Marikana mineworkers has transformed the situation in South Africa and heralded an upturn in workers’ struggle. The strike has spread like wildfire to other mines and enormously boosted the confidence of workers in South Africa. It has ignited a new stage in the South African revolutionary movement. The massacre of over 40 mineworkers in “scenes reminiscent of the worst of the apartheid era massacres” (Business Day 17/08/2012) shocked to the core South African society, catapulted South Africa to the forefront of international workers’ struggles and enlisted the solidarity and support of workers worldwide. The struggle has brought back memories of the fight against apartheid for older workers and an interest in the struggle for young people. It was in 1994 that the black majority population finally secured one person, one vote and ended apartheid with the election of the first black African National Congress (ANC) government, under a negotiated settlement. The whole world held its breath on 11 February 1990 - that historic day when Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years. The hopes and dreams of the majority for a new South Africa rested on his shoulders: a new South Africa freed from ferocious and pitiless oppression and exploitation by white minority rule. His release was secured after decades of bitter struggles when the apartheid regime attempted to drown the revolution in blood. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the heroic Soweto uprising of the youth in 1976, when up to 100 young people were shot dead by police, (see article, right) showed the determination of the masses to overthrow apartheid. The adoption of the Freedom Charter by the ANC in 1955 was an expression of workers’ demand for a revolutionary change in society. The charter called for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy: “The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people, the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.”

through marches, lobbies and boycotts and lead to many workers becoming politically active as they supported their brothers and sisters in South Africa. The 1980s workers’ movements lead to the birth of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in 1985. Cosatu adopted the Freedom Charter in 1987 under the banner ‘Socialism means Freedom’. Its largest affiliate, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), led by the then militant Cyril Ramaphosa, was at the forefront of mass strikes, and Cosatu began a series of general strikes which made the country ungovernable and ushered in the end of apartheid. But 20 years after the end of apartheid what has happened to the hopes and dreams of the workers encapsulated in the Freedom Charter? The Socialist Party and the CWI have explained that following the collapse of Stalinism the white regime of FW de Klerk recognised the potential for a power-sharing agreement with the ANC. The fundamental economic interests of capitalism would not be threatened because of the ANC leadership’s shift to the right, betraying the revolutionary struggle. Failure of ANC South Africa is now the most unequal country in the world with the wealthiest 10% of the population taking 60% of its total income while the bottom half of the population earns less than 8%. Almost one quarter of South African households experience hunger on a daily basis. An average worker lives on R18 (£1.30) a day but 44% of workers - six million workers - live on less than R10 a day. Unemployment is 25% with 50% youth unemployment. This means workers continue to live in crushing poverty. “A mineworker outlined his working and living conditions: ‘We spend eight hours underground. It’s very hot and you can’t see daylight. There is no air sometimes and you have to get air from the pipes down there.’ His shack has no electricity, no running water, and the outside toilet is shared with two other families” (the Guardian 7/9/12). Apart from the short-lived reconstruction and development programme in their early years in government, which saw limited improvements for the black working class, the ANC has pursued an aggressive neoliberal economic programme with mass privatisations of public utilities like electricity and water which has led to the increased pauperisation of the working class. This has fuelled a myriad of community struggles for housing and delivery of services for many years. For example, the ending of subsidised water supply in Kwa Zulu Natal in 2000 led to the biggest cholera epidemic in the country’s history as workers went to the dams and rivers to drink as they couldn’t afford to be reconnected to the new more expensive supply. Mass public sector strikes against privatisation in 2007 and 2010 shook the ANC government which has been



It was the explosion of the organised working class onto the scene of struggle that undermined Apartheid photo Reflex

ruling in a tripartite alliance together with Cosatu and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Divisions have widened in the alliance as the ANC effectively abandoned the working class and became conscious agents of the big bosses and capitalism. Some Cosatu leaders have also been assimilated into the ranks of the elite and have abandoned the struggle. Cyril Ramaphosa was paid £61,000 as a Lonmin non-executive director last year and has come to symbolise the gap between a new black elite and the poverty-stricken majority. Socialism alternative Following the Marikana massacre the credibility of the ANC has now been shattered. It has demonstrated that it shares with the capitalist class the same fear and loathing for the working class. “The ANC was in the black mind, the black soul, it took on an almost mystical quality. But now they’ve lost faith in it. The bond is shattered and it happened on television” (the Guardian 7/9/12). As the global economic recession deepens the bosses, backed by the ANC government, will continue their attempt to load the burden onto workers’ shoulders. So the scene is set for not only continued explosive struggles but a split in the tripartite alliance and the ANC itself. The Democratic Socialist Movement (the CWI section in South Africa) are proposing a Rustenburg general strike, to be followed by a national strike and demonstration. International pressure by workers and activists must also be maximised. The enthusiastic response to the ideas of the DSM among workers indicates the great potential for the development of a new mass workers’ party with a socialist programme, to defend and further the interests of working class people in South Africa.

Soweto uprising 1976

In 1976 South Africa’s vicious apartheid regime was shaken by a heroic uprising started by thousands of school students in the black ‘township’ of Soweto near Johannesburg. The police killed at least 140 people on 16-17 June 1976, mostly in Soweto, and 600 more as they tried to put down the year-long revolt. South Africa was then still under the apartheid regime which used ‘separate development’ to disenfranchise, racially segregate and keep down the country’s black majority and to ensure plentiful cheap labour. The ruling Nationalist government insisted that school lessons in certain subjects must be taken in Afrikaans - associated with white minority rule and particularly with the oppression of apartheid. Students had begun boycotting Afrikaans classes and elected an action committee that later became the Soweto Students’ Representative Council (SSRC). The campaign started with a demonstration on 16 June. The police fired tear gas into the crowd, estimated at 12,000 strong. The students replied with a volley of stones. The police then fired directly into the crowd. 13-year-old Hector Petersen was one of the first victims, being shot down in front of his sister and friends. The education system was the spark but there were many such grievances throughout apartheid South Africa, especially in the townships. Militant (the Socialist’s predecessor) described Soweto as a “powder keg waiting for a match to set it alight” with “virtual concentration camps”. “A million Africans are packed into Soweto. Half the population is unemployed and therefore without permits to stay, at the mercy of any police raid.” The article contrasted the dreadful conditions of the townships with the privileged life of many middle class whites. The Soweto uprising changed the political consciousness of South Africa’s black working class. Youth in Alexandria township, north of Johannesburg, had seen that they couldn’t beat the apartheid state forces by themselves and appealed to their parents at work to back them. By 22 June 1976, over 1,000 workers at the Chrysler car factory had stopped work in the first strike action consciously held in support of the students. In Soweto, the SSRC took on the responsibility of organising for a student march into Johannesburg on 4 August and, for three days, the first political general strike since 1961 took place. The government conceded on the Afrikaans issue but the revolt had gone too far and was now clearly aimed at the regime itself. Roger Shriver

South Africa

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Birmingham Tory conference demo

Marchers support call for 24-hour general strike

Tony Leigh
Birmingham Socialist Party

A ring of steel greeted protesters who were in Birmingham to show their anger outside the Tory conference on Sunday 7 October.

An unprecedented security operation was in force which included drafting in hundreds of extra police, entire streets sealed off with a metal wall, and a phalanx of private security guards sent from the infamous security personnel ‘provider’ G4S.

Nevertheless, thousands of trade unionists, youth, unemployed

workers and pensioners turned out for a noisy and vibrant march and rally.

Dozens of trade union banners and placards festooned the mass of marchers, proceeding noisily accompanied by Indian drummers and two trade union brass bands.

Unfortunately the route of the march itself was mainly

confined to deserted back streets. The trade union movement must do more in future to make sure it is not hidden from view!

The rally heard contributions from a number of local and national trade union leaders. The best by far were from RMT’s Bob Crow, PCS’s John McNally and FBU’s Matt Wrack. In his fighting speech Bob Crow received the biggest cheer of the day when he called for the full renationalisation of the railways.

But vitally both Bob and John McNally concretely posed that the next step against the Con-Dems’ austerity agenda, after the 20 October national demo, should be a 24-hour general strike.

Bob said: “We can march and march again but enough’s enough. The TUC must look at the practicalities of coordinating industrial action across the public and private sectors.”

Waltham Forest

Parents and staff unite against school sell-off

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union coordinator

Waltham Forest, in north east London, could have 16 ‘academy’ schools, by the end of the year. Academies take away money from the remaining local authority schools, are outside local authority accountability, and are often run by groups linked to big business.

At the end of the summer term a group of parents got together at Chapel End school to fight the academy proposals. A good meeting was held, but the decision was made before an opposition group had got up and running.

However, there is a movement brewing to generalise the opposition. The next school potentially to go is Connaught, but a very successful strike ballot has taken place there to stop ‘academisation.’ Waltham

Forest Anti-Cuts Union (WFACU) is calling on all campaigners to support this strike which is likely to be on 16 October.

A public meeting on 4 October raised the linking up of Connaught parents and staff with those at the next school to potentially fall, George Mitchell. If coordinated action of these two schools took place it would act as a barrier to the academy juggernaut and would alert teachers, pupils and parents across the borough to the need to unify against the school sell-off.

WFACU will be supporting the mass lobby of Waltham Forest council on 18 October and calls for a borough-wide parents ballot. We are also raising with parents, teachers and campaigners the need to stand Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in opposition to academies and all cuts and privatisation.

See page 2 for more on TUSC

Save our server!

Sunderland anti-fascists stand up against divisive EDL

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Can you donate to the Socialist Party’s appeal? We are aiming to raise £12,000 to enable us to buy a new computer server and are asking all our members and supporters to contribute.

We are continuing to get a great response from members and readers. Thanks this week to: Gavin Hartley £25; Chris Baugh £30; Gareth Bromhall £10; a reader of the Socialist £500; members in Worcester £75.

Please consider donating to the appeal. Our target is within reach. Every donation, no matter how big or how small is very welcome and will take us nearer to our goal.

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

Socialist Party member
Northern region

Socialist Party members took part in a counter-demo against far-right, racist groups, including the English Defence League (EDL), that were opposing the building of a new mosque in Millfield, Sunderland.

Our counter demonstration was about 200 strong, and was a mixed group containing left-wing activists and Asian and white members of the local community, under the banner of Sunderland Anti-Fascist Coalition (SAFC).

At the end of the march we were standing near the intended site. On the other side of the road, the far-right demo started to assemble.

Clearly the racists are intent on spreading hatred, and dividing working class communities. An

already tense atmosphere soured even further as the right-wing groups began throwing firecrackers and bottles. One of the firecrackers exploded right by my feet, with smoke and sparks hitting me in the face. One of the bottles hit the roof of a house and glass showered down on us.

Demonstrators on our side were determined to stand their ground, though at one stage the demo became somewhat fragmented, with some moving back and others forward, which highlights the need for well-organised stewarding on future demonstrations.

Our counter-demo stayed until the right-wing demo had completely disbanded, then we marched back to the starting point where our demo could safely disperse.

SAFC did a good job of getting trade union backing for the printing of leaflets and posters. However, trade unions should also be urged to mobilise their members against far-right demonstrations.

Keep the EDL out of Waltham Forest
Saturday 27 October
Assemble 11am, Walthamstow town centre, E17

The EDL were stopped by counter-demonstrators from holding a rally in Waltham Forest on 1 September. Now the EDL leaders are threatening to ‘unite the right’ and march again on 27 October. This must be stopped. See www.socialistparty.org.uk/keyword/anti-fascist for reports and strategy

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Send the transport privatisers packing

Renationalise the railways

Take the whole rail system back into public ownership! That is the only logical conclusion from the fiasco over the franchise for the West Coast Main Line railway from London to Glasgow.

Capitalist giant Virgin Rail had run the service since 1997 under the privatisation policy that has ruined the rail system. However, this August, the Department of Transport took the franchise off them and handed it to rivals FirstGroup. After angry protests from Virgin's Richard Branson, that decision was overturned with ministers blaming civil service workers (who else?) for this disastrous flop of a government policy.

Rail privatisation, introduced by the Tories in the 1990s but continued by Labour governments, puts profit-seeking in the driving seat. Rail firms are guaranteed a large income. If they do not reach their target profit, the government makes up part of that shortfall. It foolishly puts trust in the capitalist companies' integrity.

Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of the transport union RMT, told the Socialist:

"The bidding system was supposed to get private rail firms to put in a realistic bid to win the franchise and safeguard jobs. FirstGroup put

in an unrealistic bid and have been granted the franchise! The only way they're going to make this franchise pay out is to cut jobs aggressively.

"We're not supporting one private company against another. The RMT thinks the whole network should be renationalised. Even the job-threatening McNulty report says this would be three to four times as cheap as a private system.

"It's ridiculous. For months the system will be in limbo. They don't know what to do apart from painting the trains green but not putting any logo on it until the whole mess is resolved! Renationalisation is the only realistic solution."

The Socialist Party programme includes:

- No to privatisation
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system
- Nationalisation of the transport system under democratic working class control and management
- Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need. No compensation for the privatising fat cats

Reality of rail privatisation

- The West Coast deal will cost Britain's taxpayers £40 million to compensate bidders as this franchising operation is totally rerun.

- The government returns in taxpayer bailouts nearly half of the money that privatising rail companies pay for their profitable operations. Eight out of 17 rail franchises receive huge public subsidies. They received £451 million in the past year (up by 55% in two years) after they over-inflated their projected revenue.

- Fares are set to rise by up to 11% next January to boost private profits. Thousands of workers' jobs are threatened by the McNulty review.

- The East Coast line has increased its punctuality since being taken back into public ownership, and even made almost £200 million in profits.

- Polls had already suggested that 70% of people supported the RMT union policy of total renationalisation of the rail system – after this debacle a Guardian poll showed 93% of people shared that opinion.



RMT members strike on the London Underground photo Paul Mattsson

Buses - brutal reality behind the sweet talk

A London bus worker

Privatisation of public transport would make things so much better, the Tories told us under Margaret Thatcher. Many people thought it couldn't get any worse. The prospect of waiting in the cold and rain or being packed on overcrowded trains meant more people used cars and services declined for the rest of us.

Apparently privatisation would improve things for the consumer because faceless bureaucrats were no longer in control. Enterprising companies would run things in their customers' interests. They'd be more flexible and respond to people's needs – the free market would guarantee that if they didn't provide a good service, competitors would take their business. Passengers would have a choice.

No mass party explained an alternative. So the brutal reality behind all this sweet talk only slowly dawned on people. Fatal rail disasters showed how the safety culture had been undermined. Bus services outside the big cities practically vanished on Sundays and in the evenings.

High fares

As a public transport user and a bus driver, I see things from two viewpoints. The month I lost my staff pass reminded me of the high fares, too.

London buses were privatised a decade after the rest of Britain, partly because the government was concerned at the potential resistance of the unions. But eventually in the run-up to 1994, in the absence of a determined union



The Unite leader on a London bus workers' protest photo Paul Mattsson

leadership, workers were forced to accept job cuts, pay cuts of up to a third, destruction of pensions and even our social clubs.

The Tories also feared transport chaos in the capital. So privatisation came with regulation through Transport for London (TfL). This includes an annual subsidy from the taxpayer to private bus operators of hundreds of millions of pounds. So they don't mind state regulation too much.

Look at the career of David Brown. Last year he resigned as TfL's Managing Director of surface transport to become CEO of bus firm Go-Ahead. Before TfL, Brown had been chief executive of Go-Ahead's London bus business. Now a former boss of bus com-

pany First has taken his position at TfL. So that's all right then – for the bus companies.

Where's the "healthy competition"? Just five firms – Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach dominate UK local bus services and train operations too. Where's the "choice"? These same big firms have already chosen which one will provide a service in your area.

London tube workers beware! Privatisation is heading in your direction too, if the government gets its way. A genuine alternative would involve a mass political campaign by transport users alongside workers in the industry and democratic public control of the transport system.

Freight transport's lost opportunity

At one time a nationalised body, the National Freight Corporation (NFC) could have been the way to integrate a fragmented freight transport system. NFC was formed in 1969 from several nationalised companies.

NFC comprised British Road Services, (included its parcel service, rebranded as Roadline), two companies from the railways including National Carriers, two shipping companies, the three Pickfords companies, Heavy Haulage, Removals and Travel, and Waste Management Ltd.

NFC could have been the means to integrate the freight transport system, as many transport workers hoped, or it could be a holding company, preparing for privatisation, as proved to be the case.

National Carriers (NCL) soon closed its rail links and the two parcels companies competed with each other. NCL inherited many rail goods depots, but sold off most of them, paying for redundancy out of the proceeds.

When NFC was privatised in 1982, the Tories pretended it was a workers' cooperative. It was nothing of the kind. Not all the workers could afford to buy shares, and the existing management remained. One union rep, with some exaggeration, told me that negotiating with this management was like "attending a Nuremberg Rally". A minority of shares was also owned by banks.

For some years, shareholders could only sell shares back to the company or other shareholders. However in 1989 it became listed on the London Stock Exchange. Former boss Sir Peter Thompson writes (*Connections*, August 2012) "an investment of £500 by the drivers or any employees was by the end of the decade worth over £50,000."

However much this was due to the inherent profitability of the company and how much to the bubble of capitalist euphoria following the collapse of Stalinism, cashing in shares was an offer the shareholders could hardly refuse. A bubble was likely because the shares soon went down again.

By this time NFC was buying and selling whole companies. In 2000 it renamed itself after its North American subsidiary Exel.

In 2005 what remained of the company was taken over by German company DHL. Privatisation had done its worst and profits not planning were the order of the day.

Peter Redfarn,
A former NFC worker.



photo Paul Mattsson

Venezuela presidential election

Chavez comfortably secures victory over neoliberal right

But his share of vote falls compared to 2006

Tony Saunois in Caracas

Thousands flocked to Miraflores, the Presidential Palace in Caracas, to celebrate the victory of Hugo Chávez in Sunday's (7 October) Presidential election.

The victory of Chávez, his fifth electoral victory since 1998, has inflicted yet another defeat on Venezuela's right wing and is welcomed by the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) and its Venezuelan section, Socialismo Revolucionario, together with workers and socialists internationally.

A victory of the right wing would have resulted in an attack on the Venezuelan working class, a rolling back of the social programmes and a political offensive by the ruling class nationally and internationally celebrating another defeat for 'socialism'. A massive voter turnout of over 80%, (up from 75% in 2006) the highest in decades, reflected the political and class polarisation which grips Venezuelan society.

With nearly 98% of the votes counted Chávez won 8,062,056 votes (55.14%) compared to 6,468,450 (44.24%) for wealthy businessman Henrique Capriles. If Chávez completes his new six year mandate he will have been in power for two decades.

This election campaign has been presented in Venezuela as "historic", one that will determine the future of the country, and as a choice between "two distinct models". However, Chávez did not present such a choice in the form of a socialist programme to break with capitalism during the campaign or when he addressed the crowds that greeted him outside Miraflores.

Right wing

One of the most significant features of the election campaign was the character of the right-wing campaign of Capriles. The effect of the policies and struggles over the last 14 years has left powerful support for radical social policies and to an extent the idea of "socialism" which is now deeply held in popular political consciousness.

Capriles was compelled to present his programme in a populist manner that masked his real right-wing neoliberal agenda. This represents a significant change in the strategy of the right wing.

His propaganda and speeches attempted to address the plight of the poor. He promised to defend a welfare state and that he would not dismantle all of the 'missions' in health and education. Capriles called for the defence of 'independent' trade unions and tried to win the support of public sector workers by promising to end the obligatory attendance at Chavez rallies and protests which is a major source of discontent.

The real programme of the right was to be found buried in its material. It argued for reduced state intervention in the economy and an increased role for private investment.

This change is a reflection of the real balance of political forces. Capriles was compelled to rein in the extreme right. To have unleashed the forces of the far right or



Cheering Chavez supporters. But there were few references to 'socialism' in his election campaign

to have argued explicitly for more right-wing neoliberal policies would only have resulted in a bigger defeat.

Important lessons need to be drawn from Chávez's win to prevent a future right-wing victory. Chávez's share of the vote fell by 7.7% compared to the last election in 2006. In contrast, Capriles increased the vote of the right by 7.3%. Due to a bigger turnout Chávez's vote grew by 752,976. Capriles increased the vote of the right by 2,175,984!

The failure to break with capitalism and introduce a genuine socialist programme with democratic control and management by the working class and all those exploited by capitalism, is clearly allowing the right to exploit people's discontent and frustration.

Worsening social conditions, corruption and inefficiency accompanying the growing 'Chávista bureaucracy' and top down bureaucratic approach which the CWI has consistently warned about, are contributing to growing dissatisfaction.

'Boli-bourgeoisie'

Chávez got his best result in the 2006 election when he took 62% of the vote. Significantly this was also his most radical campaign when the question of 'socialism' dominated the campaign.

Since this time the government has increasingly collaborated with the capitalist ruling class and sought to reach agreement with it. Its policy of "national reconciliation" and agreements struck with the employers' federation, together with the emergence of the "boli-bourgeoisie" who have grown rich on the backs of the Chávez movement, inevitably resulted in growing discontent and protests against the government.

There has also been increased repression against workers and others who have taken strike action in recent years. Workers in the public sector, for example, are subject to the Law of Security Defence of the Nation. This allows for the banning of strikes and even protests in the public sector.

The catastrophic social conditions that remain in the poorest bar-

rios (neighbourhoods), have been a breeding ground for a dramatic rise in crime, violence, and kidnappings to extract money from the families of victims. Venezuela has one of the highest murder rates in the world. The government's official figure of over 19,000 deaths in 2011 underestimates the scale of the problem.

The housing situation remains desperate, especially in the poorest barrios, despite government attempts to address the problem through the Housing Mission which claims to have constructed over 200,000 houses.

Socialism relegated

Chávez's campaign during this election was to the right of the campaign fought in 2006. In this period the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) was launched as a "revolutionary party". Chávez made reference to the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky and his theory of the 'permanent revolution'. He spoke of building a 'fifth international' of left-wing parties.

But in the 2012 election none of this was evident. References to socialism were minimal until the last week of the campaign. Instead the main slogan was "Chávez, the heart of the fatherland".

While the main avenues of Caracas were full of cheering crowds at the closing rally it was noticeable that the placards simply featured Chávez and the "Fatherland" with no political content. Absent were the banners of the PSUV or the trade unions.

Workers were often wearing shirts from the companies they worked for and many reported being there because they were "obliged" to by their employers. These features reflect the lack of an independent organised political force of the workers and the poor.

Unfortunately, Chávez's victory speech to his supporters gave no indication of taking steps to overthrow capitalism. He offered dialogue and debate to the opposition. "We are all brothers of the fatherland" he thundered after praising the opposition for accepting the result. He spoke of building "one united Venezuela".

He did make two passing references to socialism. However, these were drowned in pronouncements of "Viva Bolívar" (Simon Bolívar, the early nineteenth century 'liberator' of Latin America), "Viva La Patria" ('the fatherland'), "Viva Venezuela".

During the campaign he argued that the 'socialism' of the Soviet Union had failed and a new type of socialism is needed in the 21st century. Yet his policies illustrate that what he means by this is a 'mixed' economy combining capitalism with state intervention and reforms.

The reforms (which the CWI supported) are, however, now being rolled back and cut. They can only be maintained and strengthened on the basis of breaking with capitalism and introducing a democratic socialist plan of the economy.

Perspectives

Capriles is clearly biding his time and now intends to consolidate his base following the election campaign.

Chávez is set to continue with his policies of reconciliation with those sections of the ruling class which are prepared to collaborate with him. Such a policy will increasingly bring his government into collision with the class interests of workers and the poor, and social discontent will increase.

It is urgent that an independent, democratic socialist workers' movement is built with a programme to break the stranglehold capitalism exerts over society. If not then the threat from the right will develop, along with growing social disintegration and alienation.

The deepening global capitalist economic crisis will have a heavy impact on Venezuela. It cannot be excluded that Chávez could be driven back towards the left and introduce more radical measures that encroach on capitalism. However, this is far from certain.

To break with capitalism and build a real democratic socialist alternative still needs the urgent construction of an independent, democratic and politically conscious workers' socialist movement.

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net

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



Indonesia: Massive strike against outsourcing

"Workers unite! We cannot be defeated!"

Dave Hundorf, chinaworker.info



Italy: New round of social and political struggles loom

CWI holds enthusiastic weekend of discussion and planning.

Giuliano Brunetti, *ControCorrente* (CWI Italy)



photo Active Stills

Israel: Strike at Haaretz

Workers fight back against lay-offs and cuts.

Interview with Ariel Gottlieb

Marx was right!

Here we publish an extract from *Socialism in the 21st Century* by Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary. This short book was written in 2002, five years before the current deep-going crisis started, but predicted such an event.

At that time also, many commentators were looking to Marx for an explanation of the economy and the growing tensions in the world. Hannah writes: "In the last few years their

[Marx and Engels] ideas have been regaining popularity. At the end of 1999 Marx was voted the 'greatest thinker of the millennium' in a BBC online poll.

"Even some capitalist commentators and Wall Street traders have reread Marx and realised how clearly he described capitalism as it is today."

This is an extract from chapter three, entitled 'Marx was right'.

Reality has hit some commentators between the eyes and has forced them to partially recognise Marx's analysis of the nature of capitalist crises which, he explained, were intrinsic to the system. Capitalism is a cyclical system: crises can be triggered by a number of factors, such as financial crashes or political unrest.

However, the underlying reasons for crisis are the fundamental contradictions of capitalism as first described by Marx. These include the antagonism between the social, collective nature of production on the one hand, and private ownership of the means of production on the other; and the antagonism between the world market and the limitations of the nation state.

Capitalism is based on production for profit and not for social need. The working class creates new value but receives only a portion of that new value back as wages. The capitalists take the rest – the surplus. As a result, the working class collectively cannot afford to buy back all the goods it produces.

The capitalists partially solve this by ploughing a proportion of the surplus back into industry, but this results in the production of more goods which, at a certain point, actually intensifies the problem. The inevitable results are crises of overproduction and overcapacity. In the long term, the capitalists cannot overcome this problem. As a result, capitalism is a system riven by crisis.

While some commentators have

What is the working class?

The strength of the British working class remains immense. The London Underground and rail strikes have given a glimpse of how capitalism can be paralysed when a key section of workers takes action.

Even less powerful sections of workers are able to have an effect on the profits of the capitalists. For example, to a far greater degree than in the past, if teachers were to take national strike action millions of parents would be unable to work because of childcare commitments. This would exert real pressure on the capitalist class.

Relevant today

This does not mean that everything Marx and Engels wrote in the 19th century was correct in every detail or has been confirmed by events.

On timing and the proximity of the socialist revolution and on some other issues they were mistaken.

Many of the demands drawn up in 1848 are now obsolete. Moreover, society today is in many ways very different to then.

Nonetheless, an amazing amount of what they formulated about society is as relevant today as when it was written.

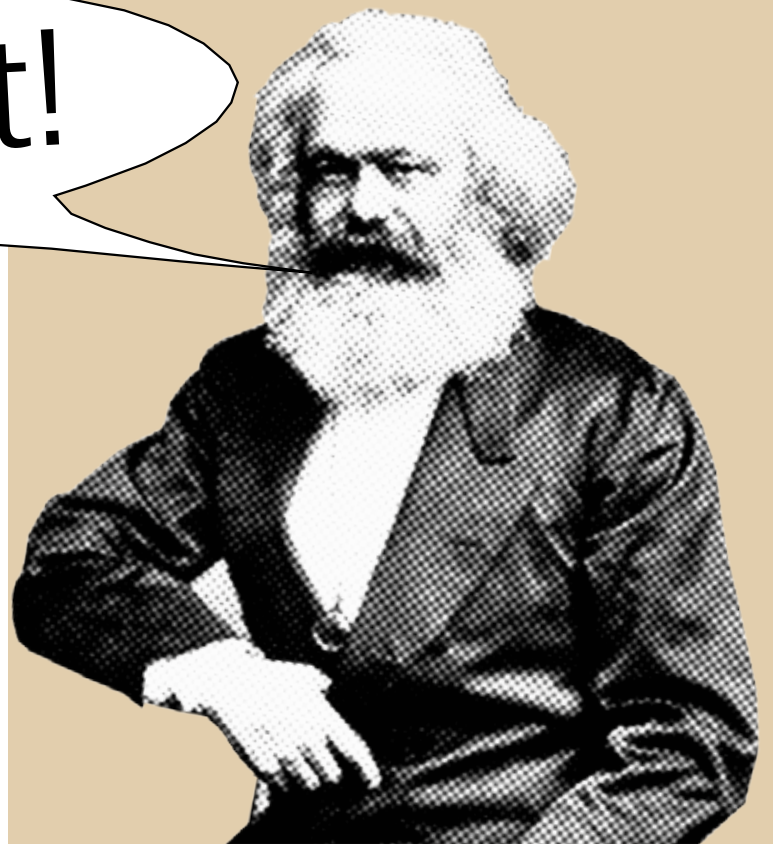
accepted that Marx predicted the fundamental features of the modern economy remarkably well, in general they shy away from the conclusions that he drew. Marx famously declared:

"Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it."

This does not mean that Marx saw nothing positive in capitalism. He recognised that capitalism, despite all its brutality, played a necessary historic role in developing the productive forces and the world market. It was therefore an advance from the feudal societies that preceded it.

Today, the idea of capitalism as a progressive force is unthinkable to most of those involved in the anti-capitalist movement. Yet capitalism has developed the world market and the enormous wealth, science and technique that have laid the foundations for a socialist society.

Under capitalism, however, wealth and power have always been concentrated in the hands of a minority – the capitalists. And the development of technology is not driven by any rational means but by the need for profit. Capitalism is completely incapable of fully harnessing the productive forces it has brought into being. This is a system where science and technique are only ever used partially and inadequately. And the anarchy of the capitalist market always results in increasing wealth and power for a few alongside poverty for the many.



TV review

Masters of Money: Karl Marx

Andy Beadle and Steve Glennon

Stephanie Flanders concluded her BBC TV series *Masters of Money* by looking at Karl Marx, "capitalism's severest critic". Often "refuted", his ideas just won't go away!

The deep crisis of recent years and their lack of answers has led some economists to read for themselves what he really said.

Former International Monetary Fund chief economist and now a University of Chicago professor, Raghuram Rajan, said Marx was right on a number of dimensions including social inequality.

The senior economic advisor at UBS, George Magnus, said: "Anyone from Chelsea or Chelmsford who thinks Marx is only about communism is in for a shock because it is what Marx said about capitalism that rings so true today."

Flanders commented: "Marx said capitalism is inherently unstable and would lurch from crisis to crisis and society would become increasingly unequal."

Marx saw capitalism as fundamentally flawed: the problem wasn't how to improve it but to replace it with a new type of society.

He saw how different forms of society – like slavery and feudalism – had been overthrown when they no longer enabled economic progress. Capitalism isn't eternal either.

The programme showed Marx

developed a comprehensive analysis of the shortcomings of the profit system while it was still in its infancy. But it repeatedly claimed he said little about what could replace it.

In fact Marx spent much of his time trying to build and unite the workers' movement. He followed

"Marx said capitalism is inherently unstable and would lurch from crisis to crisis"

international developments and commented on strategy and tactics.

In this programme, Marx's followers were shown to be academics: Martin Jacques, former editor of *Marxism Today*, professor David Harvey, City University of New York, Tariq Ali, *New Left Review*, and New Labour MP Tristram Hunt.

Comments also came from former Tory chancellor Nigel Lawson and Bank of England Governor Mervyn King. But nothing from "the 99%": those who suffer the personal consequences of debt, poverty and unemployment, who are increasingly moving into struggle, as Marx predicted.

Socialism in the 21st Century

Hannah Sell

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A musical and political evening to remember

Ben Robinson

Campaign Kazakhstan hosted a very impressive event in London on Tuesday 2 October. Its aim was to raise awareness and financial support for those who resist the attacks of the regime in Kazakhstan. 120 people attended and around £900 was raised to aid the families of those killed and injured during the state massacre in Zhanaozen on 16 December last year.

'Cellorhythmics' - a non-classical group featuring cellos, percussion, guitar, violin, harmonica and more - played their music to great acclaim from the audience. They also donated their recent CDs.

Short films were shown of the events in Zhanaozen and a recorded greeting from Paul Murphy MEP.

Two poems by the imprisoned dissident writer Aron Atabek were performed in Russian and English. It was a great privilege to have Aron's son and wife, Askar and Zhainagul Aidarkhan at the concert reciting the poetry and giving short speeches to explain Aron's situation.

Aron Atabek was imprisoned for his role in the struggle in Shanrak - he was sentenced six years ago to 18 years. Shanrak was an informal housing settlement built by poor migrant workers on the edge of Kazakhstan's de facto capital, Almaty.

The mayor at the time (2006) attempted to forcibly remove these



Cellorhythmics in concert photo Keith Dickinson

homes with no provision of alternative accommodation - effectively making many families homeless. Aron Atabek, alongside others including founding members of what is now the Socialist Movement Kazakhstan, helped organise the workers' resistance to this brutal demolition of housing.

Shortly after the victorious struggle, Aron was charged with 'inciting disorder'. He has remained in prison since with 12 years remaining to be

served. He has been kept in solitary confinement for the last two and a half years, been refused visits from Askar and Zhainagul and had his poetry stolen from him while in confinement.

Solitary confinement is defined as torture by the United Nations. The Kazakhstan regime has also threatened suffocation and rape to those workers charged with inciting events in Zhanaozen, a fact widely reported in the press.

Aron has refused to accept any talk of a pardon, as this is tantamount to an admission of guilt. He maintains his innocence. Campaign Kazakhstan is calling for the stepping up of an international campaign for the release of Aron Atabek and the three other campaigners imprisoned alongside him on completely false charges.

Askar and Zhainagul along with Kazakh cellist, Alfia Nakipbekova, and Niall McDevitt of the Interna-

tional Times participated in a protest outside the Kazakhstan embassy on 5 October, to make clear that opposition will not go away.

We will pursue this issue until Aron and his co-defendants go free as well as the victimised oil workers of Zhanaozen and all political prisoners in Kazakhstan.

For videos of the concert and of the protest see www.campaignkazakhstan.org

Special offer: Alfia Nakipbekova and Cellorhythmics CDs: "The Rise of the Celloretters" and "Heaven Eyes" £7 each or £10 for both albums. JS Bach: Six Cello Suites £10 or £15 for all three albums.

Proceeds to Campaign Kazakhstan!

Please add £1 p+p per CD. Make cheques and postal orders payable to Campaign Kazakhstan, PO Box 66682, London, E11 9ER and include a note with your address and which CDs you would like. You can also pay online via paypal - use the donate facility on campaignkazakhstan.org website and email the details of your order to campaignkazakhstan@gmail.com

Defending the health service - no to privatisation!

Yorkshire health workers ballot for strike

Adrian O'Malley secretary and **Dave Byrom** chair Unison Mid Yorkshire Health, personal capacity

Over 500 admin and clerical staff working for Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust are being balloted for strike action against the Trust's plans to make up to 40 staff redundant and "downband", ie cut the pay of over 200 others.

The Trust is trying to 'save' £16 million in a desperate attempt to break even and achieve Foundation Trust status by 2014. Predictably the Trust Board opted for the easy option of reducing staff numbers and cutting the pay of some of its lowest paid (and mainly female) workers.

Workers being balloted include medical secretaries, waiting list co-ordinators, cancer admin and reception staff working at Dewsbury, Pinderfields and Pontefract Hospitals and at clinics across the district.

If implemented the pay cuts would be between £1,700 and £2,500 a year. The 25 redundancies in the Medical Secretarial department would directly hit the service to patients and are opposed by con-



photo Dave Carr

sultants in some departments. Despite many requests from the trade unions the Trust has still to release the Clinical Impact Assessment they took during the so-called consultation process.

If the Trust thought it would have

an easy time attacking the terms and conditions of these low-paid workers, they made a big mistake. Over 150 attended a lobby of the Trust HQ before a negotiating meeting in August. In a Unison consultative ballot they voted by 95% for strike action and by 98% for action short of strike action!

Workers were angry when they heard that the Trust, while it was demanding job and pay cuts for us, has spent over £3 million on private management consultants including £2.5 million to Ernst and Young (E&Y) since last December. E&Y have been part of the Admin and Clerical review which recommended job losses and pay cuts in order to justify their inflated fees.

Unison has called for the removal of E&Y from the Trust and is demanding no compulsory redundancies and the withdrawal of the downbandings. We are also calling for the nationalisation of the Mid Yorkshire PFI scheme which costs the Trust £40 million a year.

The ballot ends on 19 October. If the vote is yes, the strike action will take place in early November.

Save East Midlands ambulances

Andrew Walton
Unison rep, personal capacity

Our local ambulances carry the slogan: "Arriva, in partnership with the NHS". Has the bus company generously lent the NHS some vehicles? No. Arriva has bought out the East Midlands non-emergency ambulance service, undercutting the 'in-house' bid, but only by assuming that there will be 35% fewer ambulance journeys than at present.

What's left of the NHS ambulance service helps people across the East Midlands. The plans are to cut back 66 NHS ambulance stations to just 13. Closing all stations in villages and remote areas will mean much longer journey times to reach a hospital for anyone not living in a city.

This plan is being 'consulted on', but this is just a tick-box exercise, not democracy. People are given no real option; NHS bosses know cutting services is deeply unpopular.

These cuts show the real priorities of a market-driven, privatised health system. Today, NHS Trusts have to compete with the lowest



photo Paul Mattsson

bidder and patient care is less of a priority than breaking even in order to attain Foundation Trust status which, like "Partnership", is a code word for privatisation.

After a successful public meeting against NHS cuts, we decided to lobby the consultation meetings. But the health unions should be taking action over this attack, including looking to ballot for industrial action. This is not an easy option for workers in an emergency service but the unacceptable alternative is to see ambulance services decimated and sold off.

Dewsbury fights health service cuts

Paul and Dawn Wheelhouse

Huddersfield Socialist Party started running stalls and collecting signatures against privatisation of our NHS in May. A month later, news broke that the Mid-Yorkshire trust, due to their PFI deal, was in serious financial difficulty and proposed cuts.

At our stalls, we discovered that the people of Dewsbury wanted to

learn more about why the cuts were being proposed, and wanted to fight them. We arranged a public meeting, attended by around 70 people, with Socialist Party health workers speaking.

Since then we have formed the Save Our Local Hospital Services group, involving Socialist Party members and other people from Dewsbury and surrounding areas who want to stop cuts to their NHS services.

Group members attended every Mid-Yorkshire Trust public meeting, challenging the trust to open up their accounts to public scrutiny to see (and question) where the money has been spent.

We have had several well-attended public meetings in different areas and the group has now arranged a demo on 27 October giving everyone a chance to show their opposition and to stop these cuts being implemented.

Stop Tory privatisation plans

- 398 contracts were recently signed in eight NHS areas, adding up to £262 million with bids from 37 private companies.
- In 2013 the Coalition plans to open up £750 million of NHS services to private vultures.
- Buckinghamshire aims to "double its private income over the next year".
- 333 donations from private healthcare sources, totalling £8.3 million, were gifted to the Tories since 2001.

HEALTH WORKERS MUST FIGHT ATTACKS ON JOBS AND PAY

Call a 24-hour general strike to defend the NHS from the government's cuts and privatisation monster



Hardly a day passes without reports of ward closures, casualty departments shutting, and more job losses in the National Health Service. The government's savage budget cuts and exorbitant privatisation schemes are part of an insidious drive to abolish the NHS as a publicly owned and run health service. The following article shows the devastating impact of what the NHS break-up will mean for health workers and patients.

Roger Davey
Chair, Wiltshire and Avon Health Branch,
Unison (personal capacity)

The decision by the majority of NHS Trusts in the South West to break away from national agreements on pay and conditions has huge consequences, not just for health workers, but for the whole of the public sector and for the entire population's health needs.

This new 'consortium' is about to put forward proposals that, if implemented, would result in health workers suffering a staggering 15% cut in their pay and conditions.

This should act as a warning to the trade union movement everywhere that the bosses' offensive against the working class is likely to become even more

brutal and savage over the next period.

Earlier this year a leaked document revealed that 20 NHS organisations in the South West have paid £10,000 to join what is, in effect, a pay cartel. These trusts employ over 60,000 workers (90% of medical staff in the region), and include almost all of the major acute hospitals in the South West. The document itself contains a list of proposals which would destroy the terms and conditions of health workers.

The consortium plans to: increase the working week; cut basic pay; reduce annual leave entitlement; cut unsocial hours payments; introduce performance-related increments; cut sickness pay and reduce redundancy pay.

However, the threat to national collective bargaining is not the only issue facing health workers. Funding in the NHS has fallen from a 6% increase per year under Labour (much of it going to the private sector) to just 0.4%.

Alongside the unaffordable cost of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes and privatisation, this represents the biggest fi-

nancial cutback in the history of the NHS. Already this is leading to the closure of wards, casualty departments, and to the 'rationalisation' - ie cuts and rationing - of NHS care.

Furthermore, with the advent of the Health and Social Care Act, it means that from next April NHS finances will be in the hands of GP consortiums, or, in reality, private companies, with the emphasis on making profit instead of patient care. This will be in addition to the further development of the commercial health market with the growing domination of ruthless private healthcare companies.

The defence of the NHS, like the protection of workers' living standards, can only be achieved by mobilising the strength and power of the trade union movement.

Whether you are a cleaner in the South West or a teaching assistant in the North East you will experience the same attacks, the same bosses, and feel the same anger.

South West Socialist Party members who work in the NHS are demanding the unions call a regional demo and run an indicative ballot for strikes, so action can be organised if the employees don't back down.

A 24-hour general strike by the trade unions can be the first step in harnessing this anger, and represent the beginning of the end for austerity and the coalition government.

See page 15 for more on the NHS

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!