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On 20 October march against austerity in London, Glasgow and Belfast

BUILD A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE AND FIGHT TILL WE WIN



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We want a 24-hour general strike!

Rob Williams
NSSN national chair

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has spent the last few months helping to build for the TUC demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Belfast. We lobbied the TUC conference last month for the unions to follow up the 20 October mobilisations with a 24-hour general strike to defeat the Con-Dems' austerity offensive.

The motion from the POA prison officers' union was passed at the TUC conference calling for coordinated action, including the consideration of a general strike.

Since then, we have produced a model motion backing up this decision which has been taken to shop stewards' committees, union branches and trades councils and debated and passed by many of these. Some examples are below. This will continue after the demonstrations.

The government's Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (ERR) Bill sits alongside the attack on PCS facility



On the NSSN lobby of the TUC photo Dave Gorton

time agreement as a serious turn in the Con-Dems' assault on our unions. It is further evidence that if

they are not stopped, this weak and divided government will stagger on, inflicting ever more hardships on

our class. This Bill merely reinforces the urgency for this and emphasises that whatever happens on Saturday, it's a new stage of the struggle not the end of the campaign against austerity.

On Saturday, the NSSN will be giving out tens of thousands of our leaflets and thousands of our placards calling for this action. We'll also be distributing our new NHS bulletin, the second we've produced.

The NSSN is organising meetings and conferences around the country after Saturday on this theme and others, such as defending the NHS.

Have a great day protesting against this government of the fat cats and their attempt to make us pay for the bankers' crisis. But please pick up our leaflet. Better still pick up a handful for your work colleagues or trade union branch. Come to one of our meetings and take the model motion to your next union meeting and keep the pressure up on the union leaders.

March together on 20 October... then strike together to stop the Con-Dem cuts!



photo Senan

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."

Coventry

Coventry District Unison supports the call for a general strike and calls for the date to be named. A motion discussed and passed unanimously at the latest branch committee meeting welcomes the TUC decision to look at the practicalities of organising a 24-hour general strike, to launch a discussion among our membership and urges our NEC to call on the TUC to name a date for coordinated action. We also agreed that the motion will be sent to our regional council, NEC members and Coventry TUC.

Our activists, like many others across the country, put huge amounts of work into making the pensions strike on 30 November a success.

Many stewards were disappointed that further action was not

called, and that the union pulled out of the pensions fight.

No one should be under any illusions that the TUC, and Unison, will just call a 24-hour general strike. They will need to be pressured. Unison activists need to discuss how there can be genuine membership control over any future action and how our union can be turned into a democratic, fighting union.

With councils, including Coventry city council, to announce their budgets for 2013/14 in the next few weeks and months, the move of Unison, GMB and Unite in Glasgow to call on councillors to refuse to implement the cuts and to look at ways of resisting, should be discussed widely.

Bucks

From the motion carried by Bucks health Unison:

The horrendous situation facing working people in Greece could be our future if we don't stop the Con-Dem attacks...

We urge all members, friends and families to come to the TUC demo on 20 October, and that 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 the

branch committee will send this motion to all stewards and trades councils to organise discussions on the issue and organise a local meeting to discuss how to progress these ideas put forward by the PCS and POA at the TUC conference this year.

We will send this motion for discussion at regional meetings of Unison in the South East.

We request that Unison's national executive discuss this motion and work together with other unions to find the most appropriate way to coordinate the biggest possible joint strike. This is so that we can defeat these cuts and pose the alternative vision of society we hold.

Unite housing workers

The Unite Housing Workers branch passed a version of the NSSN resolution which included:

"We note that the NUT executive has agreed to meet with other unions to explore ways of advancing the practicalities of general strike action and call on Unite executive to use the size and authority of our union to lend maximum support to such initiatives."

Waltham Forest

The Waltham Forest Health Unison branch committee based at Whipps Cross hospital in east London met on 10 October and considered a motion calling on the TUC to name the date for a 24-hour general strike involving public and private sectors, as soon as possible after the demo on 20 October.

This follows the successful lobby of the TUC conference on 9 September, which 19 Whipps Cross work-

ers attended. The attacks on NHS workers' national agreements was a major influence in the committee supporting the idea of naming the date for a general strike.

Stevenage

At the last meeting of Stevenage TUC a motion was passed unanimously calling on the general council to name the day for a strike. Following reports from the NSSN Lobby of the TUC and a meeting

where Alex Gordon, RMT president, spoke in Welwyn Garden City, it was clear that the TUC has to act, coordinating all trade unions in both public and private sectors in a one-day strike.

Every delegate at the meeting spoke in favour of such action.

The NSSN model resolution was passed and will be sent to the County Association of Trades Councils and in turn to the South East Region of the TUC (SERTUC) to be put before the general council of the TUC.

National Shop Stewards Network meetings www.shopstewards.net

- Bristol**

Bristol NSSN and Bristol Socialist Party:
Tuesday 23 October, 7.30pm
Cheltenham Road Library, Bristol BS6 5OX

Swindon

South West NSSN public meeting
Saturday 27 October, 12-4pm
Great Western Hotel, Station Road, Swindon

Reading

Wednesday 24 October, 7.30pm
Reading International Solidarity Centre, room 1, 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS
- Caerphilly**

Wales Shop Stewards Network meeting
Wednesday 24 October, 7.30pm
Tower Room, Twyn Community Centre, CF83 1JL

Birmingham

Midlands NSSN conference
Saturday 17 November, 12-4pm
Unite offices, 211 Broad Street B15 1AY
Speakers (personal capacity): Joe Simpson, POA assistant general secretary, Lee Barron, CWU midlands regional secretary, Kevin Greenway, PCS national executive, Dave Auger, Unison, Nick Harrison, FBU, Linda Taaffe, NSSN national secretary

- London**

London NSSN public meeting
Wednesday 24 October, 7pm
ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY
Speakers include: Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, Steve Hedley, RMT assistant general secretary, Suzanne Muna, Unite housing branch secretary

Glasgow

Scotland NSSN conference
Saturday 27 October, 11am-4pm
Glasgow Unison offices, 84 Bell Street.
- Leeds**

Yorkshire and Humber NSSN conference
Saturday 24 November, 10am-4pm
Cosmopolitan Hotel, 2 Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE

Manchester

North West NSSN public meeting
Saturday 27 October, 1-3pm
Town Hall Tavern (upstairs), 20 Tib Lane, Manchester City Centre M2 4JA
Speakers include: Steve Acheson, Unite construction national industrial sector committee and Sparks rank and file and Alex Davidson, PCS North West vice-chair

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 NSSN website.

Stop the gas price hike

Nationalise the utilities!

Alec Price

The privately owned gas companies are going to hike up the price of gas and electricity...again!

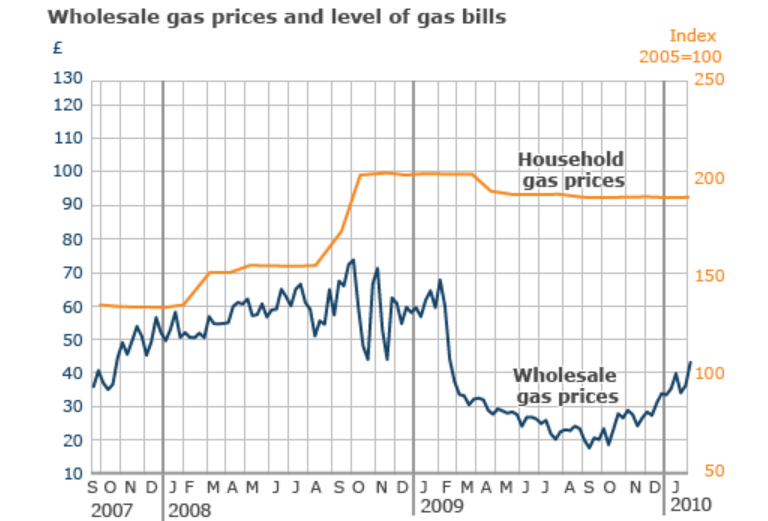
The biggest energy provider, British Gas, is increasing its prices by an average of 6% - adding around £80 a year to our bills. Following this, four of the other 'big 6' energy firms followed suit with similar prices hikes. The only exception is E.ON which has a price freeze for 2012.

Someone on a salary of at least £1 million like Phil Bentley, the managing director of British Gas,

Instead of competition, private ownership of the utilities has produced an 'oligopoly'

will probably not even notice a 6% increase in his bills. But millions of working class people across the UK will be feeling the pinch.

Senior Manager for Age UK Redbridge, James Monger, said: "We are very disappointed by this latest increase. We know that deaths among the elderly increase as the weather gets colder and with people's savings being worth less than they were



The claim that household gas prices mirror wholesale gas prices is simply untrue Graph source: Office for National Statistics/ Bloomberg

three or four years ago this is bad news."

Despite the claim of private companies and politicians of a 'free market' creating 'competition', gas and electricity is provided almost exclusively by the 'big 6'. Instead of competition, private ownership of the utilities has produced an 'oligopoly' - a small group of firms that act like a monopoly over a product or industry.

One of the key arguments parroted by energy bosses is that a rising price in wholesale gas has to be passed on. In 2008, when British Gas put up gas prices by a record 35% boss Phil Bentley claimed "we have entered an era of unprecedented high world energy prices."

But when wholesale prices fall, prices aren't dropped, meaning super-profits for top bosses and major shareholders. British Gas Residential announced profits of £345 million in the first half of the year - up 23% year-on-year.

Socialists argue for the utility companies to be nationalised, to be run as a public service for people's needs. Combined with investment in green energy this would lead to cheaper prices, jobs and a more efficient system.

Hands off our NHS!

Victory in Gloucestershire

The area reserved for members of the public was packed for the Board meeting of NHS Gloucestershire on 15 October. After 18 months hard campaigning and taking the case to the High Court for a judicial review, Gloucestershire's local anti-cuts groups got the decision which they had been told was "impossible", "illegal" and according to NHS manager-speak "unwanted".

Eight community hospitals, community health services and around 3,000 staff will not be taken out of the NHS into a social enterprise, nor will these services be open to tender. The campaign has achieved an NHS stand-alone trust which in about 18 months time will become an NHS Foundation Trust.

It was a remarkable victory in many respects, but the mood was not jubilant. Everyone is aware that NHS cuts will create huge problems. The wages and conditions of NHS staff are under attack from the recently established South West pay consortium which the new trust will sign up to.

At the start of the campaign the health unions were less than enthusiastic about the challenge to the social enterprise which they, and management, claimed was the best that could be achieved.

This claim, like the argument that the staff and public supported the move to outsource to social enterprise, was blown apart by the legal action, the campaign and the results of the consultation process it engendered: 91% of staff and 96% of the public voted in favour of the NHS option.

A victory can only be achieved by fighting back. We have won a battle - it has shown that gains can be achieved and will strengthen our resolve to keep up the campaign.

Sue Powell



photo Gloucestershire Socialist Party

Mass struggle needed

Austerity is hitting the NHS. 26,000 nursing posts have already been reduced, with a further 34,000 to be sacrificed, to balance budgets at the expense of patient care.

Nursing staff and healthcare assistants report being so overstretched that patients are being nursed in hospital corridors. Staffing levels are often dangerously low, with nurses having to care for up to 18 patients at once. District and community services are increasingly under strain.

With the pensions attacks, we are being forced to work in physically, mentally and emotionally demanding roles until we are 68. The government is hell-bent on cutting the pay of nurses and other public sector workers serving communities outside of the M25 - although they won't extend this measure to MPs and we all suffer the pay freeze.

This is the state of affairs after just one of four years of planned cuts.

In the latest cabinet reshuffle, David Cameron recognised the unpopularity of his government's bid to privatise the NHS, sacrificing the reform's architect, Andrew Lansley. His replacement, Jeremy Hunt, represents more of the same.

Like a broken record Hunt, like Lansley before him, repeats the mantra that 'cuts have to be made' and that the 'private sector can do it better'.

And the NHS is not alone. Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers are expected to march on London against these measures on 20 October. The march promises to be a great day, but we need more - we need to act on the motion passed at the TUC conference to look into the possibility of a 24-hour general strike. The demand for publicly funded, high quality healthcare should be central to this battle against austerity.

Becky Jackson

Them...



And the winner is...

If watching Tory conference speeches brings you out in hives, you might have avoided Osborne's speech - a further £10 billion to be cut from the welfare budget, unconvincingly veiled in the language of 'fairness'. The justification: "It is not possible to balance the books on the wallets of the rich alone." But billions could be raised simply by forcing them to pay what they already owe us. The latest prize for the biggest heist, the perpetrator having allegedly pocketed a cool £570 million, goes to Apple. Their 'wallet', in Britain alone, includes an estimated £2.2 billion profit (hardly scraping by). Exploiting legal loopholes, siphoning money off through a related company in Ireland then to the British Virgin Islands, they manage to pay about 2% of what they owe in tax. It's a shame council tax bills don't come with 'avoid paying 98% of this' as an option.

Laura Cartwright

Whose peace?

The European Union was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. According to the Nobel committee the award was for the EU's "efforts of peace and democracy in the midst of the union's biggest crisis since its creation in the 50s". Apparently the Union has "helped to turn Europe from a continent of war into a continent of peace".

I think that the people of Greece would beg to differ! The EU, along with the IMF and ECB, have wreaked havoc upon the Greek working class. While the people of Greece and other European countries are facing a struggle for day to day existence the leaders of the European Union are busy slapping themselves on the back.

Carl Peters

Penguins

Penguins are a favourite mascot for a diverse range of organisations, such as American evangelists or food companies selling rubbish chocolate bars. The latest group to use penguins to sell an unpalatable agenda are a group of

Tory students who want to revive the practice of lavish white-tie dinners.

Lucky diners receive an exclusive invitation card stamped with a penguin in a top hat and tails. The inaugural dinner of the group will be held at an exclusive London private members club where the menu will include crab and brandy bisque and roast rib of Orkney beef, followed by recitals of 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the Queen'.

The organiser of the event, Paul Godziemba-Nizinsky counts ex-Bullingdon club member Boris Johnson as his political hero. At the time of going to press it was unclear whether drunkenly trashing a restaurant and using your parents' connections to escape prosecution would also be part of the evening entertainment.

Plebby Penguin

Greed is good

About 150 NHS managers were flown to Kansas City for a four-day conference including an 80s themed street party organised by Cerner, which is bidding for IT contracts worth £250 million to £400 million from the NHS. A whole street was shut down for the party, and food and drink provided free by Cerner. Rumours that the 80s theme was Gordon Gekko's "greed is good" are denied by the organisers, though cynics might say that the £150,000 bill for flight and accommodation for the NHS bosses suggests otherwise.

Nikki Black

We are the 99.99%

Around a year ago the Occupy movement burst into the media, highlighting the difference in wealth between the 99% of working and middle class people and the 1% of super-rich at the top of society. A recent editorial in the Economist, highlighted just how concentrated wealth has become at the top over the past few decades. In the USA the top 0.01% (around 16,000 families) 'earned' just over 1% of national income in 1980, whereas today it is almost 5%. Capitalism just lets the rich get even richer.

Dave Ingram

...& Us



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

#ReasonsFor24hrGeneralStrike

Unite the union

Companies trading in Britain avoid at least £12 billion of tax every year

#reasonstomarch #oct20

PCS union

Aspiration nation? Yes. "Where once we had rights...now we can only aspire to them" - Serwotka for @commentisfree

Éoin Clarke

G4S's shareholders have donated more than £1,470,000 to the Tory Party

False Economy

Babies and toddlers could lose out as early help cash faces axe

The Bugle

Cameron: time for Britain "to sink or swim". Meaning: Britain is like the Titanic. And people in first class are far more likely to survive

Defend national NHS agreements

John Malcolm

Unison branch secretary (mental health), personal capacity

NHS bosses in North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust are due to sack all 5,500 staff and re-employ them on inferior terms and conditions, which is a move away from the national agreement Agenda for Change (AFC).

The Trust runs University Hospital of North Tees in Stockton and the University Hospital of Hartlepool.

It aims to remove enhanced sick pay from those staff entitled to be paid the normal shift rate when on sick leave.

This is part of the national terms and conditions and signals a move away from AFC by the employers that could see the introduction of regional pay and further attacks on terms and conditions.

This proposal is part of a package to make savings of £40 million over three years.

Managers have called this a consultation exercise, yet plan to sack staff. Those workers who refuse the new terms will have them imposed.



NHS staff will have to fight to defend national agreements

photo Elaine Brunskill

Nationally AFC is under attack. Unfortunately there were signs in the early stages from the unions

that they were prepared to negotiate with management and that the unions should enter into a form of

concession bargaining.

This has met with opposition from union branches and members with the call that this agreement should be defended and unions should refuse to negotiate any erosion of our pay and conditions.

So far the unions have not made a clear statement saying they will refuse to negotiate, and further talks are to take place.

We have also seen the developments in the South West where employers have set up a pay cartel to try to break up national bargaining and introduce regional pay. There have also been rumours of a pay cartel in the Northern region despite a number of Trusts saying they have no intentions of moving away from AFC.

Unison's head of health has issued a strong statement attacking this proposal but strong words must be matched with action and a campaign to defeat these moves and defend the national agreement.

A local and regional fightback is needed now. But unless the unions organise nationally and prepare for industrial action we will see similar moves across a range of NHS Trusts.

Lecturers fight cuts

Gateshead College lecturers took further strike action on 10 October in response to an attack on their pay and working conditions. The picket line at the main campus was lively, and they were getting plenty of support from passing traffic.

College management are pushing through restructuring which could see lecturers working up to 50 hours a week.

Richard Bathgate, UCU branch chair, explained what restructuring has meant: "All members of teaching staff have had to go through the process of re-applying for their own job. Some have spent up to four days on their application form."

Another striker commented that

her role has been changed from 'lecturer' to 'learning facilitator'. She went on to say: "My salary is protected, but I will get no cost of living increase until my pay grade matches what I'm frozen on."

Preparation time for lessons will be cut to six minutes per hour. This will include preparing lessons, marking and any individual attention required. Clearly this will have a huge impact on the standard of lessons students at the college receive.

The mood on the picket line was determined, and lecturers commented that they were being well supported by their students.

Elaine Brunskill

Protect workers' rights at Amnesty International

Kevin Parslow

"Workers' Rights = Human Rights," read the placards outside the Amnesty International offices in Shoreditch, London on 10 October. Unite members at Amnesty International UK (AIUK) exercised those rights when striking and picketing all day against the threat of a large-scale cost-cutting programme and compulsory redundancies.

By lunchtime around 80 strikers and supporters had assembled. Among the support messages sent to the strikers was one from Wisconsin workers, who noted that Amnesty had supported trade union rights in the Wisconsin struggle.

This second one-day strike - the first was on 12 September - showed management that workers in the office were not prepared to accept an estimated £2.5 million cuts when income to Amnesty UK is rising, which is unusual in the not-for-profit sector during the recession.

However, management is using the excuse of increased costs to Amnesty's International Secretariat - where workers are also believed to be preparing industrial action - to seek job losses among the 204 members of staff in AIUK.

Unite regional officer Alan Scott said: "At this rate, Amnesty's management is going to be responsible for the death of AIUK as a campaigning organisation."

"Staff fear that lasting damage will be caused to Amnesty's human rights work because of senior management's headlong rush into this huge cost-cutting exercise, which is being implemented with the misguided blessing of AIUK's board."

Daniela Manske, one of the Unite reps in the AIUK Shoreditch headquarters, said that since the first strike, no meaningful negotiations have taken place and the scale of redundancies will not be known until 25 October.

The strike was well supported, with Unite having about 70% membership in the office, and only senior managers and human resources staff went into work.

Messages of support can be sent to Unite members at union@amnesty.org.uk and donations to the campaign can be made payable to: 'TGWU ACTS 1/524 Central London Branch' with the words 'Amnesty International UK Strike Fund' on the back and sent to the Unite reps at AIUK's offices c/o The Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA.

UPS workers defend union rep

Neil Cafferky

Union busting is alive and well in the UK as the campaign to reinstate Winston Dallen clearly shows. Winston is a Unite rep at UPS Camden, the parcel delivery firm, with 14 years employment at the company's Camden depot in London.

For the last five years he has been an effective and popular Unite rep. In a leaflet handed out to workers on 9 October, Unite explain that Winston has been unfairly suspended for his trade union activity.

UPS is a notoriously anti-union firm in the US. Those methods seem to have been imported wholesale to Britain. During leaf-

leting by Unite officials and supporters, including Socialist Party members, groups of managers attempted to intimidate workers into refusing to take leaflets.

The chief manager is a spitting image of Sid James but there was nothing funny about his attempts to disrupt leafleting, often standing beside leafleters as they spoke to workers, threatening them with disciplinary action if they displayed 'Reinstate Winston' leaflets on their dashboards of their delivery vans.

Despite these tactics union activists were determined to carry on leafleting. Several drivers were seen to keep the 'Reinstate Winston' leaflets in their windscreens in defiance of management bullying.

Attacks on Bromley workers

On 10 October in Bromley, south London, the Unite regional officer Onay Kasab and three Unite reps were due to meet the employers to begin this year's pay discussions. But prior to entering the building, the employer informed Onay Kasab that one of the negotiating team was to be suspended with immediate effect.

The employer claims to have received a complaint from a member of the public saying that there was an altercation between the worker, who drives a dust lorry, and a motorist. However Unite is clear that the real reason is about the protest

that took place last week. On 4 October, workers walked off the job in protest at four sackings. After the walkout the workers agreed to ballot for strike action.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab stated: "This is victimisation of a trade union representative, plain and simple. Veolia, by attacking our rep has ensured that this dispute will be escalated and as a result industrial action looks more likely than ever."

We are clear. We will not stand by and allow Veolia to victimise those who are prepared to stand up on behalf of their colleagues."

Building the fightback in Salford

Unison steward

On 8 October, over 170 Salford city branch Unison members gathered to discuss pay and grading, car allowances and the anti-cuts campaigns in Salford.

The Labour controlled council is proposing a £15 million reduction in the wages bill over five years. It has also 'offered' a new car allowance scheme, and further cuts to admin services, mental health services and environmental services.

In an indicative vote, 168 members voted in favour of a motion

rejecting the council's proposals. It included support for a ballot for industrial action if the council doesn't remove this proposal from the table.

The meeting also supported an indicative motion to reject the car allowance offer and to campaign for a fair scheme that doesn't amount to a pay cut.

There was overwhelming support for admin staff who are facing cuts, refuse collectors whose terms and conditions are under attack and staff in mental health services where services users and staff have linked up to resist cuts.

In brief

Living wage now!

Transport union RMT is campaigning for London Mayor Boris Johnson to increase the London living wage to £10 an hour, benefiting cleaners and other low-paid workers.

Campaigners demonstrated outside the headquarters of the Greater London Authority on 17 October, to call for better pay and conditions for transport cleaners. Cleaning companies on London Underground, DLR, London Overground and the various national rail companies pay wages varying between £6.09 an hour to £8.30 an hour.

A study has just found that one in five workers in London, over half a million people, are paid less than the current 'living wage' of £8.30 an hour.

Tesco drivers

Nearly 200 Tesco drivers in Doncaster were transferred over to Eddie Stobart's Logistics (ESL) firm in August and immediately lost their pension scheme and other benefits.

That is bad enough, but within one month of the transfer the drivers were all given three months notice, with no promise that they will be re-employed once the 90 days is up.

After the drivers voted by 91.7% to 8.3% for strike action they went on a 48-hour strike, which started on 9 October.

Unite, their union, fully supports the strike and has provided a mobile canteen for its duration.

The pickets were in a very angry but hopeful mood; there were a lot of drivers beeping in support as they passed the site. The strike will be well supported by the residents of Doncaster, a once proud industrial town.

The 200 drivers who are being treated so shamefully deserve better but the system that is built on the exploitation of workers will continue to grind us down until we make a stand.

Mary Jackson

Crossrail



The collapsed waste hopper

Unite has been leafleting rail and tube passengers in London, exposing the fact that Crossrail bosses are doing nothing about contractors who sack workers who raise health and safety concerns. The union is calling for urgent talks with Crossrail over these claims of victimisation and that there is an anti-union bias across the project. There is a daily picket at the Westbourne Park site where recently a waste hopper collapsed, underlining the importance of having proper safety reps. Here Crossrail allowed a contractor to cancel a contract, effectively sacking 28 workers, including a shop steward and safety rep.

Unite is also raising concerns about the tax-dodging antics of contractors on this £18 billion project.

Fight their system, demand our future

Youth Fight for Jobs fortnight of action 13-28 October

Youth unemployment: frustrating and illogical

Willie Hume

When I finished university and qualified as a social worker I expected to find a post quickly. But like many other young people across the world today I cannot find a job.

The jobcentre tried to put me on the workfare scheme to work for McDonald's for my benefits. I refused to do this and my jobcentre advisor didn't argue much, it was clear that he also thought that workfare was pretty much slave labour.

'Unqualified'

Then I was asked to do work for a frozen food shop for £2.60 an hour on the basis that after six months I would receive an NVQ Retail level 1. "Hardly a useful qualification for a newly qualified social worker," I told them.

But the most frustrating experience of being unemployed so far is 'work trials'. I have done several shifts without pay for a series of companies. The trials are based on the idea that if they like me then they'll give me a job at the

end of the day.

I worked a shift in a restaurant where every worker was on trial and working for free. I also worked in a bakery factory for a full shift before being told that I wasn't qualified to do the job - a quick look at my CV before the shift would have told them that.

But with nearly three million unemployed people, bosses can do what they want - both to those who are looking for a job and those who

Like many other young people across the world today I cannot find a job

have one. They can use unemployment to drive down wages and conditions for those already in work.

Capitalism is not just a cruel system, it is an illogical one. At a time when all the social ills of capitalism are rife (mental health issues, poverty, addiction, homelessness, etc),



photo Paul Mattsson

60% of newly qualified social workers, the very people whose job it is to help are unemployed.

Youth Fight for Jobs campaigns for:

- Stop all cuts. The economic crisis was caused by big business, bankers and the governments who represent them. We should not have to pay for it with our jobs and services
- Scrap all workfare schemes. For real jobs

- Government run apprenticeship and training schemes that provide a living wage and guarantee a job at the end
- Open the books - when companies claim workers must be sacked due to lack of money we demand to see the facts
- Government investment into a programme of socially useful public works, such as house building and infrastructure projects, to provide jobs and training for young people

Student finance delays cause misery for students



photo Senan

Chris Morehead

I started my third year of university in September. My student loan arrived late, and I wasn't the only one. Some people may ask, what's the problem with it coming in late? The answer is simply that it puts working class students at a disadvantage.

I and many of my friends cannot afford textbooks. Many students can't afford rent, as they have nowhere to borrow it from except Student Finance. To receive the money, you must register in person at your university. This means that money must be spent on travel to university and rent paid before you can receive any money.

Some students receive loans from parents or family, but for those from a working class background, this is often impossible. Many students have to go a week or more without

any money whatsoever.

This issue raises its head at the same time every year, and yet the Student Loan Company and Student Finance England don't rectify it.

History of failure

This is even after controversy in 2009 when approximately 116,000 students had to start the academic year with no financial aid in place. Even by mid-November around 70,000 applications were still being processed.

Financial aid coming late is, of course, on top of having to pay through the nose to study. We have to fight for free education and for full grants to cover the real cost of living. These should be administered by a publicly owned body democratically controlled and managed, including by representatives of students and trade unions.

Marching for jobs in Scotland

From 17 to 20 October, Youth Fight for Jobs Scotland is marching from Stirling to Glasgow on the Scottish March for Jobs and Public Services against Austerity. The march's demands include:

- Public investment in a programme of real job creation to create at least 100,000 jobs in Scotland through public works and fairly paid skilled apprenticeships
- For these jobs to pay, as a minimum, the Scottish living wage of £7.20 an hour
- The reversal of cuts to college courses. Fully funded grants for all students at university and college
- The scrapping of slave labour workfare. All training schemes to pay the living wage and guarantee work on completion



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



The Rape Is No Joke campaign, initiated by Socialist Students, is gathering support. The campaign aims to draw attention to the issue

of rape jokes being used in comedy and the trivialising effect this has on sexual violence.

Several comedians and comedy night organisers have now signed the campaign's pledge, including What the Frock!, Kate Smurthwaite, Jim Smallman, Bianca Arlette, Aidan Goatley, Rory Nolan, Diean Vincent, Ellis James, Jimi Pidd, Luke Smith, Will Hodgson, Hannah Stone.

To get involved in the campaign or to sign the pledge contact:
www.rapeisnojoke.com
rapeisnojoke@mail.com
 Twitter: @norapejokes
 Facebook: R*pe Is No Joke



We're in for the fight of our lives. Fee hikes, EMA scrapped, youth services cut to the bone, housing benefit cuts 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 among young people. 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 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

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



In October 2011 Youth Fight for Jobs activists marched 330 miles campaigning against youth unemployment. This book is the story of the Jarrow March for Jobs.

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

A future for the 99%: Manifesto of Youth Fight for Jobs and Education



This pamphlet outlines what Youth Fight for Jobs campaigns for and how you can get involved.

To order a copy or to get your union branch or campaign group to sponsor the manifesto, contact Youth Fight for Jobs at the details above.

Fight for a socialist and internationalist alternative to the crisis-ridden EU

'But the EU is at war on us' exclaimed a number of Greek workers when reacting to the European Union (EU) being awarded a Nobel peace prize. The EU leaders, along with those of the IMF, are part of the hated 'Troika' of capitalist institutions that is insisting on the austerity measures presently raining down on Greece's population.

In that country 68% of the population now lives at or under the official poverty line, one in four workers are unemployed. In Spain too, one in four is out of work and youth unemployment in both countries has soared shockingly to over 50%.

Increased emigration from the recession-mired countries Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain - among others - is a graphic indication of the desperation and daily struggle of many people to make ends meet. The suicide rate has also risen considerably. And now the largest European economies are again weakening, including France and Germany.

No desperate accolades from Nobel or anywhere will stop this present decline or shore up the EU's biggest faultline - the eurozone crisis. The IMF has recently admitted that the impact of austerity drives on economic growth could be worse than it previously thought. Greece shows no prospect of avoiding an exit sooner or later from the zone; despite the rounds of bailouts and brutal cuts its public debt is larger today than at the start of the crisis.

An ultimate Greek exit will create further and deeper turmoil in the eurozone and beyond and will increase the pressures on the other struggling economies within it.

Media commentators speculate about who is to blame for this disastrous scenario - why a project that began with great promises of prosperity has sunk into disunity, clashes and unmanageable crisis.

Floundering

The Socialist Party and Committee for a Workers' International (CWI, to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) predicted from the start though that the eurozone could not stay intact. The economies across the zone varied significantly in their features, strengths and weaknesses, yet were confined to a straitjacket of a single currency and interest rate. This was workable to some extent in a period of economic growth but was bound to come under insurmountable pressure in a recession.

Reflecting the depth of the crisis, Europe's ruling classes and governments now have no achievable solutions to the crisis to offer and are deeply divided within and between themselves on what to do.

Some argue in vain for a new EU constitution with more central powers and an end to national vetoes on treaties. Others want a looser relationship with the EU or to be out of it altogether. All reveal their bankruptcy - they



The EU is a bosses' club that has enshrined the rule of the market and the attacks that flow from that photo Paul Mattsson

cannot deliver stability and growth.

However, their floundering is not taking place in isolation. Millions of working class and middle class people have participated in strikes and demonstrations against the onslaught on their living standards that is being spearheaded by the EU chiefs. During the last few weeks alone there has been another general strike in Greece, hundreds of thousands on the streets of Portugal and Spain and tens of thousands demonstrating in France, Germany and elsewhere.

The EU is increasingly being seen as the bosses' club that it is - that has enshrined in its constitution the rule of the market and the attacks that flow from that.

In this situation, the leaders of the trade unions - the organised workers' movement - have a responsibility to lead a challenge to the cuts-making governments that will actually force them to retreat. Much more is needed than strikes and protests called just to 'let off steam' - impressive though many are - as has happened too many times.

The CWI calls for trade union movements throughout Europe to adopt determined opposition to all the attacks on living standards, escalating action if necessary. Their strategies must have the serious intention of removing any government that sticks to a path of making ordinary people pay for the economic crisis. Struggles should be coordinated to have greater impact, when possible, ie mass strikes and demonstrations in different countries taking place on the same day, as will happen across

Spain and Portugal on 14 November. This can prepare the way for the organisation of a powerful one-day Europe-wide general strike.

As well as such action, urgently needed are workers' parties that can offer a socialist political alternative to the capitalist parties across Europe. There is a warning to be drawn from the rise in support for the far-right Golden Dawn in Greece: dangerous, divisive ideas can be turned to in desperation if a viable progressive path isn't clear. However, also in Greece

Millions of working class and middle class people have participated in strikes and demonstrations against the onslaught on their living standards that is being spearheaded by the EU chiefs

the rapid rise in support for the left-wing alliance Syriza shows the scale and speed with which a party opposing austerity can gain an audience. This can be echoed by new workers' formations elsewhere in Europe in the coming period.

They will be attractive if they put forward socialist ideas that lay bare the failings of capitalism and offer programmes that boldly pose a real alternative in workers' interests. Such

programmes should include increasing taxes on the rich and top companies and banks, and refusing to pay back the massive sums of debt 'owed' to them at home and abroad. Let big business and their friends in finance pay for the crisis that is of their making, not ordinary people!

Socialist programmes should also include the nationalisation, under democratic workers' control and management, of the major companies that dominate the economy. These measures would provide the means to massively invest in jobs and services. In Greece, where the crisis is the most acute, support for such a programme is growing.

What about the EU? Opposing the capitalism-serving institutions that make up the EU certainly doesn't mean rejecting international links and cooperation between ordinary people. The key questions are: What is the character of the institutions, who is controlling them and in whose interests are they acting? The EU is controlled by 27 of the European capitalist ruling classes and flowing from this they act in the interests of big business and the rich.

Socialist societies across Europe would be able to democratically elect representatives to an entirely different type of institution - ones serving workers' interests. This would be the basis for a European socialist confederation - an alliance of socialist states - that could democratically, and with full accountability, enable economic, environmental, social and cultural cooperation in the interests of the overwhelming majority of people across the continent.

Fight back against austerity - support the Socialist Party

Can you make a donation to support the work of the Socialist Party and help maintain a socialist paper that has consistently been an independent voice for the working class?

The Socialist Party is at the heart of the resistance to austerity. Our members are involved in fighting the cuts in community campaigns throughout England and Wales, in the trade unions and in elections, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. You can read reports of these struggles in the pages of this paper.

Socialist Party members are currently standing in elections in Manchester and in Bristol. Our message is that these cuts can be fought and defeated and, far from

there being no money for services, the NHS, housing and jobs, there is plenty!

We explain that the £750 billion in the coffers of the big corporations and the banks could pay off the 'deficit' and fund a massive programme of building houses, schools and hospitals. But to make our voice heard we need your help!

We depend solely on the support of ordinary people - the Socialist Party has no rich backers. Our placards, banners and leaflets for the 20 October demo have cost thousands of pounds. We think this expenditure is well worth it in order to build support for socialist ideas and the fightback against austerity.

But we need your support - can you donate £5, £10, £50 or £100 or more? We can guarantee that every penny will be used in the fight for socialism.

The three main capitalist parties have no answers - they point to decades of cuts for us while the super-rich get even richer.

We say that there is an alternative, a socialist alternative, where the enormous wealth in the world is democratically owned and controlled by the majority, by the '99%', and is used to build a society based on meeting the needs of everyone and creating a sustainable future.

If you agree with us, support us with a donation! (details, right)

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

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Punished for their principles!

Southampton anti-cuts councillors form new council group

For the crime of honouring the Labour Party's election pledge and opposing the closure of Oaklands Swimming Pool at Lordshill, Coxford Ward Labour Councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas have been 'suspended' for three months by their Labour colleagues on Southampton City Council.

They are no longer allowed to be part of the Labour Group, are not allowed to attend Group meetings or express a point of view - but they are, on pain of further suspension, required to vote in council as ordered by the Labour Group!

They have now launched a new group, Labour councillors against the cuts. This is their launch statement.

Please send solidarity messages to: councillor.k.morrell@southampton.gov.uk and councillor.d.thomas@southampton.gov.uk

Fight to save Oaklands Pool will go on until the doors re-open!

Despite this attempt to gag them, councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas refuse to be silenced and are determined to continue speaking out on behalf of their constituents and users of the pool, and are demanding that the city council finish off the stalled repairs, recall the staff and immediately re-open the Pool.

Oaklands Pool closure - the first of the cuts!

People voted Labour believing that a Labour council would stand up for them. The announcement that the Labour administration is planning to carry out massive cuts in local services and sack hundreds of staff on behalf of the Tory-Lib Dem government is a betrayal of trust.



Campaigning to save Oaklands pool photo the Socialist

The administration intended that the closure of Oaklands Pool would be only the first of many such attacks and did not expect that the announcement by Coxford councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, that they would fight against the closure, would trigger a magnificent City-wide fightback by residents, supporters of the pool and trades unions.

Labour councillors against the cuts!

The experience of the Oaklands

Pool campaign demonstrated that people are fed up with broken promises and being treated with contempt.

Councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas are forming a new group on the city council to demonstrate that principles, integrity and accountability are not just words used by politicians during elections.

The new group, Labour councillors against the cuts, will provide a focus of opposition to the claims by the three main political parties that 'there is

no alternative to cuts', that 'we have no choice but to make cuts', and that 'tough decisions have to be made'.

Everything has to start somewhere!

Labour councillors against the cuts demands that the city's Labour administration immediately announces that it will refuse to do the government's dirty work of forcing through massive cuts in public services and that the city council will lead a national campaign to demand that the government restore

the money it has stolen from local authorities.

Councillor Keith Morrell says: "We supported 100% the workforce and unions in their campaign to win back the pay stolen from them by the Tories. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with them against any further threats to their jobs and to public services."

Councillor Don Thomas added: "We support the unions' view that council workers and the community should not be made to pay for a crisis they did not create."

Tough choices

A recent TUC organised conference, entitled 'Outsourcing and Austerity - Civil Society and the Coalition Government' was attended by over 100 people from the voluntary, charity and third sector as well as union and anti-cuts activists.

The Labour spokespeople made much of the 'one nation' sound bite with Lord Glassman talking about the need to 'restrain capitalism'. He also specifically commented that we needed to move away from the politics of "irreconcilable class conflict".

This wonderful exercise in spin was interrupted by a questioner who asked: "Can we trust Labour or is 'one nation' just another version of 'big society'?" This drew sustained applause.

I asked what was Labour's message to people under Labour administrations such as in Southampton, where Labour have already declared their intent by closing a local swimming pool and lining up a projected £29 million cuts next year. Expecting us to endure another two years of cuts and the prospect of business as usual under a Labour government would not be tolerated.

"The gentleman has demanded more leadership from us", replied the Labour MP, followed by much handwringing about "Labour councillors have to make tough choices."

Another panellist interjected angrily: "It may well be tough to make tough decisions, but it's a lot tougher for those who are having their services cut!"

Feeling slightly battered at this point the Labour spokesperson said: "we will repeal the NHS reform bill" anticipating a groundswell of approval. Alas it was not to be. Instead there were shouts of "what are you going to do now?"

Someone added: "you bought the privateers in, how are you going to get them out and when are you going to apologise?"

Conferences like this make the 'job' that Labour is doing clearer. Fortunately there will be an increasingly active challenge to their timidity and, as one person expressed it: "We need a pincer movement against the government, remember the poll tax".

Gavin Marsh

Invest in caring - we're worth it!

Pete McNally
Worcester

Care arrangements for elderly relatives are now a major issue for families. Here is my experience.

My Dad lived to 84 and by then had memory loss and dementia. I could get him to talk about the distant past but he could not remember what he did yesterday.

When he had a fall and went into hospital he deteriorated fast. The beds on either side were occupied by a woman on an oxygen machine which made a noise every minute, and a man who was so confused he tried to leave his bed at every opportunity and had to be persuaded back.

Eventually the doctors were convinced to discharge him on the promise one of us would stay with him at his flat for a week and care plans would be made. My sister stayed with him and the council intermediate care team provided help each day. They were excellent and his neighbours looked out for him.

The council only provide care for six weeks and then the job is put out to tender. A private firm took over and a nightmare ensued. They phoned my sister on each of the first four days they were due to say they could not gain access.

My sister had to leave work to sort it out. After much confusion we found the private firm had been going to the wrong address.

Later my Dad went back into hospital and it was clear he could not



Care for elderly relatives is a major issue for families photo Paul Mattsson

live alone again.

He needed to go into a care home but which one? We were advised to consult the Care Quality Commission website. We went to visit some. None of the ones we visited were purpose-built. There were steps, dark corners and poorly-lit corridors.

All the staff seemed to do their best but in one home there were 20 or so occupants sitting in a lounge looking at a large TV screen. At another I asked to use the loo and found it dirty. None were suitable.

Before this we had been put in

touch, I think by a nurse at the hospital, with someone who could help us. We needed all the help we could get. But we eventually realised the job of the person "helping" us was to fill the beds as quickly as possible to keep the money coming in.

The decision was taken out of our hands. One of my brothers arrived at the hospital to visit my Dad but he had been sent to a care home without us being told. Apparently this is not unusual and the hospital can do this to free up the bed.

When we visited we were pleas-

antly surprised. It was what we had looked for. Purpose-built with wide corridors, large bedrooms with ensuite showers, adjustable beds and staff who seemed to enjoy their work. We could visit at any time.

Well cared for

This was not enough for some of the residents. On my first visit I went in and two elderly women approached me. They asked if I could show them the way out. They said they had been to a meeting and now needed to go home. With my mind on my Dad I did not catch on. Then a member of staff came and assisted them back to the lounge. They were the escape committee.

My Dad stayed at this care home for nine weeks before he died. The fact we were confident he was safe, well-fed, had his medication taken care of and we could visit unannounced was a great help to us.

Half of the care homes visited by the Care Quality Commission failed in their duties to the mentally ill. That forced me to write this article.

There must be a massive investment in the state provision of care, and a thorough overhaul of the way relatives are involved. This will cost a lot of money but then there is a lot of money about, look at the amount the rich have stashed in tax havens - up to £20 trillion! And we are worth it.

Have you got stories for the Socialist?

Email:
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Osborne's 'shares' plan threatens rights

Jim Horton

Fancy a few free shares in the company you work for? Well David Cameron's party for the aspirational privileged announced at its conference this week a policy that apparently could make budding capitalists of us all.

However, aside from doubts about the practicalities of the proposal, there is just one not insignificant drawback for workers - we will have to forgo our rights to redundancy payments and unfair dismissal claims. In addition we will have to accept less flexible working and maternity rights.

Basically, millionaire chancellor George Osborne is asking workers to exchange our employment rights, won over decades of struggle, for a few pounds to gamble on the stock exchange. This is at a time when share prices are yielding few gains. The government plans to bring the new rules into force in April 2013.

So how's it meant to work? Employees can be given between £2,000 and £50,000 of shares exempt from capital gains tax (CGT). However, the Office for Budget Responsibility recently forecast that austerity measures could continue until 2018. The percentage of a business allocated to employees through share schemes, particularly during recessions, is traditionally low and so the CGT gain is unlikely to be significant for many. There's also the small matter of how the shares will be valued and whether workers will acquire



Lobbying Parliament for trade union rights photo Suzanne Beishon

voting rights as shareholders.

More likely is workers receiving shares, losing their jobs and then finding any share gains are less than the redundancy payment or unfair dismissal compensation they could have received.

But let's not be fooled here, the government's proposals have nothing to do with giving workers a say

in the companies they work for, and everything to do with further eroding the few rights we have at a time of economic crisis, wage cuts and job losses.

This measure is not about creating equality between the bosses and workers, it is intended to strengthen the hand of employers to enable them to sack workers at will. Being a

shareholder won't make you a boss, just more vulnerable.

The Tories claim their proposal will remove barriers to small and medium sized businesses taking on new workers. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has acknowledged the fallacy of this argument. They correctly point out that there is little evidence to indi-

cate that employee rights are stopping small businesses from taking on new workers.

The UK already has one of the least regulated labour markets in the world. Even employer organisations such as the CBI and Chambers of Commerce dismissed the proposal as a niche idea that would have no significant impact on growth.

In any event, the claimed employment rights barriers just do not exist in relation to employers taking on new workers. Shamefully, since 6 April this year, anyone starting work generally cannot make an unfair dismissal claim until they have worked for the same employer for at least two years.

And all workers must be employed by the same employer for two years before they are entitled to a statutory redundancy payment. So why the shares for your rights proposal?

The idea signals an intention to remove key employment rights from all workers, a long cherished aim of sections of the Tory Party and big business. Under the current proposal the scheme will be voluntary for existing employees, but disgracefully companies will be able to force it on new recruits.

Bosses will be able to compel new workers to either sign away their rights or stay on the dole. Unscrupulous employers could also abuse the scheme by dismissing an entire workforce and imposing new terms and conditions on re-engagement.

Unless stopped by the trade union movement, few rights at work could become the norm for all workers.

We need shorter hours!

Barry Andrews
London bus driver

As a new driver I remember being asked by the man behind the counter: "Are you resting tomorrow?" I answered "Yes". I was puzzled when the supervisor responded "Do you want a rest day?" I thought I'd just told him I'd got the day off. It took me a while to understand that in the Orwellian language of the bus garage "do you want a rest day?" means would I like to *work* on my rest day! Offering a driver a "rest day" is seen as doing them a favour.

Bus driving is still one of the highest paid regular jobs in the capital that many unskilled manual workers can hope to get. That is partly because of the unsocial hours we are expected to drive. Early jobs start before 5am, late duties may finish after 1 or 2am. And they call us day drivers!

People of all backgrounds and nationalities are drawn into the job. With debts, young families to support and some struggling with mortgages it's not surprising that most of us work overtime.

Many drivers work six and seven days alternately. The law says bus and coach drivers can't work more than thirteen days in a row. Usually plenty of "rest days" are available especially over the summer holiday period when some drivers are away.

I have seen drivers pleading with supervisors behind the counter to give them some overtime because they are desperate for the money.

The maximum daily driving time is ten hours and within that no more than five-and-a-half hours without a break. The minimum break is 30 minutes but in London



London bus workers are getting organised photo Suzanne Beishon

40 is the established norm through union pressure.

Once I was expected to do a late job on Tuesday, finishing about 2am the following morning, rest on Wednesday then start a very early one on the Thursday. Fortunately, I was lucky when I requested a change. Otherwise I could go sick or

absent. But many drivers on my rota did those duties. How and if they fitted two nights' sleep into that 27 hour slot, I don't know.

A stronger union and the fight for reasonable hours isn't just an issue for drivers. It's a matter of public safety too! We need shorter hours with no loss of pay.

Pakistan: Workers die as profit put before safety

Khalid Bhatti
CWI in Pakistan

In September a garment factory inferno in Karachi's Baldia Town took the lives of at least 275 workers, including a number of women and teenagers. This once again exposed the horrific working conditions in Pakistan.

This incident is not an exception but a norm for the working class and especially for industrial workers in Pakistan. On the same day, in a shoe factory in Lahore, more than 25 workers were burnt to death and scores maimed.

One of the survivors of the Lahore factory inferno said: "Everyone has to die one day. People like me will die of starvation if they don't work."

At least 90% of factories in Karachi are working illegally, yet no action has been taken against them because of the political support enjoyed by their owners.

According to official estimates, Pakistan's total workforce exceeds 57 million but only 2.1 million of them are registered with provincial social security departments.

The question this harrowing incident poses is can the capitalists sustain the rates of profits they are extracting from the workers by imparting liveable wages, pensions, health benefits and proper safety conditions? The answer is a big no!

To attain their rates of profits the bosses had to exploit labour to the level of drudgery. But even that was not enough, they had to steal the resources, evade taxes and plunder the state to fulfil their



The terrible fire in Karachi

insatiable lust for money. The state in return became a beneficiary of all this extortion and involved itself in business. A subsidiary of the Pakistan army is the largest entrepreneur with an investment of \$27 billion in the economy.

The government has turned a blind eye to the repeated demands of the trade unions to upgrade safety and security in the factories while the factory owners and captains of industry live a life of luxury at the expense of their workers' health and lives.

The formation of new trade unions and workers' committees in all the workplaces is the need of the hour. The struggle for workers' rights, decent wages and better working conditions is linked with the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system and to replace it with socialism.

SOCIALISM 2012

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Unless we fight back, Greece will be our future

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party deputy general secretary

The cold cruelty of the British ruling class and the Tories, its traditional party, was revealed in all its viciousness at the Conservative conference. David Cameron tried to claim that the Tories stand, not for the better off, but for the 'want to be better off'. Millions watching on TV will have laughed hollowly.

The big majority of the 'want to be better off' have no chance of becoming so in Cameron's Britain, no matter how hard they work, or look for work.

On the contrary, the Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that, if current policies continue, low-income families will be an average of 15% worse off by 2020 - even if pigs fly and the economy grows substantially! New IMF research shows that every £1 of austerity could cost up to £1.70 in lost GDP. Cuts are making the situation far worse.

Throughout Tory conference ministers

justified protecting the rich, while proposing ever more ingenious methods of making the rest of us suffer. George Osborne ruled out a mansion tax on properties worth over £2 million - because he didn't like to take money from people who had worked hard for their mansions. His own Notting Hill pad, paid for as a result of inherited wealth, is worth around £3 million. The rental income from it is estimated at around £200,000 a year - after all he only earns £130,000 a year as chancellor.

The Tories have no problem, however, taking money from those whose hard work doesn't earn them enough to pay the extortionate levels of private sector rents (the average rent for a one-bed London flat is over £1,000 a month).

The delegates whipped themselves into a frenzy of excitement at the prospect of removing housing benefit completely from under-25 year olds. Never mind that half of the under-25 year olds who claim housing benefit have children. Or that more housing benefit claimants are in work than are unemployed - this was supposed to be about taking money

from the lazy, feckless undeserving poor.

For two years the government has pressed the growing ranks of the young unemployed to travel around the country to find work - now they are told that they have to live with their parents or sleep on the streets; both of which are becoming ever more common even before these latest brutal benefits cuts.

Britain's young are facing a desolate future of mass unemployment; further and higher education only for those who can afford to pay, and no prospect of ever having a secure home.

No return to 'normal'

Yet all the misery we have suffered is only the start of what the government has planned for the majority - both young and old. Just over 20% of the government's existing cuts in public services have been carried out, and the Tory conference pledged to add another £10 billion in welfare cuts.

Already the number relying on food banks to feed their families had doubled, with four

new centres a week opening to cope with spiralling demand. To top it off the NHS faces the worst cuts in its history and local council services are being decimated.

When this crisis began many hoped it would be temporary. But Cameron says austerity will last until at least 2018. There is no prospect of a return to what used to be 'normal'. Unless we fight back, the misery facing workers in Greece, Spain and Portugal - where youth unemployment is 50% or more - will be our future.

But there is an alternative. Many of the Tory party conference fringe meetings centred on bashing the trade unions, with demands to abolish 'facility' time (the time elected trade unionists can spend representing their members) prominent. This was not accidental.

The Tories understand that the organised trade union movement - involving six and half million workers - is a powerful force capable of mobilising the majority in society behind its banner and stopping the government's programme of endless austerity in its tracks.

Continued over

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party deputy general secretary

On 20 October Britain will again glimpse the potential power of the trade unions, as workers from across the country march through London in their thousands. Without doubt though, this march could have been bigger - even larger than the 750,000-strong 26 March 2011 demonstration against cuts.

That it is not, results from the failure of some trade union leaders to conduct a serious struggle against austerity. Last year, on 30 November (N30), 29 unions across the public sector struck against the government's attacks on pensions.

This magnificent action had overwhelming public support, not least because it was widely recognised that it was more than a strike against pensions - it was a strike against austerity.

If the trade union leaders had stood firm and been prepared to call further action the government could have been forced to retreat. Instead the common front was broken as the leadership of the TUC and of Unison, the biggest public sector union, backed down from the struggle.

Mounting anger

Local government workers won some concessions on pensions, but these were incomparable to what could have been won if the battle had continued. For other workers the deal on offer was virtually identical to the insult that had been on the table before N30.

Unsurprisingly some workers are

now unsure if it is worth answering the trade union leaders' call to march on 20 October, fearing they will be betrayed once again. This is no reflection, however, of the mounting anger at government cuts, as was palpably demonstrated when 80,000 people booed Osborne at the Paralympics.

The Con-Dem coalition government is weak - riven by divisions on many issues. Faced with a mass movement it can be forced to retreat, just as the government in Portugal did when the population took to the streets against austerity. In Britain, unlike many other European countries, there has never been a 24-hour general strike, and the last general strike took place in 1926.

Even a partial 24-hour general strike would electrify the country - giving enormous confidence to the working class. Particularly if the leadership of the trade union movement stands firm, making it clear that a further 24- or 48-hour general strike would follow if the government did not retreat, a one-day strike would testify the government and the capitalists.

The prospect would be raised of the government being forced to call a general election. Ed Miliband and Co would probably find themselves heading a majority government, despite their own aspirations being limited to a coalition with the Cable wing of the Liberal Democrats.

What does it say about the Labour leadership that they consider it a good idea to enter an alliance with Cable, a man who is proud of his pre-election warnings to his party that vicious cuts would be needed? Unfortunately, this desire to form a coalition with a party that has wrecked itself on the altar of austerity sums up the reality of Labour today.

FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALIST CRISIS AND MISERY

Capitalism is a system which puts the production of profit for the few, the millionaire and billionaire capitalist owners of industry and resources, before the social needs of the majority, the multi-billion poor and working class throughout the world. It is also a system based on crisis and misery.

Any government which bows to the will of the markets will continue to drive working class people into the dirt, just as François Hollande, elected as president in France on the basis of opposition to his predecessor's pro-rich policies, is now implementing his own vicious austerity against the French working class.

That doesn't mean we can't win victories. Alongside an industrial fightback workers need a political voice. We need councillors and MPs who stand for the 99% instead of for the 1%. Around the country Labour councils are obediently implementing Con-Dem cuts, but there are exceptions. In South-

ampton two Labour councillors took the unusual step of putting the interests of their constituents before the orders of the Labour Group and voting against cuts in public services. For this 'crime' they have been expelled from the Labour Group but have won huge public support from the people of Southampton.

Some trade union leaders argue reclaiming the Labour Party is the way to create a mass party which stands in the interests of working class people. Yet all the evidence indicates this effort will not succeed. While anti-cuts councillors are being suspended from Labour, at this year's Labour Party conference, which in any case no longer has the power to influence Labour's policies, the public sector unions did not even manage to get a resolution passed condemning the public sector pay freeze, instead the conference merely 'noted' it!

The Socialist Party is playing a central role in building the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC, see page 13). TUSC involves the transport workers' union (RMT) and other militant trade unionists. It provides a platform for trade unionists and campaigners to stand as an-

NO TO ALL CUTS

At this year's Labour Party conference Miliband proved he can memorise a speech, but he promised nothing to improve the lives of working class people. No wonder the director of the CBI bosses' organisation, described it as "a speech that reached out to business".

A picture of a future Labour government was drawn by Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls. He reiterated that Labour would not reverse the cuts, would continue the public sector pay freeze and would not pledge to renationalise the railways.

NHS under attack

If, thanks to Labour's complete failure to offer an alternative, this government was to run its full term and to succeed in implementing even half of its policies, Britain's NHS would have been destroyed, the benefit system smashed - with whole sections of society facing destitution, and mass unemployment will have rocketed. Labour is also unwilling to promise to reverse anything.

Even the pledge, under huge pressure, to repeal the Health and Social Care Act, is not, in reality, a pledge to save the NHS as it would not reverse the cuts or the massive privatisation (much of which began under the previous Labour government).

Five million people need social

housing. If Labour was serious about solving the housing crisis it would pledge, not 100,000 affordable homes, but to immediately put the 100,000 unemployed construction workers to work to build a million high quality affordable council houses, as was done in the five years after World War Two.

Housing benefit payments - no longer handed over to greedy landlords - would fall immediately and dramatically.

But Labour is incapable of offering an alternative to austerity because it accepts the logic of capitalism. Miliband adopting the Tory slogan 'one nation' reflects Labour's belief that the interests of the 1% and those of the 99% are one and the same. It is only a question, according to Miliband, of encouraging 'responsible' rather than 'predatory' capitalism. But no amount of pleading will create a caring, sharing version of capitalism.

Worldwide the super-rich have £20 trillion stashed away in the world's

tax havens, around half of which is owned by a mere 100,000 people. This is greater than the national debts of all the OECD countries added together. No tax is being paid on this vast wealth.

In Britain alone it is estimated that £120 billion of tax is avoided or evaded by the rich every year. Nor is this unimaginable wealth being invested in driving society forward by developing industry, science and technique - once capitalism's historical mission.

On the contrary there is £800 billion stashed in the bank vaults of Britain's major FTSE 100 companies - not invested because there is no profit to be made from doing so.

Society
How do we combat the growth of the far right?
United & popular fronts
Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party regional secretary
Sunday 1pm

Society
Hillsborough cover up: what does it say about the role of the police, media and government?
Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool TUSC mayoral candidate
Sunday 1pm

Introducing socialism
Is human nature too greedy for socialism?
Sean Figg, Socialism 2012 organiser
Saturday 3pm

Politics Forum
Is the Labour Party a vehicle for socialism?
Owen Jones & Clive Heemskerck
Sunday 1pm

Welfare vs Workfare
Scroungers?
The role of unemployment in capitalist economy & the ideology of the 'benefit culture'
Dave Griffiths, West Midlands Socialist Party regional secretary
Sunday 1pm

Fight Austerity
How to stop the sell off of the NHS
Dr Jackie Grunsell & Roger Davey, Unison Wiltshire & Avon Health Service chair (personal capacity)
Sunday 10am

Fight Austerity
Can we bring the government down?
Rob Williams, chair NSSN & John McNally, PCS vice-president
Saturday 3pm



It's time to take over the banks

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary talks about an aspect of the struggle for socialism

Working people in the UK and across much of the globe are facing horrific attacks on living standards. These attacks are supported by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Central Bank and a whole plethora of supposed experts on economic matters.

But, far from delivering prosperity, George Osborne has simply managed to deliver a long running double-dip recession.

Debates around austerity and on economic issues have become the central political issues in Britain and internationally. Working people want economic security and a decent future for the next generation. Increasingly, these issues raise questions about what sort of economy and what sort of society we want.

The trade unions have rightly engaged in this economic debate, challenging the austerity agenda of the Westminster coalition. There has been some excellent work done on the issue of taxation and the billions of tax unpaid by the ultra rich and by big business. But, of course, the truth is that the rich will always avoid paying their tax. It is also true that businesses and the rich will tend to move their operations to countries where the tax regime is less rigorous and where tax rates are lower.

So we should be discussing in the labour movement the need for working people to find ways to take control of the economy.

The tax issue is very important but without also starting to address the real levers of economic power it will be left as a utopian dream.

The majority of people know that those at the top are not suffering. Top bankers are still being paid disgusting levels of bonus and billionaires are still avoiding paying their share of tax. People also know very well that the worldwide economic crisis was sparked by the banks.

So we need a debate on how we can really challenge the power of the banks as part of challenging the austerity agenda and as part of fighting for a different type of economy altogether.

At the Trades Union Congress, the FBU successfully moved a motion calling for the public ownership of the banks. This was the first time ever that such a motion has been carried at the TUC. We hope it will be debated in other unions and by other workers discussing the case for an alternative to the policies of the coalition government.

We know that others in the movement strongly disagree with us on the issue and the TUC policy as a whole is rather unclear, since it also supports an alternative approach of improving the regulation of the banking system and increasing competition within the sector. The experience of the privatised gas, electricity and rail industries show that greater competition does not in any way guarantee improved services to consumers.

We are not claiming that public ownership of the banks alone

SATURDAY RALLY

KICK OUT THE CON - DEMS

BUILD A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

6.30pm Saturday 3 November
Friends Meeting House, Euston Road

Speakers include:

- **Bob Crow** RMT transport union general secretary
- **Peter Taaffe** Socialist Party general secretary
- **Hoshoko Letshoba** a South African miners' leader
- **Keith Morrell** Southampton 'rebel' councillor and more

TICKETS FROM
WWW.SOCIALISM2012.ORG.UK

INTERNATIONALISM

Capitalism is capable of spending billions on weaponry but it is incapable of feeding the planet. In Britain growing numbers of families are struggling to feed their children. Globally, billions of people are short of food, with 870 million chronically and seriously undernourished. And the situation is about to get much worse.

The UN is warning that this year's failing harvests have pushed world grain reserves to their lowest level in almost 40 years. The Earth Research Centre is warning that the price of wheat and rice, already rising dramatically, could double in the next decade.

The absolute bankruptcy of capitalism is summed up by the response of the speculators who are dashing to buy up cheap farmland and gambling on food 'futures' - driving the price of food up further in order to maximise their profits from the appalling human tragedy that is starting to unfold.

Only a democratic socialist plan of production could fully harness the science and technique created by capitalism in order to meet the needs of all and protect our fragile planet.

Internationalism
The weekend will include sessions on Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Syria and we will hear speakers from Spain and South Africa

What we stand for
5 years since Northern Rock:
A socialist programme for the banks
Jane James, Socialist Party executive committee
Saturday 3pm

CLOSING RALLY

RALLY FOR SOCIALISM

Speakers include:
HANNAH SELL, Socialist party deputy general secretary
MATT WRACK, FBU general secretary
3pm Sunday 4 November
Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, NW1 2BJ

will resolve the crisis or shift economic power into the hands of the majority. Nor are we suggesting that this (or any single) measure in the UK alone would resolve the challenges we face.

The events of the past few years have demonstrated very clearly how interlinked the world economy is and consequently the need for much greater unity and collaboration between workers internationally. But we are saying that taking over the major banks has to be central to any realistic strategy to protect jobs, living standards and public services.

World Economic Crisis
What future for the European Union?
Lynn Walsh, editor Socialism Today
Sunday 1pm

WORKSHOPS AND DISCUSSIONS REGISTER FROM SATURDAY AT 2PM AT UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION MALET STREET WC1E 7HY

3PM SATURDAY

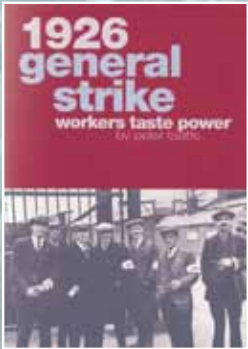
10AM SUNDAY

1PM SUNDAY

Introducing socialism Is human nature too greedy for socialism? Sean Figg, Socialism 2012 organiser	Science The God Particle, science and Marxism Pete Mason, author: Marxism, Science and the Big Bang	Society The Hillsborough cover up: what does it say about the role of the police, media and government? Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool TUSC mayoral candidate
Fight Austerity Where next for the fight against austerity? Can we bring the government down? Rob Williams, chair NSSN & John McNally, PCS vice-president	Introducing Marxism Historical materialism: How Marxists understand progress Ken Douglas, Socialist Party executive committee	World Economic Crisis What future for the European Union? Lynn Walsh, editor Socialism Today
Welfare vs Workfare How can we stop the Con-Dems' attacks on the disabled?	Internationalism Syria, imperialism & Arab revolutions Niall Mulholland, CWI & eyewitness to Tahrir Square	Introducing Marxism An introduction to Marxist economics Lenny Shail, Socialist Party national committee
Politics Murdochgate scandal & Leveson: A socialist programme for the media Judy Beishon, Socialist Party website editor	LGBT: 40 years of pride.	Welfare vs Workfare Scroungers? The role of unemployment in capitalist economy & the ideology of the 'benefit culture' Dave Griffiths, West Midlands Socialist Party regional secretary
Internationalism Sri Lanka: a new epoch of struggle Senan, Tamil Solidarity	Society The Royal delusion Becci Heagney, Socialist Party national committee	What we stand for Immigration: a socialist programme Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary
 World Economic Crisis Can capitalism escape economic crisis? Is socialism viable? Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary	 Welfare vs Workfare Forum How can we defeat workfare? Paul Callanan, Youth Fight for Jobs & Boycott Workfare speaker	 Politics Forum Is the Labour Party a vehicle for socialism? Owen Jones & Clive Heemskerck
Introducing Marxism Marxist Philosophy: Using dialectical materialism Robin Clapp, South West Socialist Party regional secretary	Internationalism After the Venezuelan elections: What prospect for socialism in Latin America? Tony Saunois, secretary CWI	Fight Austerity How can councillors fight the cuts? Harry Smith, Liverpool 47 & Dave Nellist, chair TUSC
The role of popular culture in normalising sexism Sarah Wrack, Rape Is No Joke organiser	What we stand for Does the Occupy movement offer a new way to change the world? Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, editor the Socialist	Internationalism Campaign Kazakhstan Clare Doyle, CWI
Internationalism Spain in revolt Spanish socialists	Fight Austerity How to stop the sell off of the NHS Dr Jackie Grunsell & Roger Davey, Unison Wiltshire & Avon Health Service chair (personal capacity)	How do we combat the growth of the far right? United & popular fronts Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party regional secretary
Science Planning for the planet: Socialism & the environment Pete Dickenson, author: Planning For The Planet & Clive Lord, Green Party founder member (personal capacity)	Introducing socialism How could a planned economy work? Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party regional secretary	Internationalism South Africa erupts: What does the miners' struggle represent? Alec Thraves, eyewitness in Rustenburg & South African miner
Society Are the police just a tool of the government? Nick Chaffey, Southern Socialist Party regional secretary	1972: The general strike that never was. Lessons for today Roger Thomas, PCS South West Regional vice chair (personal capacity)	Introducing socialism Is the Russian Revolution relevant today? Ben Robinson, Socialist Party national committee
What we stand for 5 years since Northern Rock: A socialist programme for the banks Jane James, Socialist Party executive committee	Politics Should Scotland be independent? Philip Stott, Socialist Party Scotland	All sessions are subject to change. A full programme will be available from registration during the weekend.

SOCIALIST BOOKS WILL HAVE HUNDREDS OF TITLES AVAILABLE AT SOCIALISM 2012

There will also be a huge variety of political & other stalls including some great merchandise for you to get your hands on! These will be in the Gallery in ULU



Socialist Books Highlights

Get your copy of the newly released 'Planning for the Planet' tackling capitalism's inability to save us from environmental catastrophe. Only £9.95 Hear the author debate with Clive Lord of the Green Party in the session on Saturday at 3pm. Other books, pamphlets and Socialist Party publications will be available, including Peter Taaffe's book on the 1926 general strike, full of important lessons for today and Marxist classics by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, VI Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. Order from: socialistbooks.co.uk



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Weekend £30/£15 (concession)
One day £15/£8 (concession)
Rally only £5

Buy tickets online at www.socialism2012.org.uk, call 020 8988 8777 or email socialism@socialistparty.org.uk Send cheque or postal order payable to 'Socialism' to: Socialism, PO Box 24697, London, E11 1YD with your name, address, phone number and details of your purchase. Saturday night accommodation available. See the website for details. There will be a full creche. Please phone to book a place.



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Unions must build the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)

Alex Gordon
RMT transport union President

On Saturday 22 September the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition national supporters' conference discussed the vital task of putting forward socialist candidates to fight the austerity cuts.

RMT's executive committee took part in the conference on behalf of our union. This year RMT's 2012 annual general meeting adopted a policy to support the development of a new political force that advances the ideas of trade unionism and socialism, to give confidence to workers and help to create a viable political alternative to austerity.

RMT called for TUSC to develop a trade union forum to take our message to working people in trade union branches, shop stewards' committees and throughout the democratic structures of the trade union movement.

TUSC provides a nucleus of a new political force. While TUSC is not a political party and remains a federation of socialist individuals and organisations (including the Socialist Party) along with an increasing number of trade union bodies, the numbers of activists currently involved in TUSC is a fraction of the number needed to stand candidates in every local authority, district council and national elections.

This, however, must be our aim if we are going to offer working class people an alternative to the diet of cuts, outsourcing, privatisation, wage freezes and anti-trade union laws that is supported by the leaders of all the main political parties in Britain.

RMT was 'disaffiliated' in 2003 by the Labour Party that our predecessors in the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants founded in 1899. Our expulsion was the outcome of a decision to support socialist candidates standing in Scottish parliamentary elections.

That decision by RMT's special general meeting in Glasgow came about because RMT members were no longer prepared to stomach New Labour's policies of Tube and rail privatisation, labour market flexibility and war.

In the last decade RMT has developed a debate through our democratic structures on the glaring absence of working class political representation in Britain today. RMT continues to work with socialist MPs in Westminster and our parliamentary group, which has now increased to 24 members.

However, the greatest absence in the political armoury of working people today is the absence of an avowed mass party of socialism, able to intervene in every electoral contest and to argue for a political alternative to austerity and neoliberalism.

Such a mass party would pull Labour's policies to the left. Instead of allowing party leaders such as Ed Balls and Ed Miliband to take

The greatest absence in the political armoury of working people today is the absence of an avowed mass party of socialism

working class voters for granted by pitching themselves as 'one nation' conservatives, we should be mobilising the millions of working class voters who want some red-blooded socialist solutions to the global capitalist crisis.

RMT is proud to have played a lead role in developing the arguments for an alternative. In 2009 we created the first nationwide electoral platform backed by any national trade union to stand candidates against official Labour candidates in the European elections with the 'No2EU - Yes to Democracy' coalition.

More recently RMT has supported candidates standing under the TUSC banner in local and national elections. Our AGM this year unanimously approved a resolution for RMT to continue to support TUSC candidates, subject to our rules and the authority of the union's executive.

We are under no illusions that an electoral mass party of socialism is a difficult and arduous process to build, beset by difficulties, not least the financial resources that are required.

Nevertheless, every tax cut for the rich, every pay cut for workers, every attack on the welfare state from the Tories and their Lib Dem lapdogs and every pathetic apology for continuing austerity policies 'more slowly' from the leaders of the Labour Party, underline the need for a socialist alternative.

We call on trade unions representing the millions of workers and their families in Britain today who have been abandoned by Labour to join us in building TUSC as a nucleus of such an alternative.



Alex Gordon speaks to TUSC supporters photo Paul Mattsson

Manchester Central byelection Rebuilding working class representation

Manchester Socialist Party became convinced of the need to run a TUSC candidate in the November byelection after watching the Labour Party candidate Lucy Powell turn in a useless performance in a debate at the trades union council.

Labour's selection of a careerist, ex-adviser to Ed Miliband typified everything about its degeneration into a purely capitalist party. The Labour held constituency has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. We also have a Labour council cutting and privatising vital services. The constituency is

also home to several major railway stations which will face devastating cuts to jobs if the McNulty report is allowed to be implemented.

TUSC is the only political force with a programme based around putting a real political alternative to the policies of privatisation, wage freezes and endless austerity.

As a PCS union activist I have witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of government spending cuts and wage freezes. As Miliband and shadow chancellor Ed Balls have made clear, they will continue with the anti-working class policies

of the Con-Dems. Labour offers no alternative for our class.

Our campaign in Manchester will be based around workplaces and anti-cuts campaigns and in working class communities. We will be showing that there is an alternative for working class people to the dead end of Labour.

I am proud to be the TUSC candidate and to be part of rebuilding working class political representation.

Alex Davidson, Socialist Party and TUSC candidate for Manchester Central

Bristol Mayor election Active opposition to all cuts

Tom Baldwin
Socialist Party and Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts candidate for Mayor

It has emerged that Bristol's funding will be cut by an extra £25 million over and above what had been expected. This should send a shiver down the spine of Bristolians when you consider what cuts have already meant for the city. They have included the privatisation of home care services and now the closure of eight elderly people's homes and seven daycare centres.

The city's Lib Dem council launched a consultation to try and make ordinary residents take some of the decisions about where cuts should fall. This was to take some of the heat off themselves for slavishly following the orders of Cameron and Osborne and passing on the

government's cuts.

On 15 November people in Bristol will have the chance to have a say on what really matters in the election for the new post of mayor. Sadly the choice between the main parties is simply about which cuts to make. None of them have opposed the government's austerity agenda or pledged to fight cuts locally.

But there is an alternative. I am standing for Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts to give a voice to ordinary working class people. Prices are rising but our pay isn't and we're expected to pay for a crisis caused by super-rich bankers

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**
www.tusc.org.uk

while they're still rolling in the cash.

Enough is enough. I am standing on a programme of active opposition to all cuts and will only take the average wage of a worker if elected.

TUSC election rallies

Manchester: For an anti-cuts MP

Tuesday 13 November 2012 - 7.30pm

'The lounge' meeting room in Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, off Piccadilly Gardens, city centre, Manchester M1 1JQ
Speakers include: Dave Nellist, former Coventry socialist MP and Alex Davidson, TUSC Manchester parliamentary byelection candidate

Bristol:

Wednesday 14 November - 7.30pm

Council House, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR

Speakers include: Tom Baldwin, TUSC Against Cuts mayoral candidate; Dave Nellist, former Coventry socialist MP; Sheila Caffrey, Bristol NUT Divisional President (personal capacity) and John McNally, PCS union vice-president



Working class people need a left alternative photo Suzanne Beishon

Chesterfield Socialist Party: Lessons of Clay Cross council defiance

Friday 9 November - 7pm

Clay Cross Social Centre, Market Street, Clay Cross, near Chesterfield.

40 years since Clay Cross council defied the Tory government, this meeting will discuss the lessons for the battle against cuts today

Speakers: A former Clay Cross councillor; Alex Gordon, RMT president; Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary; Becci Heagney, Youth Fight for Jobs

Black History Month

Who was Malcolm X?

Hugo Pierre

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

“By any means necessary” – Malcolm X’s expression of militant civil rights – is known worldwide by young people fighting against racism.

In the 1950s and 60s, black workers in the US southern states rose up to end their status as second-class citizens, segregation and the vicious enforcement of the vile, racist Jim Crow code.

The struggles of black workers in the 1940s, including winning equal pay in some of the war industries, was allied to the experiences of those who fought during World War Two. Encouraged to fight for US capitalism under the banner of ‘freedom’ they returned to find their rights, even to a seat on a bus, severely restricted at home.

Bus company boycotts sprang up in many southern towns and cities, which eventually ended segregated buses in Montgomery. These struggles, organised by black workers and trade unionists, forced many elements of the black ‘establishment’ into action – particularly the churches. A new leadership, particularly around Martin Luther King Junior, based their method of struggle around the principles of non-violent action.

The mass struggle that developed engulfed the south and inspired black workers and youth throughout the north. The political establishment, both Republican and Democrat, feared the potential for this movement and tried to entangle the leaders with promises of reform in the future.

Poverty

Malcolm X came to the struggle from a life of poverty as a teenager, petty crime and prison, via the Nation of Islam. The Nation condemned the objectives of the civil rights movement leaders for integration into US society, posing instead the fight for black separation with a message that whites were ‘devils’.

Prior to Malcolm joining, the nation was a small sect. Malcolm’s skills and enthusiasm, against the

backdrop of racism, poverty and police brutality, led to a huge rise in membership across northern states. While segregation didn’t legally exist in northern states, poverty and discrimination – including police brutality – left the majority of blacks in the worst housing, worst jobs and worst conditions.

Malcolm organised a mass protest against the savage beating of a Nation member in Harlem by the NYPD. The police were forced to release the Nation member into hospital for treatment. Thousands applied to join the Nation overnight.

The Nation made radical speeches but over time Malcolm became uneasy with their lack of action. Southern mass movements were challenging the power of the state. Boycotts, mass demonstrations and campaigns for voter registration were met with brutal resistance, including police murders and racist thugs such as the Ku Klux Klan. Youth were starting to turn away from non-violence and attempting to work out a programme to defeat state violence.

Conflict

Malcolm came into conflict with the Nation’s leader, Elijah Muhammad, when he wanted to organise violent reprisals following the LAPD’s murder of a Mosque leader in 1962. Malcolm was ordered to ‘stay where I put you’ and not organise a united front campaign with civil rights campaigns.

Malcolm was increasingly involved in organising protests and pickets, supporting workers’ struggles in New York, talking less about religion and more about the social questions facing blacks.

The Nation ordered its members not to participate in the 1963 March on Washington, organised by a coalition of civil rights groups. Hundreds of Nation members defied this edict. Malcolm, while not openly defying it, participated in the lead up and watched the march.

But Malcolm then denounced the march leaders, who relied on possible civil rights legislation, for making the demo a “Farce on Washington”. Black youths, along with Malcolm X, were angry that there was no call for more mass action, in

particular strike action.

Malcolm’s idea of revolution still came within the framework of black nationalism. But within months he was expelled from the Nation, which by now had millions of dollars invested in real estate and black businesses.

Malcolm’s trips to Mecca broke his view that ‘the white man is a devil’ and brought him into contact with leaders of the colonial revolution in many African states. Malcolm noticed that many of these leaders embraced ‘socialist’ ideas.

On returning to the US he made clear that he was not anti-white, but anti-exploitation and anti-oppression. He called for black armed self-defence.

Racism and capitalism

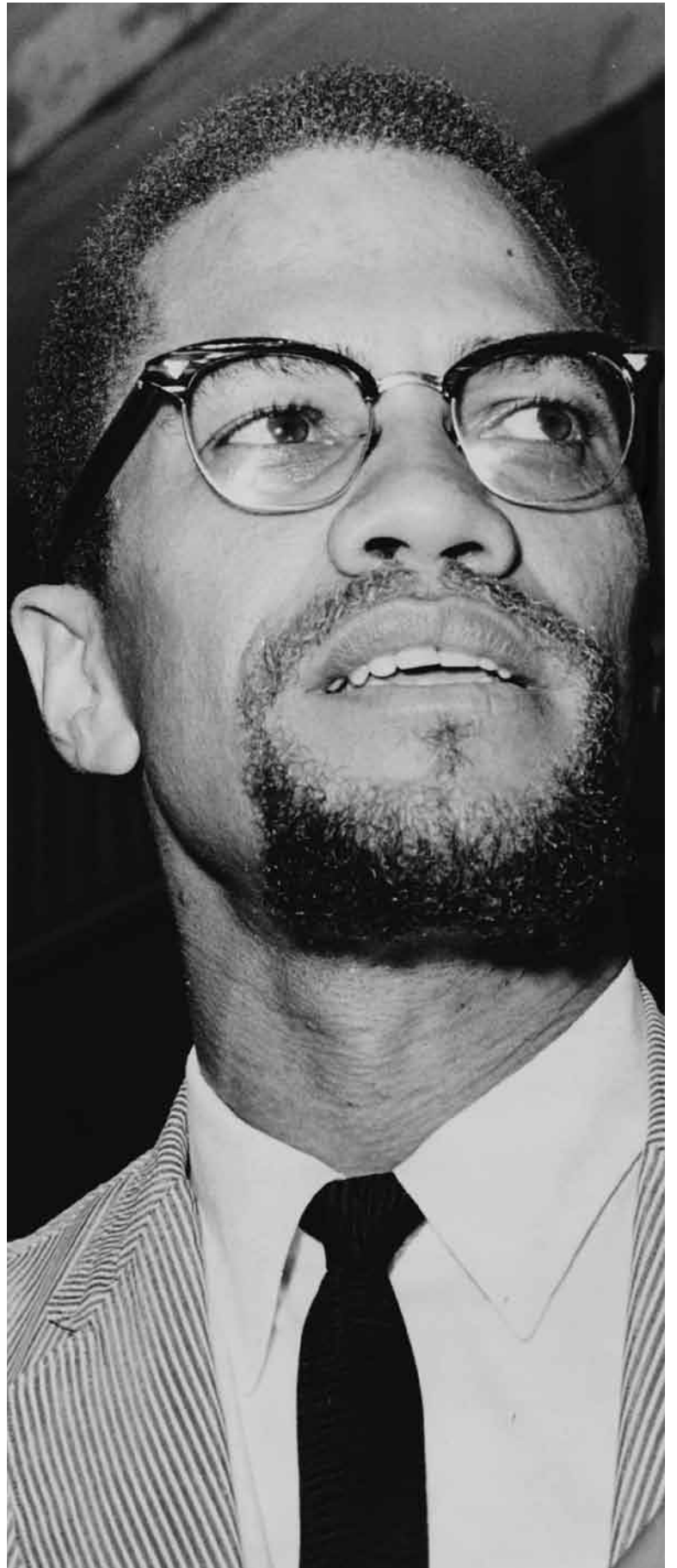
Malcolm was drawing conclusions about the nature of capitalism and the integral role racism played within it. His support for workers’ struggles, alliances with black groups combined with links to the white working class posed a serious threat to the state. He was murdered by the state, with the collusion of the Nation, on 21 February 1965.

But a new generation of black youth reached the conclusion that armed self-defence and a socialist programme were essential to the struggle for black liberation. The Black Panthers’ ten-point programme, written in October 1966, included demands for housing, employment and education but also “placing the means of production... in the community”.

‘Legal rights’ against discrimination have not ended economic segregation and state harassment through police brutality. A black US president, Barack Obama, has presided over the worst fall in living conditions for black workers since the 1930s.

The struggles of the working class, such as those in Wisconsin, and the Occupy Movement, will enthuse a new layer of black youth to look at the life and methods of Malcolm X, especially the anti-capitalist conclusions he drew towards the end of his life.

Only a new society, based on public ownership of the huge wealth and resources and democratic planning, can lay the basis for the eradication of racism once and for all.



Stop the far right from ‘uniting’ on 27 October

Fight for jobs, homes and services, not racism

Suzanne Beishon

London Youth Fight for Jobs

The English Defence League (EDL) is a far-right racist group. Many EDL organisers are not just racists. They are Nazis who oppose rights for women, LGBT people, trade unionists and the left.

It regularly takes to the streets across the country, often violently, to intimidate and spread its racist lies. It now threatens to return to Waltham Forest, north east London, scene of its recent humiliation.

On 1 September, the EDL was stopped from holding a rally in front of Waltham Forest town hall. Thousands of young people, trade unionists and others joined a counter-demonstration that blocked the EDL’s original march route with a

sit-down protest that was then surrounded by police.

Hearing that the EDL was being escorted by police though back streets to get around the blockade, hundreds of young people, led by Youth Fight for Jobs and the Day-Mer Turkish-Kurdish youth group, broke through police lines to occupy the EDL rallying point.

EDL leader Tommy Robinson, attempting to muster credibility, has called for a return to Waltham Forest on 27 October – a show of strength to ‘unite the far right’.

This must be stopped – but how? Labour-led Waltham Forest council is campaigning for a ban. While this may seem attractive, it is not the answer to stopping the far right.

Where EDL demonstrations have been banned, counter-demos have also been banned and intimidating

static protests have taken place, with EDLers often breaking free from police pens to rampage through local communities.

Labour-led Waltham Forest council has voted to do the Con-Dems’ dirty work and slash 600 jobs. And Labour councillors have a record of trying to ban anti-cuts protests. It’s no wonder working class people feel like no one stands up for them.

The EDL’s claims to do so are lies. Disgracefully it attempts to lay the blame for the problems faced by working people on those with different colour skin, different nationalities and different religions.

The blame lies with the bosses and pro-big businesses politicians who caused the economic crisis. They want to make the 99% pay for it.

That is why the fight against the EDL and their racist lies is a dual

task. We need to organise mass opposition to stop their vile marches.

Already workers and young people are being mobilised to stop the EDL on 27 October. The RMT union in London has agreed to again block the EDL from London stations, demonstrating clearly the huge potential strength of the organised working class.

But a programme and action against the brutal cuts is also needed. Working class people need a mass party to fight austerity – this would show that the real enemy is those at the top who continue to leech and profit while we suffer.

**Stop the EDL - 27 October, 11am
Walthamstow town centre, E17**

Rotherham opposes racist EDL

Around 200 protesters joined the rally and march against the EDL coming to Rotherham on Saturday 13 October.

This mobilisation, at short notice, will now have to be built on as the National Front have announced their intention to march in the town on 27 October.

The far right are trying to whip up racism against the Muslim community.

Socialist Party members have argued that this must be countered by campaigning for jobs, homes and services, against all cuts and against racism.

Rotherham Socialist Party

US elections: And the winner is... Wall Street!

October has seen a tightening of the US presidential race. The Republican candidate Mitt Romney has gained support by exploiting the deep disappointment with Barack Obama and the still dire state of the US economy. This polarisation is simultaneously increasing the ‘lesser evil’ support for Obama as many are reluctantly prepared to vote for him, mainly as a way of stopping the right wing Republicans. Brandon Madsen, Socialist Alternative (CWI supporters in the USA), outlines the underlying issues in this campaign and why working class people need their own party.

Though Election Day in the US isn’t until 6 November, it is already abundantly clear who the winner of this year’s presidential election will be: Wall Street and big business!

The 2012 election cycle is expected to be more awash in corporate cash than any previous election, with a projected \$5.8 billion to be spent across all races.

In 2008, Barack Obama was elected to the presidency amidst a whirlwind of enthusiasm for the “hope” and “change” he had promised America, but this sentiment is now long gone.

Three and a half years into his presidency, tens of millions suffer from unemployment, foreclosures and evictions. High levels of long-term structural unemployment have hardly changed since early 2009. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that in February 2012, as many as 42.6% of the 23.5 million unemployed had been out of work more than six months.

According to the US Census Bureau, 49.1 million Americans live below the poverty line, and an additional 97.3 million are classified as ‘low income’ – ie just barely above the poverty line. Combined, this amounts to 146.4 million US residents, or nearly half the country’s total population. This number has increased by four million over the course of Obama’s term in office, and the suffering is being borne disproportionately by blacks, Latinos, and women.

At the same time, the rich have continued to get massively richer under Obama. An analysis of tax returns shows that 93% of the income gains in 2010 were pocketed by the top 1%, and 37% was taken by just the top 0.1%.

Broken promises

Despite his promises to the contrary, Obama has continued to lead the US down the same path of right-wing corporatism, imperialism and environmental devastation as his predecessors.

He supported the Wall Street bail-outs while leaving working people and the poor to fend for themselves. His 2011 bipartisan budget deal represented the largest-ever drop in US domestic spending, with serious impacts on education, health and labour.

Obama’s big promise to the labour unions was that he would get the Employee Free Choice Act



There is no substantive difference at all between the Democrats and Republicans

passed, which would have made union organising easier. This was scrapped and forgotten almost immediately after Obama took office.

Obama promised to end the Bush-era imperialist policies in the Middle East. In reality, he has increased military spending, intensified the war in Afghanistan, bombed and invaded Libya, and carried out more drone strikes than ever before in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia (countries the US is not even at war with).

He promised to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, yet it remains open today.

The ‘lesser evil’

Despite Obama’s atrocious record so far, the prospect of Republican candidate Mitt Romney winning the election is just terrifying enough to millions that they will vote for Obama anyway to keep Romney out.

However, the only reason that Romney – an out-of-touch millionaire vulture capitalist, right-wing panderer and corporate hack extraordinaire that even Republicans aren’t enthusiastic about – has a chance of winning is because Obama has failed so badly at offering any solutions to the problems facing the US.

This has also helped enable the rise of right-wing populism, as embodied by trends like the Tea Party, the libertarians and Ron Paul. The failure of the Democrats to solve the economic crisis allows for the twisted logic of bigoted scapegoating and capitalist utopianism to fill the void. Far from preventing the worst of the right wing from gaining strength, the Democrats have opened the door for it.

In the media, however, the relatively superficial differences between the candidates are sensationalised and hyperbolically played up to help maintain the illusion of a real choice in this election. The reality masked by this illusion is that both candidates fundamentally agree on most substantive issues facing working people.

In the midst of the worst unemployment crisis since the 1930s Great Depression, both parties agree that a real federally funded jobs programme is off the table. With their pro-capitalist ideology comes an almost moralistic opposition to government job creation, telling workers that they have to wait for the fickle fortunes of the markets and the private sector to

swing in their favour.

Obama’s education policy takes an anti-union, pro-privatisation agenda to new heights. The Democrats have done such a good job attacking teachers that Romney’s running mate, pro-Tea Party Congressman Paul Ryan, crossed party lines to lavish praise on Democratic mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel for his handling of the recent Chicago Teachers Union strike.

Both parties agree on the need to “reform” (read: begin dismantling and privatising) so-called “entitlement” programmes such as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security in order to lower the budget deficit.

Perhaps the most striking case of agreement between the two parties was on the nature of the bank bail-outs. For all the talk of deficit reduction on both sides, when it came to throwing trillions at the big banks with no relief for homeowners or other indebted Americans, a deal was hammered out and rammed through within days. On the fundamental issue of protecting the capitalist system at all costs, there is no substantive difference at all between the parties.

Obama has not only renewed without change Bush’s Patriot Act, which legalises various forms of government spying on citizens, he has also for the first time provided legalistic justification for things like indefinite detention of anyone in the world, including US citizens, without charge or trial – things which all previous presidents had to do more surreptitiously.

In fact, the biggest difference between Obama and Bush is that Obama has been able to get away with much more right-wing policies than Bush ever could without stirring up mass anger from the social movement organisations, the unions, and left liberals in general. It is in this sense that Obama cannot even accurately be called the “lesser evil” but, as Glen Ford of Black Agenda report put it, “the more effective evil.”

Left alternative

That is why it is so urgently necessary to build a working class alternative to the two-party system; to give working people a political voice in this system where they currently have none.

Not only is there a yearning among voters for a viable third-party choice, as shown in multiple national opinion polls, but also the resources already exist within

the labour movement to build an independent working class party.

In 2008, US labour unions gave \$400 million to Obama and the Democrats, a figure which they aim to top this year. What’s more, the AFL-CIO (the largest union federation in the US) is unleashing 400,000 volunteers this year to get out the vote for Democratic candidates. This is easily enough to build a credible third party that represents workers’ interests and takes no corporate money.

Breaking through the two-party corporate stranglehold on US politics is therefore not a question of practical feasibility but of political will. Unfortunately, so far the leaders of the unions

The failure of the Democrats to solve the economic crisis allows for the twisted logic of bigoted scapegoating and capitalist utopianism to fill the void

and other social movement organisations have failed to muster this will and have remained tied to the Democratic Party with all its disastrous consequences.

While fighting to try and change this, in the meantime Socialist Alternative is calling for a vote for Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein in the upcoming elections. Stein supports a “Green New Deal” jobs programme, ending the wars, cancelling student debt, and calling for a single-payer healthcare system, along with many other progressive reforms.

This is not a blanket endorsement of the Green Party, which fails to see capitalism as the central problem or to base itself decisively on the working class. Nonetheless, Jill Stein’s campaign has the most potential to be a strong left campaign in the country and, in this way it points the way forward most clearly in terms of a united left break with the Democrats.

The capitalist two-party vice that the US working class and social movements have been locked into is what has blocked progress and allowed the whole political spectrum to lurch to the right over the past several decades. It is time to break with the logic of capitalism, imperialism and austerity – and the parties pushing it. There is no better time than the present.

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.



Tamil Solidarity:
For the rights of workers & all oppressed people in Sri Lanka

Tamil Solidarity was set up in 2009 as Tamil-speaking people were being slaughtered by the Sri Lankan armed forces. It’s estimated that 75,000 Tamils were massacred.


The north and east of Sri Lanka have become a militarised zone. A massive land grab is taking place while the regime is privatising services, attacking workers’ rights and jailing political, trade union and human rights activists.

Tamil Solidarity stands for the right to self-determination of Tamils and the rights of all workers and oppressed people in Sri Lanka.

This year Unison’s national conference voted unanimously to affiliate to the campaign, as have many trade union branches. Building solidarity among trade union members and young people is the priority, here and internationally. A ‘join the union’ initiative aimed at Tamil workers in Britain is also planned.

Join Tamil Solidarity! Find out more by looking at the website. Get your union branch, college society or community group to affiliate today!

www.tamilsolidarity.org



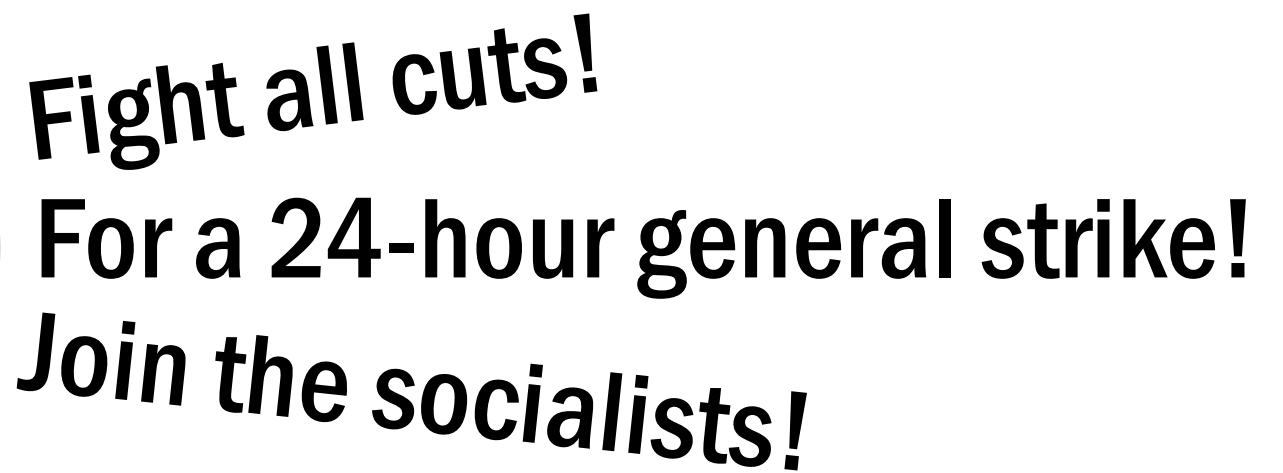
Campaign Kazakhstan
Campaign for democratic, social & workers rights in Kazakhstan

Since its launch last year, Campaign Kazakhstan has succeeded in gaining support from prominent figures and trade unions.

Campaign Kazakhstan has two main roles. The first is to raise the profile of the continuing struggles in Kazakhstan. Lobbies of embassies, and of companies linked to the Kazakh regime, have a real effect on a regime committing atrocities against its population. The campaign has been instrumental in the release of Vadim Kuramshin, human rights activist, and Bolat Atabayev, playwright, from trumped up jail charges.

The other role of the campaign is to offer practical solidarity. The campaign recently raised £900 in support of the families of jailed Zhanaozen strikers. To carry out all of these activities the campaign urgently needs funds; donations from trade unions. Several trade union branches have already donated to the campaign, but more are needed.

www.campaignkazakhstan.org



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When organised mass action defeated the Tories

Poll tax: 18 million refused to pay

Steve Score

Former secretary, Leicestershire Anti-Poll Tax Federation

The campaign against Thatcher's poll tax is an example of how a mass movement can defeat a government. 18 million people, organised through the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, defied the law and refused to pay the tax. This not only forced the Tories to scrap it but ended Thatcher's career as prime minister.

The campaign also shows the role that can be played by socialists in putting forward a strategy and tactics to win.

The poll tax was a standard charge on rich and poor alike. It was levied on each person over 18, including the unemployed, students and those with no personal income at all, who had been exempt from the poll tax's precursors, the rates. In fact a rich person could end up paying far less than a poor family.

Led by Militant, the Socialist Party's forerunner, mass non-payment was built by community based anti-poll tax unions in cities, towns and villages across the country. These were linked nationally into the Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

Militant predicted the anger the tax would cause, and saw the huge potential to build a mass movement. The trade union leaders and the La-

bour Party leadership opposed the tax verbally, but did nothing to fight it, actively opposing the non-payment campaign. Labour councils ultimately sent bailiffs into working class people's homes to impound their property and jailed people for not being able to pay.

The tax was introduced in Scotland a year earlier than in England and Wales; perhaps because the Tories had so little support there, they

18 million people, organised through the Anti-Poll Tax Federation, defied the law and refused to pay the tax

felt free to experiment! But it ignited Scottish workers' anger and the method of mass non-payment was tested out.

Militant supporters had to argue against those who said mass non-payment wouldn't work, or would only get working class people in debt. Some advocated non-payment only for a few prominent individuals who 'could afford it'.

On the contrary, only a mass movement would work. In fact millions would not be able to afford it and we planned to unite the 'can't



photo Dave Sinclair

payers' with the 'won't payers.' That way an organised campaign could defend people.

Mass demonstrations developed around the rate-setting council meetings. On 31 March 1990, the day before the poll tax was introduced in England and Wales, simultaneous mass demonstrations in London and Glasgow involved a quarter of a million people. When the London demonstration reached Trafalgar Square, police actions provoked a big battle later known as the 'poll tax riots'.

Some claim that these big demos beat the poll tax. They were important, but it was organised mass non-payment which was the real reason

for its demise. We kept the confidence of the movement up by discussing and answering every question, in meetings and in millions of leaflets.

Jailings

We clogged up the courts by mobilising non-payers to attend their hearings and assisted people by asking questions in court. Court rooms were unable to cope. We mobilised to stop the bailiffs from seizing property. We organised to stop poll tax jailings - the ultimate sanction.

Hundreds were sent to prison, including many Militant supporters. The late Terry Fields, a Liver-

pool MP and Militant member, was sent down for standing in solidarity with his constituents. However, the number of jailings, compared to the millions who refused to pay, was far fewer than would have been if there was no organised campaign.

The government announced in March 1991 that they would be scrapping the tax by 1993. We continued to support people and campaigned for the writing off of the debts. Many were actually secretly dropped by councils at a later date.

This movement showed that working class people can win battles. It also showed the critical role that a party with the right ideas can play in the struggle.

Liverpool 1983-87 Better to break the law than break the poor

Tony Mulhearn

Former Liverpool councillor and the then District Labour Party president

As a lifelong Liverpool football supporter, I was delighted to read recently that Liverpool were top of the league. I thought I had misunderstood Liverpool's dropped points in their first six games. Then reality hit me: Liverpool was top of the league for the deepest cuts in council expenditure. That explained why Mayor Joe Anderson had received the MBE.

Yet Liverpool's socialist-led council of 1983 to 1987 showed that things could be so different. In the two years before the 49 Labour councillors (reduced to 47 by the death of Bill Lafferty and Peter Lloyd) were elected in May 1983, not a single house for rent had been built by the Liberal/Tory alliance which controlled the council.

Council rents were the highest in the UK outside London. 5,000 council jobs had vanished. Youth unemployment in some areas of the city was in excess of 50%.

The defeated Liberal/Tory alliance had left behind a financial gap of £10 million of unallocated cuts, and £30 million had been slashed from Liverpool's budget by Tory minister Michael Heseltine. This was the nightmare inherited by the newly elected council in which Militant (predecessor of the Socialist) supporters played a prominent role.

Unlike Liverpool's New Labour neoliberals led by Joe Anderson, we did not use that scenario as an excuse for implementing draconian cuts but as a reason for carrying out the 47's election promises.

Adopting the slogan "better to break the law than to break the poor", we launched a programme of action that included building houses, creating jobs, expanding services



photo Militant

and freezing rents.

This was backed up by a mass campaign involving huge protests by public and private sector trade unions, community organisations, youth organisations, party constituencies and party branches, led by the Liverpool District Labour Party and the 47 councillors.

Lessons

This campaign aimed to resist any further cuts and to claw back the funds that Thatcher had slashed from the city's budget. The result was a resounding success, and if the other Labour councils had emulated that struggle Thatcher would have been forced to retreat.

This lesson is completely lost on the current Labour crop. They bleat that they have no choice but to cut

public services that provide support for those in greatest need, including disabled youngsters and Sure Start facilities for young children.

Anderson cries that if he does not make the cuts, the government will send in commissioners. The reality is that he is the government's de facto commissioner. He brags that he is in daily touch with Con-Dem ministers, no doubt to receive his instructions. He plays this role while being paid some £60,000 a year by Liverpool's hard-pressed council tax payers.

Liverpool's labour movement - before it was emasculated by the then Labour leader Kinnock's lieutenant Peter Kilfoyle - knew that collaboration with the Tory government, as advocated by both these gentlemen, would lead to disaster.

And with the ascendancy of the neoliberal right, disaster followed

Elections showed backing

The Liverpool 47 attracted the highest Labour vote in history; higher than any election since the war, even though the city's population had declined from 700,000 in 1945 to 460,000 in 1983. While the turnout for local elections in previous years had ranged from 11% to 20%, the turnout between 1983 and 1987 was 45% to 55%.

This was a clear message that if policies which correspond to the needs and aspirations of the working class are implemented, then the support will be forthcoming.

disaster. Privatisation, job losses and no more council housing, with local authority trade union leadership ready to comply with every reactionary demand of the council.

When the 47 were undemocratically removed from office by Thatcher's district auditor 30,000 workers were employed by the Liverpool city council. Today there are less than 10,000. Yet Liverpool council in 2010 was faced with a budget deficit of £120 million, even before the current round of Con-Dem cuts.

The 47 recognised that there was no guarantee of victory when you fight, but if you do not fight defeat is assured.

The city that fought

● In 1984 Liverpool's battle - and its widespread support - forced Thatcher's government into a retreat worth up to £60 million.

● The biggest of many demos, on the council's budget day in March 1984 (when a one-day strike took place) was backed by 30,000 local authority workers. They joined a 50,000 strong march in support of the council's deficit budget.

● 6,400 jobs were created in the private sector because of the house-building programme, on top of thousands of local authority jobs created and saved. Other results included six new nurseries, and five colleges. Over 5,000 council houses were built.

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Paying for rights?

With attacks on education, NHS, local government, etc, why should there not be a public show of outrage against Con-Dem austerity measures in a national 24-hour general strike? Attacks on those in employment (the race to the bottom) are becoming the 'norm'. So it's horrifying to read that under new proposals, taking a case to tribunal will incur charges from summer 2013. Examples include: Redundancy not paid? Wages unpaid this week? That'll be £160 just to issue the claim at a tribunal - and another £230 if you need to go to a hearing. And that's the lowest cost - more complex cases (such as sex discrimination, equal pay claims and unfair dismissals) could cost up to £950. Despite some exemptions and reduced costs for those on certain benefits or with very low incomes, the objective is to price the low-paid out of an already unjust legal system. The Con-Dems say they want more mediation and out-of-court settlements. We say we want a 24-hour general strike to make ourselves heard - the sooner the better.

A Unite member

Buy some beads!

"Get a job and save for a flat," David Cameron said in his Tory conference speech. Save out of what? A poverty minimum wage? A pay freeze? Is all this 'saving for flats' after workers pay back the money they borrowed for their university education? And how is anyone going to stay in work when no one has any money to buy anything they're making or selling or anything that others are making and selling? Cameron's speech raises doubts about the wisdom of sending children to pri-

right? Just one bead. So, please tell us sir, how this bead can grow into two, three, four, when all the other beads are on the left? We've all had enough of Tory party politics. When are you and your party going, and can we help you pack?

Richard Lawrence, Ashford

Good idea

BBC Midlands regional news said that there had been some problems in Walsall council's social work department. These were now being addressed. One of the solutions was to up the pay of the most junior social workers from



£22,000 a year to £30,000 a year. A social worker explained that she would not now be moving elsewhere for higher pay. This is an idea which could catch on!

Pete, Worcester

Savile – bosses took no action

It appears that the late Jimmy Savile raped and sexually abused women and girls over decades, with impunity. I recall a conversation in the mid-1980s with a nurse at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, where Savile often visited for 'charitable' purposes.

The nurse told me female staff dreaded such visits as Savile was notorious for sexually molesting staff and patients. Seemingly Savile's notoriety was well-known to senior managers at institutions such as the BBC, NHS and Home Office. The police too received complaints against the broadcaster from abused victims, yet nothing was done to prosecute this monster. There is substantial evidence exposing Savile's activities, including a BBC Newsnight feature (inexplicably pulled from being broadcast), which suggests a widespread cover-up. The victims still require justice. Internal inquiries at the BBC, etc, cannot be regarded as adequate or impartial. A full and open public inquiry by elected and accountable representatives, including from the trade union and workers' movement, into this scandal is needed.

Simon Carter, east London

A franchise to make money

The West Coast Main Line franchise 'omnishambles' shows the costs of cuts and privatisation. Over 400 Department for Transport job cuts were made from October 2010 as part of an "aggressive cost-cutting programme" (Independent, 15 October), many of them directly linked to rail-franchising. These cuts also meant there wasn't an external audit of the West Coast franchise bid, which directly led to the First-Group deal being scrapped. The collapse of the West Coast deal is costing over £100 million in public money, on top of the £4 billion annual state subsidy (double the cost of British Rail before privatisation) given to the privatised railways. So instead of letting Virgin profit out of our back pockets for another nine to 13 months while the franchise bidding process is re-run, the whole rail network should be renationalised under democratic workers' control.

Jeff Allen, East Ham

Academy double-think

How would education minister Gove react if a local authority school were to insist that all governors support com-



prehensive education? He would turn fifty shades of blue and explode. However, academies are quite within their rights to sack governors who do not fulfil the person specification "fully supports academy status". This came to light at St Bede's School in Cambridge where this clause was used to remove a long-standing governor and trade unionist. Curiously another person specification for governors was "to be able to think critically." So it seems that on planet Gove you can only think critically if you agree with the academy programme. And top of the list of "desirable qualities" was not perhaps some knowledge of education or an interest in the welfare of children. No it was business experience. Perhaps Gove's dream is a school run by Lord Sugar. It is everybody else's nightmare.

Derek McMillan, West Sussex

Chase the sharks out of Toon!



Out of the Virgin frying pan into the Wonga fire

Norman Hall Newcastle fan

Newcastle United football team has agreed a £24 million sponsorship deal with Wonga.com, the short-term payday loans company. Wonga, and other legalised loan shark firms, prey on the most down-trodden and vulnerable sections of society. Wonga's interest rates are 4,214% apr so a 30-day loan from Wonga to buy a £49.99 Newcastle shirt from Mike Ashley's (Newcastle's millionaire owner) Sports Direct, will cost £70.63 - 41% more. North-east England is under the cosh of unemployment and public sector cuts. Many people, seriously struggling, will now see the name of a company making fortunes from their poverty, splashed across the chests of super-wealthy players. Wonga also bought the naming rights to the stadium. Using the "spoonful of sugar helps the poison go down" approach, they changed

the stadium's name back to the traditional St James' Park. Some supporters just welcome the £24 million. Others say Wonga shouldn't be touched with a borrowed barge pole. Others say Wonga are scum but are they that much worse than any other financial institution such as former sponsors Northern Rock and Virgin Money? Look at Barclays, the Libor rate-rigging sponsor of football's top competition, the Premier League. Local Labour MPs and councillors correctly denounced the deal. However, Wonga was launched under the last Labour government, which did nothing to prevent these vultures setting up. Labour didn't even put in controls to limit their extortionate interest rates. The finance and banking industry definitely needs to be nationalised under democratic control and management. And football should be controlled by the fans and their communities and not be the plaything of super-rich individuals or money-grabbing wide boys.

Stop health robbery in Sherwood Forest

Karen Seymour

Two weeks after Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust's financial crisis threatened it could run out of cash by January, it emerged that 120 breast cancer test errors occurred between 2004 and 2010. This is causing great anxiety to the women affected and their families. Hospital pathology services have been subject to big changes since Lord Carter's 2006 report - under the Labour government. This private health company boss recommended moving from hospital-based laboratories to regional labs, which private companies could bid to run. Last month, bids went in to run community pathology services across the Midlands - a contract worth £300 million. These blood tests are mostly automated and profitable, so hospitals use them to subsidise complex tests, like cancer diagnosis. Without routine high volume work, hospital laboratories become 'uneconomic'. Sherwood Forest has paid Unipart over £1 million consultancy fees, introducing "lean" work prac-

tices, cutting out 'waste'. But ever-increasing 'productivity' - more work from fewer people - is incompatible with a caring health service. Health workers face intolerable pressures as patients and treatments become a production-line, with no time to provide individual attention as every patient - or laboratory test - should have. Add to this, 20% less funding that the Tory/Lib government is providing for pathology services by 2015; £20 billion cuts (given the fancy name 'efficiency savings') across the NHS; the enormous financial pressure of Sherwood Forest Hospitals' unsustainable PFI payments. Add on also the Modernising Scientific Careers project, changing the way medical laboratory scientists work, of which Kings Mill has been an early adopter - and we can see just some of the pressures building up in the laboratory. There needs to be a local inquiry by health workers' trade unions, patients and community representatives. The financial books should be opened so we can see where our money has been spent and where private profit is putting more patient's health at risk.

New sales of the Socialist in Kenilworth

On 13 October, the first Socialist Party campaigning stall in Kenilworth for many years was held. People were more interested than we expected, as ours is a traditionally right-wing town. Many people were asking questions. We sold about a dozen copies of the Socialist.

Many people were keen to sign our petition against NHS cuts and discuss socialism in today's world with us. We raised £16.70 in donations. We also found a potential member who should be joining us for the TUC demo on the 20th.

Non Frenguelli

The Socialist - a different kind of paper

Help us build it with the 20-20-20 plan!

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
The Socialist editor

Newspapers have been getting bad press lately. And largely deservedly so. The Leveson inquiry shone a light on the putrid relationship between the Murdoch press, pro-big business politicians and some police tops. The recent revelations around Hillsborough added more detail to that picture.

But the Socialist is different. The Socialist is proud that its production is not subject to the drive for profit but the drive to build the workers’

We have thousands of expert contributors – they are the ones leading a strike, or working on the frontline...

movement; to create a place for debate and an exchange of ideas; to provide working class people with a voice, normally denied in the media where anti-working class politicians rant with seeming impunity; and to always try to point a way forward for the struggle. Every article produced has the aim of fulfilling one of those vital social tasks.

Our authors are not typical either. We have thousands of expert contributors – expert because they are the ones leading a strike, or working on the frontline, or fighting for rights and against discrimination, or building the

struggle for a socialist alternative.

The Socialist has also been, and will continue to be, at the forefront of the campaign for a 24-hour general strike as the next step in the fight against austerity after the 20 October demo. Where right-wing trade union leaders betrayed the 30 November strike our writers, Socialist Party members and others, aim to provide a way forward that can help to build the fight against austerity.

If this is your first time to read the Socialist we hope you enjoy it and that you will read it every week. We hope you will add your experience and ideas to future issues – we invite all our readers to contribute, and do our best to print as much as we can, working with the Socialist Party website too.

But we also invite you to support us. This paper does not rely on any advertising revenue for its production – but we welcome support from the labour movement. There are two key ways this can be done. Most importantly if you do not have a subscription please avail of our special demo offer. That will ensure you never miss an issue.

To Socialist Party members - and all readers - we also ask that you consider your weekly plans for selling the paper.

We have expanded the Socialist to 20 pages for this special demo issue and have had extra pages to build the campaign for a 24-hour general strike over the last few issues. That has borne large financial cost. Please think about what you can do to ensure more workers, young people and all suffering the brutal impact of the cuts, have access to the ideas in the Socialist.

20-20-20

We are asking readers to aim and make plans to sell at least 20 copies of this 20 October 20-page special. Everywhere there are people who are angry about austerity – if you always have copies in your bag you can provide those people with some ideas about how to channel that anger and join the fightback.

The TUC demo, the transport to the demo and the follow-up meetings will bring us into contact with many thousands. Let us know how you get on!



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Academies: march to defend education on 20 October

Martin Powell-Davies
NUT national executive (personal capacity)

It's rumoured that education minister Michael Gove has 'war charts' on the walls of his office plotting the onward march of academy schools.

If true, then Gove must already feel able to label some parts of the country as 'conquered territory'. Around half of state-funded secondary schools have now broken from their elected local authorities to become privatised academies.

In areas like Bromley, Bexley, Swindon and Darlington, virtually all secondary schools are now academies. While far fewer primary schools have academised, their future will also be in doubt once a local authority decides it can't 'afford' to run education if it has lost most of its secondaries.

Some schools have chosen to become academies, bribed by dubious promises of better funding and the chance to use their semi-independent status to boost their position in the local pecking order of schools.

No improvement

Others have been forced to become academies for failing to meet the harsh exam targets imposed by Gove. Yet there is no evidence that academies perform any better than community schools. Is that any surprise? Since when did privatisation improve public services?

Where some academies have improved results, they have done so by using their control over admissions and exclusions to 'improve' their intake. Who will be left to look after the pupils with the greatest needs in Gove's free-for-all education marketplace?

Of course, like in the NHS, privatisation helps those who help themselves. Academies are being mopped up by growing 'chains' of education businesses. They can't legally make a profit out of school budgets (yet!), but there are already plenty of lucrative contracts and management salaries to be secured.

While many academy chains have adopted national pay and conditions, some already impose longer working hours. But if Gove succeeds with his plans to atomise national conditions, many academies will then feel free to do as they please.

Free schools

Gove also wants to set up thousands of privatised 'free schools' too. The Tories' vision is a future without elected councils running



photo the Socialist

services like schools and housing. Unfortunately, too many Labour councils seem to be following the same path.

It's going to be up to the trade union movement and local communities to defend education from cuts and privatisation. That will certainly need determined strike action but requires a political battle too - to elect local councillors who are prepared to fight for public services.

See electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk

SOLIDARITY WITH MINERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Socialist is proud to print this appeal (dated 12 October) from the Rustenburg Joint Strike Coordinating Committee, formed by South African mineworkers who are fighting an heroic battle for decent wages and rights. Please give solidarity and your support.

See the National Shop Stewards Network website for more on the campaign and how you can help these workers in the world's most unequal society: www.shopstewards.net

“We write to appeal to you to support our strike for a decent living wage. The strike that started at Lonmin's platinum mines in Marikana, where on 16 August, 34 workers were shot dead by police, is continuing across South Africa's mines.

We fight for at least R12,500 (about £940 - Eds) basic monthly salary for all workers on the mines, equal pay for equal work - to end subcontracting, for a safe working environment, to have decent houses, with electricity and water, decent education for our children - a better life that will only be won through struggle.

We have been abandoned by our union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) which has been more interested in its investment company and its alliance with the ruling party (the African National Congress) which stands for the interests of the bosses as we can see when they send police and soldiers to shoot and arrest us.

Therefore we have formed strike committees in each mine, and also a Rustenburg-wide Joint Strike Coordinating Committee. We are leading the strike in the various platinum and chrome mines in Rustenburg, and are now trying to link up with other workers on strike by forming a national strike committee.

There are over 100,000 mine workers on strike. We believe the only way our murdered comrades can get some form of justice is through us winning these battles. We are up against some of the most powerful corporations in the world, backed to the hilt by our government, and unfortunately also supported by our trade union leaders.

The only way our strikes can be successful is if we unite all workers, now largely striking in isolation from one another, into a coordinated struggle.

We are working hard on linking the various strikes, and will hold a first national strike committee meeting this weekend, which will amongst other things organise a joint march to

the government buildings in Pretoria to protest against the shooting of workers, the effective state of emergency the government has imposed, and to demand a decent basic salary of R12,500 for all, as well as development for our scandalously poverty-stricken communities.

We appeal to workers across the world, to shop stewards, trade unions and any other working class organisation to support us.

As we march on the South African government on 3 November (provisional date), we appeal for international solidarity protests, pickets or marches, protest statements and solidarity messages. The international solidarity already received has encouraged workers tremendously!

We are in dire need of resources to finance our organising work. We are collecting contributions from the workers on strike, but this is yielding limited results, especially given that we have now been on strike for several weeks without pay. Any donations for the struggle are welcome. Deposits can be made into the account we have set up.”

Rustenburg Joint Strike Coordinating Committee

Bank: Standard Bank, South Africa

Account: Workers Defence Fund

Account Number: 300495986

Branch: East Gate, Branch Code: 018 505

Swift Code: SBZAJJ

Hoshoko Letshoba, leader of the strike committee at Royal Bafokeng Platinum, Rustenburg, will be a speaker at Socialism 2012, see p9-12.

The Democratic Socialist Movement, the South African sister party of the Socialist Party, is playing a leading role in the strike committee.

SHOW YOUR SOLIDARITY AT THE SOCIALISM 2012 RALLY ON 3 NOVEMBER WHEN HOSHOKO IS A KEY SPEAKER.



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!