

photo Paul Mattsson

A healthworker

“We will fight, tooth and nail, to save our hospital services,” is the message the people of North Kirklees will be sending the bosses of the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust on 27 October.

The Trust claims it wants to remove full consultant-led A&E and maternity services from Dewsbury hospital for ‘clinical reasons’ to improve patient care. This just doesn’t wash. We know there is a huge financial deficit and management is under pressure to balance the books in order to achieve the foundation trust

status demanded by the government’s new Health and Social Care Act.

Meanwhile the consortium responsible for the Private Finance Initiative contract in the Trust is taking in the region of £40 million a year and keeping its profits in a tax haven, a Guernsey account. Business consultants Ernst and Young have been paid £2.5 million since December by the Trust, to advise on the cutting of admin staff’s wages to save money. It doesn’t take a mathematician to work out that something doesn’t add up!

The Save Local Hospital Services campaign is calling on the Trust to spend this money to maintain full services as they are. We have held a series of public meetings attended by hundreds of people across the area. The public

response at these and the petitions signed by thousands give a taste of the anger people feel - our health services are being jeopardised for the sake of profits for a private consortium.

We expect a determined crowd to join our demonstration this Saturday. We will be joined by staff from the trust, who have just voted by 88% to take strike action in defence of their wages and conditions.

The campaign has united staff, service users and communities across North Kirklees in a common goal... To save our NHS.

The demonstration starts on 27 October, 12 noon at Dewsbury Hospital car park and will march to a rally outside Dewsbury town hall at 12.45pm.

TUC MARCH SUPPORTS GENERAL STRIKE CALL



photo Senan

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party deputy general secretary

“The TUC has agreed to consult on the practicalities of a general strike. Let’s start right here - if you are in favour of a general strike raise your hands” shouted Len McCluskey, general secretary of Britain’s biggest union Unite. The massive crowd assembled in Hyde Park on 20 October roared its approval and raised its hands en masse.

The capitalist media has completely downplayed the TUC demonstration, with even those that reported it largely failing to mention that the leaders of three major trade unions called for general strike action.

However, no attempts by the press to ignore the demonstration will alter the fact that it represented the opening of a new and more determined phase of the struggle against austerity.

Over 150,000 marched in London, plus 10,000 in both Glasgow and Belfast. This was the second massive trade union-organised march against austerity since the Con-Dems came to power. The first, on 26 March 2011, was possibly the biggest specifically trade union-led demonstration ever to take place, with even the Tory home secretary, Teresa May, estimating it at half a million.

This year’s demonstration, while impressive was not as large, and was made up in the main of active trade unionists. It would, however, be completely wrong to interpret the smaller size as reflecting lessening anger at government policies. On the contrary, the experience of another 20 months of vicious cuts has driven home the need to defeat the government.

Continued on page 4

the Socialist

The paper of the Socialist Party. Issue 739.

The Socialist, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Published by Socialist Publications, printed by Sharman and Company Ltd. ISSN 1366-9621

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Standing for the 99%!

Bring back EMA

Tom Baldwin

TUSC mayoral candidate

I am standing for mayor to give a voice to the many young people who are having their futures stolen from them. When campaigning at sixth forms and colleges two issues in particular are always raised.

One is the trebling of university fees to £9,000 a year by the Con-Dem government. When I went to university, £1,000 a year fees had been introduced by New Labour which they later tripled to £3,000. This attack on the principle of free education paved the way for the skyrocketing fees students now face.

The other is the removal of the means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16-19 year old further education students. Even the government's own social mobility 'tsar', Labour's Alan Milburn, has said that scrapping EMA was a "very bad mistake".

With high bus fares in Bristol, many students found that this small subsidy was vital for getting to college. Some have worried about whether they can finish their course.

These young people are angry and political. Many took part in the 2010 student demonstrations. But they don't feel they have a voice,

and as far as the main parties go they're right! Ed Miliband has made it very clear that Labour will follow the same austerity agenda as the Tories and Lib Dems.

That's why I am standing for Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts in the election for Bristol mayor.

Austerity is hurting me and all the people I meet, from the young missing out on the best start in life, to the old who face care homes being closed. We're standing to provide an alternative and say we won't pay for a crisis we didn't cause. A top priority as mayor would be to implement a local replacement for the EMA. Other local authorities have done it so why should students in Bristol miss out?



TUSC election rallies

Manchester:

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

Renationalise energy

We have seen clearly the total failure of energy market deregulation, with another round of price increases. British Gas has jacked up prices by 6%. Npower has also put up gas prices by 8.8% and electricity by 9.1%.

This reveals the big lie told by Thatcher when privatisation took place, that competition would lower prices. What has actually emerged is even admitted by capitalist commentators to be a cartel. David Cameron responded to the price hikes by announcing plans to force companies to give customers the lowest tariff. Disgracefully, Labour shadow energy minister Caroline Flint attacked these proposals – because they'd 'damage the industry'.

I am standing in the Manchester Central parliamentary byelection for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. I call for the renationalisation of all utility companies and the provision of affordable energy to all. No one should have to make the awful choice of whether to have heat for their homes or put food on the table. Yet under both the Tories and New Labour plans this is exactly what would continue.

The New Labour candidate in Manchester, Lucy Powell, is yet another Blairite who puts the interests of big



Alex on the 20 October demo
photo Senan

business first.

The TUSC campaign is focused on workplaces and communities across the constituency. We will be the voice of the real opposition to this vicious Tory-led government and show that working class people do not have to put up with the politics of 'lesser evilism' by voting for New Labour.

Alex Davidson
Manchester Central TUSC candidate



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an electoral alliance that unites fighting trade union leaders such as RMT transport union leader Bob Crow and others, with socialists such as the Socialist Party.

Find out more at www.tusc.org.uk

Hull councillors speak out against cuts

Phil Culshaw

Unison steward (personal capacity)

Over 300 angry Hull city council workers rallied outside the Guildhall to oppose the latest round of cuts in jobs and services. This followed the announcement of private sector job cuts at Seven Seas and McCain Foods.

The protest was called by council trade unions with speakers from Unison, GMB and the NUT teachers' union.

Significantly, four Labour councillors also spoke from the platform pledging their solidarity with the campaign, with other Labour councillors in the crowd.

Councillor Gary Wareing explained that the Con-Dem government was "trying to put the crisis of

the capitalist system on the backs of the workers." He reminded his colleagues of the origins of the Labour Party, founded by the trade unions to provide political representation for the working class. "We need a real alternative; a Labour govern-

'If you're not prepared to stand with the 99% then lets have politicians that are!'

ment committed to repeal the anti-trade union laws, one prepared to stand up for working people the way this present government stands up for big business!"

Mick Whale of the NUT explained that the Con-Dems were demand-

ing cuts of £100 million in Hull over the next two years, cutting a third from the budget compared to 2010.

That would mean a third less spent on kids from the poorest areas and a third less spent on social services for the elderly.

"We're not just defending what we've got, we're fighting for a future, to be able to build homes and create apprenticeships."

And where would the money come from? Mick pointed to the £120 billion of tax avoided and evaded by the rich, and the £800 billion hoarded by big business.

Mick received one of the loudest cheers when he called to "those Hull councillors who are wavering, and the Labour leaders nationally, if you're not prepared to stand with the 99% then move out the way, let's have politicians that are!"

Axe the Con-Dems' ban on building new LEA schools

Jane Nellist

Coventry NUT member

Two new primary schools planned for Coventry have been shelved because, under the Con-Dems' 2011 education act, all new schools have to be 'academies' or 'free schools' (unless no sponsors take up the offer).

Funding for these schools had apparently been secured from a major house-building project.

Coventry, as in other major cit-

ies, is experiencing a surge in the numbers of young children. But school places are currently not as stretched in the west – where these schools would have been built – as in the east of the city, where there are more working class homes.

A consultation process is underway to rapidly expand already existing schools.

Parents have had to go through an appeal process to try and get their children into schools close by their homes and not have to travel lengthy distances. There is no support for

these families with travel costs.

The Con-Dems' drive to further the privatisation of schools is creating an absolute nightmare for school planning. Democratically elected local councils will be unable to plan school places across cities when they are unable to control the number of free schools and academies who can set their own admissions.

We have to oppose all privatisation and need councillors that stand for a democratically planned, well-funded education system that meets the needs of our children.

Privatisation opponents push out Cornwall council leader

A local government worker
Cornwall

On 16 October, the Tory leader of Cornwall council, Alec Robertson, lost a vote of confidence by 63 to 49. The vote took place after the cabinet went against the full council by going ahead with a "JV" (joint venture – ie privatisation) called the "Strategic Partnership for Shared Services".

This privatisation would affect key services and has been termed a £300 million sell-off. A petition signed by 5,000 people forced the debate in the council chamber, which is run by a Tory-Independent coalition, with Lib Dems in opposition.

Local and national media have reported that privatisation plans are now scrapped, and that secondly, the Lib Dems are the saviours of key services.

In reality, the cabinet decision to privatise service delivery still remains. A council debate is due on 23 October, as we go to press. The new Tory council leader, Jim Currie – originally a sceptic of "JV" – has

said that privatisation has not been wiped from the agenda.

However, one company involved in the privatisation plan has now pulled out. A long-term decision on the scheme might be delayed until after council elections in May.

The glory-seeking from Lib Dems on the matter is a bit rich. The petition against privatisation, which then forced the no confidence vote, was headed by an Independent councillor.

The protests and public awareness leg-work was carried out by Cornwall Anti-Cuts Alliance, a broad group encompassing trade unions, students, socialists and community campaigners.

Meanwhile, the local Lib Dem group leader openly hails 'other' public-private partnerships as a success, while nationally the party is ploughing ahead with privatisation plans in everything from the NHS to primary and secondary education.

This again shows that we need anti-cuts, anti-privatisation election candidates that put public services before private profit.

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

Birmingham: cuts put children at risk

Safina Bi and Tony Leigh
Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham's social services are in the spotlight once again. Ofsted has slammed Birmingham City Council, rating the quality of their care of vulnerable children as 'inadequate'.

Following an unannounced visit last month it concluded that the council's children's services department "is not doing what is required to keep children and young people safe".

There are around 30,000 referrals to Birmingham Social Services each year. At least 20 children across the city have died through abuse and neglect since April 2005.

The council was judged to be inadequate at safeguarding children in 2008, seven months after seven year old Khayra Ishaq starved to death at her home in Handsworth.

Child poverty

But the latest Ofsted report reveals a continuing lack of immediate action by social workers and far too few statutory visits. It stated that the inspection "found that too many children and young people are left for too long without a robust assessment, leaving some children at risk of harm".

Birmingham has some of the highest levels of poverty in the country. 35 out of the 40 wards in the city have levels of child poverty above the national average. In the seven poorest wards the percentage of children living in poverty ranges from 52.5% to 61.9%.

Between 2004 and 2012 the city council was controlled by a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition which presided over cuts and privatisation.

This year Labour regained control



photo the Socialist

and some workers expected things to change. However, as in other parts of the country, Labour has willingly wielded the Tories' axe and is cutting or destroying vital public services.

Impact of the cuts

The council has stated that "Despite savings having to be made, the council's number one priority is still to provide the essential services that Birmingham people want and need most."

But as a result of Labour's cuts-budget £22 million is being cut from the Children's and Young People's services budget for 2012/13 leaving social workers with even fewer re-

sources to effectively deal with an increasing number of at-risk children. This will only get worse given the council's announcement on 23 October that it will be making a devastating £600 million of cuts by 2017.

According to a recent study one council reported a 70% increase in referrals to children's social care in 18 months, alongside a 50% rise in child protection cases.

It is plainly obvious that cuts to our public services are leaving the most vulnerable people in society at greater risk of abuse or worse. It is vital that the working class stands up for them and fights all cuts - regardless of which party is making them.

Construction blacklisting - the tip of the iceberg

Rob Williams
National Shop Stewards Network chair

The big construction companies could be facing thousands of financial claims as a legal battle has been launched by blacklisted workers. In 2009, a blacklist was uncovered containing the names of over 3,000 workers, barred from the industry for the 'crime' of being trade unionists, campaigning for their members' rights and safety at work.

This was discovered when the legal regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) raided the office of the shadowy Consulting Association. This organisation gave information to the employers for a fee. Over 40 construction companies were paying £3,000 a year to access names on the list and ruin workers' lives.

Now it appears that this number of blacklisted workers could be the

tip of the iceberg. Incredibly, the ICO's investigations manager, David Clancy, told the Commons Scottish Affairs Committee this week that

Blacklisting has been a conscious attempt by the bosses to smash trade union organisation

only names from the construction industry were seized from the database in 2009.

They estimate that the remainder, from other sectors of industry could comprise 90-95% of the total! Anyone who thinks they might be on the list should contact the ICO and unions like Unite, Ucat and the GMB.

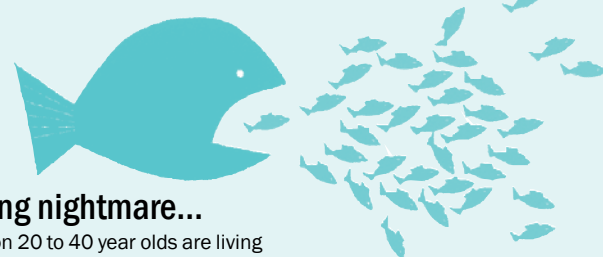
Blacklisting has been a conscious

attempt by the bosses to smash trade union organisation throughout industry, particularly in the construction sector. It's no accident that these militant union activists have been attacked at the same time as the use of sub-contracting and other attacks have increased throughout the industry.

However, the Sparks' struggle against the Besna, which defeated the employers' plans to cut wages of electricians, plumbers and pipe fitters, shows that workers can fight and win. The sacking of the 28 Crossrail workers at Westbourne Park shows that blacklisting and victimisation are still alive and well.

That's why we can't afford to let up in this battle. There are daily protests outside the Westbourne Park site Monday to Friday, 7am-12pm. Also keep an eye out for the flash-mob protests that are happening outside Crossrail sites throughout London on a weekly basis.

Them...



Housing nightmare...

1.6 million 20 to 40 year olds are living with their parents because they can't afford their own home. 41% of parents believe their children will never be able to get on the housing ladder. And it's not like renting is an affordable alternative either. With rocketing

can we pay the £160 upgrade fee? That's exactly what chancellor George Osborne, or an aide of his at least, did on a Virgin train recently. Too good to mix with the plebs George? If you could see to it that all train carriages are comfortable, spacious and not overcrowded and outrageously expensive, there wouldn't be a problem.

1.6m

20 to 40 year olds living with their parents

rents, the cut to the small amount of help available to the low paid through council tax benefit will have a huge effect.

For many it will simply be impossible to pay. The House of Lords seem to have recognised this and is challenging the plans. Councils were already budgeting for half of low-paid residents to refuse to pay the increased amount. Former work and pensions minister Baroness Hollis even warned of a "poll tax mark two"!

...but not for MPs

Remember when the rules on MPs' expenses were tightened up? They were all very sorry and were never going to abuse their positions again...or so they said. But 27 MPs have been caught renting out homes they own in London and claiming rent on another property - pocketing the profits. Four are even renting from other MPs! This is all perfectly allowed through a 'loophole' in the expenses rules. No such loopholes for us!

First class snobbery

How many of us have chanced our luck on a busy train and sat in first class with a standard ticket? Probably quite a few. But how many of us have, when caught, insisted that we can't possibly move to standard class but neither

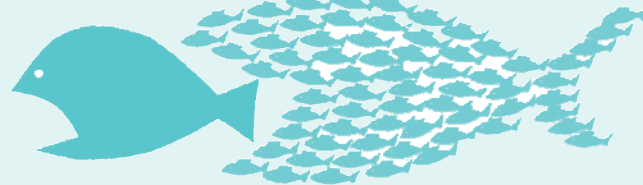
Not for sale?

The few people in Lincolnshire interested in the Police and Crime Commissioner election had been wondering how 'independent' candidate Mervyn Barrett had financed his campaign - thought to have cost up to £50,000. Barrett was being driven around in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes and had a full team of paid staff. It has now emerged that he has been bankrolled by a right-wing US think tank which champions privatisation of public services. Barrett's entire campaign staff resigned after the revelations. He issued a statement assuring us all: "I am not for sale, I never have been for sale and I never will be for sale." Hmmm.

Working poor

Yet again a record number of people are using food banks. The Trussell Trust, the biggest food bank organisation in Britain, fed 110,000 people in the last six months - almost as many as in the year previous to that. What's more, far from being for the unemployed alone, an increasing number of working people are turning to food banks. That's hardly surprising given the impact of low pay. A recent study showed that one in five people working in London is being paid 'poverty wages'. The charity Trust for London says that the government could save £1 billion from extra taxes and reduced welfare benefits if the living wage was enforced in London. Anyone would think government decisions are based on saving money for big business rather than what's best for their 'precious' public purse.

...& Us



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



#Oct20

Unite the Union

Unite's Len McCluskey fires up the #Oct20 crowd - calls for show of hands for general strike - carried unanimously

PCS union

"I'm only ten and I know the government is rubbish," reads a young girl's banner, decorated in flowers and hearts. #oct20

NSSN

Serwotka opens by praising the wildcat action taken by PCS members in Coventry tax office on Thursday! #Oct20

Martin Powell-Davies

#Oct20 RMT UNITE PCS leaders call for united strike action - now let's set the days when we all strike together!

Nancy Taaffe

#Oct20 the next step is to co-ordinate the different unions to strike on their specific issues on the same day for #24hrgeneralstrike



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk • Phone 020 8988 8777 • Text 07761 818206

After TUC march Campaign for a 24-hour general strike

Hannah Sell

“Eighteen months ago we came to this park for another fantastic demonstration,” we were reminded by Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS, when he spoke on the 20 October demo’s TUC stage. “Today we are here again, but we must be honest, we are in a worse place than we were a year and a half ago. We’ve had more cuts, more pay freezes, more privatisation. And we have to ask what are we going to do about it?”

At the start of 2011 many still hoped the unfolding capitalist economic crisis would be a temporary phenomenon. But, as Mark pointed out, it has worsened. Even the vast spectacle and massive expenditure of the Olympics was only able to tip the economy into a temporary 0.6% growth.

The cuts, meanwhile, are exacerbating the economic catastrophe. With only around 20% of the government’s planned cuts implemented so far, four new food banks are opening a week in response to spiralling poverty. Since 2009 average wages have fallen by over £2,000 a year in real terms.

The National Housing Federation has reported a doubling, to one million, of the number of working households forced to rely on housing benefit to pay their extortionate rents. Unrelenting, the Tories threaten further vicious cuts in housing benefit and the utter devastation of the welfare state if they are not stopped.

In response Mark Serwotka, along with Bob Crow, general secretary of the RMT transport union, and Len McCluskey, called for coordinated strike action across private and public sectors; “a 24-hour general strike”, as Bob Crow put it.

Campaigning

The Socialist Party, with the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), spent the preceding months, campaigning for a 24-hour general strike as the next step in the struggle against austerity, and received a fantastic response on the demo. Many of the workers who marched clearly came with an understanding that this time the demonstration had to be a springboard to further action - not merely a ‘parade’.

The experience of the magnificent 30 November 2011 public sector strike in defence of pensions has taught trade unionists many lessons. Firstly, coordinated action is effective and gives the working class confidence.

Secondly, it is not sufficient for the public sector to strike alone and that the next step should be to call out the private sector as well. Thirdly, trade unionists cannot simply rely on their leaders to organise the action that is needed.

There is no doubt that the betrayal of the pensions struggle by the right-wing trade union leaders has had profound effects on the outlook of public sector workers. By breaking the alliance of striking unions immediately after the 30 November pension strike, the leadership of Unison and the TUC left many workers doubting the possibility of a serious struggle in defence of their pay and living conditions.

As a result workers were not con-



Part of the London demo photo Claire Job

fident that the 20 October demo would be the launch-pad for an escalation of the battle against the Con-Dems. On the other side, many of those who attended understand that they have to actively campaign to demand their unions led a serious struggle.

It was this pressure from below, vocalised via the NSSN lobby of the TUC in September, which forced the TUC congress to overwhelmingly support the POA prison officer union’s ‘Motion 5’ committing them to “discuss the practicalities of a general strike”.

Following the call from national trade union leaders for a general strike, the confidence of those leaving Saturday’s demo had visibly increased. As Southern Europe prepares for its first ever cross-country general strike on 14 November the pressure for Britain’s trade union movement to take similar action will increase.

Two days before the 20 October demo, the general council agreed to consult its constituent unions to ask for their views on a general strike. However, as Brendan Barber, outgoing TUC general secretary, made clear, the leadership of the TUC will do all it can to resist calling a general strike.

Over the coming weeks we have to step up the pressure across the whole trade union movement to demand that the TUC names the day for such a strike. The NSSN general strike motion needs to be passed at

every trade union branch to build irresistible pressure.

Those unions that have declared they want a general strike, or further coordinated action, need to have concrete discussions on how they can work together to strike on the same day. Given the timetable of their individual disputes, and the decision by the teaching unions not to take strike action this term, it is likely that such coordinated action will be early in the New Year.

National Shop Stewards
Network website:
www.shopstewards.net

Just as the 30 June coordinated public sector action last year acted as a lever to force the calling of the 30 November strike, such action would enormously add to the pressure for more unions to join the action.

At the same time we have to answer those who say that a general strike is impossible because of Britain’s repressive anti-trade union laws, not repealed by New Labour, and now being added to by the Con-Dems. Labour’s Ed Miliband, unsurprisingly, has made no more commitment to repeal additional anti-trade union laws - never mind all of them - than he has to reversing the cuts that are laying waste to Britain’s public services.

No party can claim to represent working class people while continuing to support laws which seriously hamper the ability of workers to defend their interests from the attacks of the employers.

The anti-union laws are a real obstacle to effective struggle, raising the danger that unions have their accumulated funds, paid by their members over decades, sequestered. The Socialist Party does not take this lightly.

However, the working class is facing the worst attack on its living conditions and rights to organise in 80 years and cannot allow the anti-trade union laws to justify avoiding a serious struggle.

And, in reality, the ability of the government and employers to use the anti-union laws depends on the concrete balance of forces.

When prison officers, who have no legal right to strike, organised action on 10 May this year, the government did not dare to use the law against the POA, as they knew it would escalate the struggle. The same is true of the construction strikes in 2009.

If the TUC was to name the day for a general strike, and then make it clear to the government that if any unions or workers were threatened for participating in the strike the TUC would immediately call another 24-hour general strike, the anti-trade union laws could be pushed aside, losing their power to hobble

the trade union movement.

Nonetheless, a general strike should be called with the maximum possible legal protection for the workers who participate in it. KD Ewing and John Hendy QC have written a pamphlet arguing that the Human Rights Act and the European Court of Human Rights could provide the legal basis for taking protest strike action.

We are in favour of using any means to increase the protection for striking workers, including the European courts.

However, even if the European Court of Human Rights was to rule in favour of striking workers in Britain, which is by no means guaranteed as Ewing and Hendy’s pamphlet makes clear, this would be some years down the line, after the legal battle had been fought in the UK courts.

In the meantime, workers could face victimisation in their workplace if the employers thought they could get away with it.

However, it is possible to go a long way towards a general strike even within the straitjacket of the anti-union laws. If the TUC was to name the day, all unions with live disputes could coordinate their ballots in order to be able to strike on the same day.

Each individual union would be striking over their own issues - whether pensions, pay, privatisation, job losses, all of these or other



Workers were looking for a clear lead towards strike action photo Paul Mattsson



The NSSN platform at Speakers' Corner - campaigning for a general strike photo Senan

issues – at the same time collectively it would be a general strike against austerity.

This would create a powerful core to a general strike, and there is no question that, once called, other workers would want to take part. A Guardian online poll in September showed 80% of the population would support a general strike against austerity.

We should aim to turn this support into participation. Their protection would come primarily from the power of the strike.

Preparation

We want a 24-hour general strike as soon as possible, but it must not be ill-prepared. After the day is named, in the build-up to the strike, a massive propaganda campaign from the trade union movement would be essential. This would include mass meetings in every workplace and community to build support for the strike.

Workers who are not yet trade union members, alongside small business people, students, pensioners and the unemployed, could all be drawn into action. A general strike more in the tradition of the Indian and Sri Lankan 'hartal' - where the whole of society stops - would be possible.

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



Disability rights campaigners photo Paul Mattsson

strike would electrify the country – giving enormous confidence to the working class.

If the leadership of the trade union movement stands firm, making it clear that they would call a further 24 or 48-hour general strike if the government did not retreat, even a one-day strike would terrify the government and the capitalists.

The prospect would be raised of the government being forced to call, and then lose, a general election.

Miliband again made it clear on Saturday that a Labour government would not reverse the cuts, and was widely booed as a result.

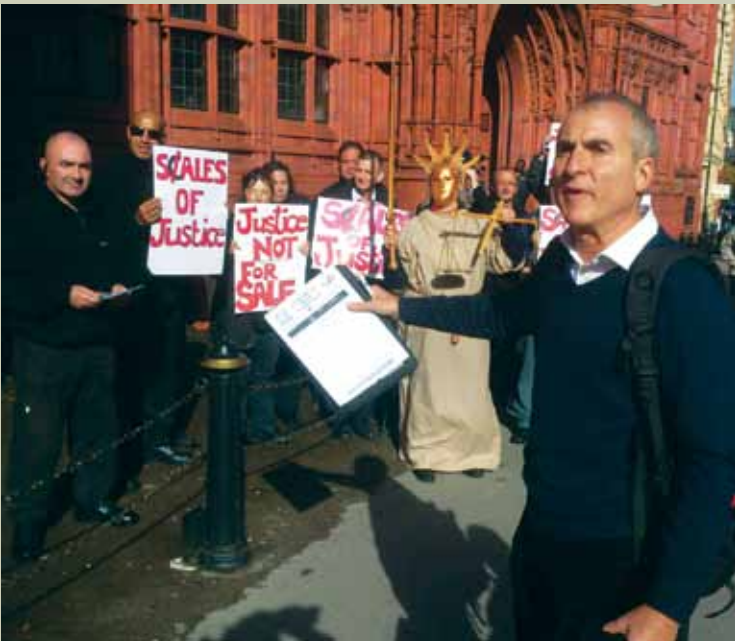
Even with a cuts-making Labour government, the working class

would be in a far stronger position if the Con-Dems were defeated by a mass movement.

But the need to turn that anger at Labour into a mass political voice for the working class is also an increasingly urgent task.

For videos of the demo and speeches see www.socialistparty.org.uk. For reports from Glasgow see www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk and Belfast: www.socialistpartyni.net

In brief



Protesting outside Birmingham magistrates court photo Dave Griffiths

Court protest

On 19 October 35 court workers joined a lunchtime protest outside Birmingham magistrates court against government plans to privatise a large chunk of the criminal justice system.

Members of the PCS trade union warned that privatising the collection and enforcement of court fines would unleash the likes of G4S and private bailiffs - known for adding extra charges - onto the public, be it criminal or motoring fines.

"We've seen what private firms have done to the railways, in the NHS with failing PFIs bankrupting NHS trusts and what G4S did in the Olympics."

"We don't want profits made from justice, profits that will be taken from both the public and Court staff", PCS Ministry of Justice group president Kevin Greenway told the protest.

The PCS is balloting now on industrial action.

The NUT has served notice that members at those schools will strike for one day on 25 October, two days on 6 and 7 November and three days the week after that.

Waltham Forest schools

16 schools in the North East London borough of Waltham Forest could become academies and teachers at Connaught School in Leyton took two days' strike action on 16 and 24 October.

NUT members had voted unanimously for action to defend their community school from becoming a forced academy. The head teacher is rushing ahead, pushing for a decision by the governors on 24 October, despite opposition from staff and parents.

Fighting school by school alone cannot beat back this attack. Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union has raised the call for a ballot of parents across Waltham Forest, and circulated a draft resolution for NUT members to consider, raising the idea of borough-wide action.

A packed meeting of 200 parents, students, former students and staff at George Mitchell school in Waltham Forest met for a celebration of the school last week. There is a likelihood that the community school could be forced to become an academy and the staff are determined to build up a campaign in advance.

Lecturers strike

Lecturers' union UCU members were on strike at the University of East London on 18 October. After making hundreds of UEL staff redundant, management is trying to force lecturers to work longer hours and teach more students. Already the UEL student-staff ratio is one of the highest in Britain. And the university charges the maximum fees.

This was the start of a series of one-day strikes.

Crossrail

The protests against the victimisation of trade union and health and safety reps on the Crossrail site in London are continuing every day. 28 workers have been sacked from the project by contractors. Unite is fighting for workers to be employed directly rather than 'self-employed' allowing employers to avoid adhering to national agreements on the workforce's conditions.

Please protest to the employers at helpdesk@crossrail.co.uk For more information see the National Shop Stewards Network website: www.shopstewards.net

Teachers fight back

National Union of Teachers (NUT) members are taking action short of strike action over excessive workloads. Victories are being won at school level and some of the worst workload practices knocked back. But if action short of strike action doesn't persuade schools to think again, then the NUT has made clear that school strike requests are likely to be supported - and that strikes will be financially sustained by the union.

A victory over the withdrawal of a threatened 'mock inspection' was won in a Tower Hamlets school after notice was given - without needing to strike.

NUT and NASUWT members at Deptford Green School in Lewisham have voted overwhelmingly to strike if their head teacher refuses to withdraw plans that could mean eight or more classroom observations a year. Staff in Highcrest Academy in Buckinghamshire and Stratford Academy in Newham have also voted to strike in response to threats to dock their pay if they stick to the union action guidelines.

Workers confront brutal South African capitalism

Democratic Socialist Movement members are playing a decisive role in the mineworkers' dispute, assisting and leading the Coordinating Strike Committees and posing a socialist alternative to the corruption and betrayal of the present ANC and NUM leaderships, writes Wales Socialist Party member Alec Thraves, who has just returned from South Africa.

On 16 August the premeditated slaughter of 34 striking Lonmin miners in Marikana by the South African police shocked the world. It revealed that, despite the ending of apartheid and the historic election of the African National Congress (ANC) government in 1994, a ruthless and brutal regime of capitalism still exists in South Africa.

The Marikana massacre has shaken the foundations of the whole of South African society. It has had an irreversible impact on the ANC ruling government party. A big question mark has also been placed over the role played by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and its largest affiliate the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Among the working class in South Africa social discontent and demands for fundamental change are growing. So too is a rejection of the corrupt political and trade union leaders. These are highlighted - not just by the unofficial miners' strike - but by strikes of hundreds of thousands of other workers across all sectors of industry.

The demand of the striking miners for a R12,500 (£900) a month minimum wage is now the rallying call for low-paid workers across the country.

The Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International, as is the England and Wales Socialist Party) is playing a decisive role in the mineworkers' dispute, assisting and leading the unofficial Coordinating Strike Committees and posing a socialist alternative to the corruption, greed and betrayal of the present ANC and NUM leaderships.

Like many activists, most of the Lonmin workers have little confidence in South African President Jacob Zuma's 'official inquiry' into the massacre. Many of those workers have already answered the lies poured out by the capitalist media in South Africa and across the globe.

Political 'fat cats'

As well as returning the country back to the dark days of apartheid repression, the disgusting flaunting of wealth and privilege by ANC leaders is exposed in the media every day.

The state-financed, R200-million upgrade of President Zuma's massive pri-

The Marikana massacre

"The precipitating event in the Lonmin strike was management's unilateral decision to grant [wage] increases to selected workers. In spite of the fact that this broke an existing two-year agreement signed by the NUM, set to expire in June 2013.

"The NUM's failure to react meant it was once again colluding with management, so workers took matters into their own hands forming an independent rank-and-file committee. On 9 August the Lonmin strike committee presented their demand for a R12,500 a month minimum wage. The NUM refused to support them, management refused to negotiate, so the miners shut the pit down.

"On Saturday morning NUM officials tried to force the miners back to work so the strike committee sent delegates to the NUM office (which is unbelievably next to the police station in the Lonmin mine 'informal settlement' (squatter camp). As they approached the office they were shot at, killing two members of the strike committee. Management reacted in their normal manner by sending in private security and the police to stop the strike by force resulting in the death of four more workers, two private security guards and two policemen.

"The striking mineworkers concluded that for their own safety it was best to move off the mine to a small mountain to continue their protest. The workers' demand was simple: management should meet with them and respond to their demands. What happened next was premeditated murder and could have only happened with clearance at the highest level of government, police and the employers. It was a decision to crush the strike and drown it in the blood of the strikers.

"The police fenced off the mountain leaving just a five-metre gap in the barbed wire. 3,000 armed police, with helicopter back-up went on the attack from the air and on all sides. Starting from the back of the crowd, they shot and forced the strikers to run towards the five-metre gap. As they tried to get out they were shot down by the waiting police so they turned around and ran back, hiding under trees and rocks.

"That's where the majority of strikers were killed, with nowhere to run. Some were killed after raising their hands in the air while others were lying injured and then finished off. There were only survivors among the injured because police thought they were dead and threw their bodies on a heap. 34 strikers were killed, 79 injured and 234 arrested."

This is how a DSM activist and one of the leaders of the Strike Coordinating Committee - along with Weizmann Hamilton, a DSM organiser from Johannesburg - explained what really happened on 16 August, from out of the mouths of the mineworkers who were present, at a DSM meeting in Flagstaff, in the Eastern Cape.

To add insult to injury, the National Prosecuting Authority, revealing the cold callousness of the state, initially attempted to press murder charges against the arrested miners for the death of their own comrades, under the notorious Doctrine of Common Purpose used by the apartheid regime. Marikana is the brutal reality of capitalism in South Africa!

The ANC government presided over this massacre. A corrupt, degenerate government of big business, it is now finished in the eyes of big numbers of the working class.



Lonmin platinum miners celebrate a 22% pay rise after a six-week long bitter strike

vate residential complex in his home village is dominating the national press. It reportedly has underground bunkers, a helipad, luxury furnishings and two soccer pitches for his security guards to have a kick about!

With the five-yearly ANC national conference due to take place in December, Zuma is attempting to stand for a second five-year term as president of the ANC which automatically means remaining as state president as well.

His main rival, Kgalema Motlanthe, the deputy president of the ANC, has no real ideological differences with Zuma - but like all the warring factions their main objectives are power and all the wealth and perks that go with it. Whatever faction gains power and whoever becomes president in December it will just mean a new corrupt management running a rotten ANC house of privilege, with the South African working class picking up the tab!

It's likely that expelled ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema's political career is coming to a close following charges of money laundering. Malema opportunistically tried to gain favour among striking miners by supporting their strike and calling for the nationalisation of the mining industry.

The demand for nationalisation understandably got an echo from a layer of the working class in South Africa but the feeling among striking activists is that Malema is intervening for his own narrow political interests. With houses and mansions worth millions, sports cars and designer clothes, Malema has moved a long way from his younger days as an ANC militant.

Any serious attempt to portray Malema as a champion of working class interests would be treated with laughter by those

activists in South Africa attempting to build a genuine socialist alternative. The term 'fat cats' could have been invented for the aspiring black bourgeois class of the ANC who arrogantly flaunt their wealth and size, much to the hatred of the struggling working class.

Corruption is endemic at the top of South African society, from the fat cat politicians and big corporation bosses to the media companies and trade union officials at all levels.

NUM betrayal

Is it any surprise then that the strike-breaking NUM is losing thousands of members when it collaborates with management and attacks its own members? And thanks to his latest increase, NUM general secretary, Baleni, now earns R105,000 a month salary but yelled for the Lonmin bosses, the police and army to put an end to the strike where workers were demanding just R12,500 a month!

The NUM is now blaming the spread of the unofficial strikes on the Lonmin bosses because they gave in to the strikers' demands! You really do have to pinch yourself sometimes when you consider the treacherous role of these trade union leaders.

Compare the capitulation of these cowardly leaders to the determination of the unofficial strike leaders who when told by the management of one shaft that their national agreement with the NUM didn't run out until June 2013 so they wouldn't negotiate, said: 'ok then, we will stay out and see you next June!'

Even Cosatu has had to recognise the damage its biggest affiliate is doing to its reputation, so after weeks of saying and doing nothing to support the miners it has now slapped the wrists of the

NUM leaders and is attempting to claw back some credibility as a trade union federation.

Nevertheless, in the eyes of the most militant and conscious workers, Cosatu has been exposed as ineffective at best and a collaborator of the bosses at worst. Recognising the weak and vacillating role of Cosatu, the unofficial coordinating strike committees look set to continue and expand their influence across all unions after this present dispute ends.

Horrendous conditions

The miners' strike is not just about wages. It is also a protest about the horrendous conditions that the working class in South Africa is facing under capitalism. The 'informal settlements' or squatter camps, or 'shack lands' or whatever term you want to give them, are a disgrace to a civilised society in the 21st century.

These 'informal settlements' exist in their thousands across South Africa, not just alongside mine shafts but in the urban areas of Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and other cities. Tin sheds, where in Britain we wouldn't put animals or gardening tools, let alone human beings!

In many of the settlements there is no electricity, no running water, no sanitation, no roads just dirt tracks - nothing, no life, no existence, just misery.

Social conditions such as these provide the breeding ground for alcoholism, drug addiction, violence and prostitution... but also for revolution, especially among the young! That's why DSM has branches in the mining squatter camps of Rustenburg, including Marikana, where several more young miners and sacked miners have now joined it.

The DSM has also recruited incredibly

mineworkers, trade unionists and the working class in general to join the DSM and assist the building of a socialist society. Dozens of trade unionists, youth and community campaigners have responded to Sebei's appeal and joined the DSM, including several young workers at the recent national coordinating strike committee meeting in Marikana.

The demand for a new mass workers' party is also enthusiastically greeted whenever it is raised and the DSM will be to the fore in establishing such an initiative.

The class struggle in South Africa is far sharper than in many countries across the world. Socialist consciousness and the receptiveness for a socialist alterna-

"The class struggle in South Africa is far sharper than in many countries across the world."

tive are far higher among this powerful, industrial working class.

The DSM is poised to take a huge step in building a socialist movement that can eradicate this brutal capitalist state and introduce a socialist society that can finally offer a future worth living for the poor and oppressed of South Africa.

●As well as encouraging trade unionists and union branches to donate to the miners' strike committee, the DSM is also in urgent need of funds. Make donations payable to Socialist Party and send to 'South Africa Appeal', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Online put 'South Africa Appeal' in the message box - www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate

Socialism 2012 Saturday rally

Hear a South African miners' leader speak

6.30pm Saturday 3 November
Friends Meeting House, Euston Road

Speakers include:

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

Tickets and full programme from
www.socialism2012.org.uk

The rally is part of a weekend of discussion and debate hosted by the Socialist Party

	£ target	£ received	October-December 2012			Deadline 4 January 2013		
Southern	1,200	310						
North West	1,200	295						
East Midlands	1,550	351						
West Midlands	2,100	390						
Eastern	1,200	207						
Yorkshire	2,900	500						
South West	1,400	233						
Wales	2,300	322						
Northern	600	55						
London	6,100	358						
South East	750	36						
England & Wales	3,700	596						
TOTAL	25,000	3,657						

Can Africa throw capitalism a lifeline?

Peluola Adewale

Democratic Socialist Movement,
(CWI in Nigeria)

“It is my firm belief that Africa represents the next global economic frontier, and I am not alone in that assessment.” So said Johnnie Carson, assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, to the US House foreign sub-committee on African Affairs on 17 April 2012.

Carson is not alone in expressing growing optimism about Africa. As he also noted, the World Bank’s projection of economic growth rates for Africa during the next two years is between 5% and 6%. This exceeds the figures expected for Latin America, Central Asia or Europe.

The IMF’s forecast for five years, beginning in 2011, has seven African countries - Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, Zambia and Nigeria - among the world’s ten fastest growing economies. An analysis by the Economist last year reveals that six sub-Saharan African countries - Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique and Rwanda - were among the world’s ten fastest growing economies over the ten years to 2010.

Indeed, Africa has begun to draw positive remarks from capitalist commentators especially since the dawn of the global economic crisis. The worst capitalist crisis since the 1930s Great Depression, triggered in the United States and Europe, has apparently forced capitalist strategists to search elsewhere for a success story, and they have invented one in Africa.

Leading capitalist media have suspended their characteristic bad press about the continent and now trumpet what are seen as ‘positives’. A striking example of this can be found in the Economist where Africa metamorphosed from being the “Hopeless Continent”, as in a May 2000 edition, to the “Hopeful Continent”, which was the cover story in a December 2011 edition.

However, most of these countries’ high growth rate figures reflected a pick-up in raw material exports and price increases tied to the growth in global demand, especially from China. For instance, the price of crude oil rose from less than \$20 a barrel in 1999 to \$147 in 2008. Generally these statistics do not reflect any generalised growth in the economy or in living standards.

Besides, any sustained slowdown in the West and China will see a sharp decline in the demand for Africa’s exports.

Poverty

To most working people, who have only seen their living conditions getting worse year in year out, the impressive figures of economic growth being thrown around seem magical. In fact, the huge increases in food and fuel prices mean a continued assault on living standards. Africa today reveals a continent blighted with mass poverty and restricted access to the basic needs of life.

For example, in Ethiopia, a country on the ‘golden list’, 90% of the population was classified as “multidimensional poor” by a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report in 2010.

The situation in Nigeria, Africa’s biggest oil producer is also aptly described by the UNDP. Its representative in the country, Daouda



Most African countries’ high growth rate figures reflected a pick-up in raw material exports and price increases

Toure, correctly noted that “for almost a decade now, Nigeria has been recording consistently a high economic growth rate that has not produced commensurate employment opportunities and reduction in poverty among its citizens.”

He continued: “Available statistics suggest that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria had indeed worsened between 2004 and 2010” (The Nation, Lagos, 29 August 2012).

South Africa, the continent’s biggest economy, is the second most unequal country in the world. This is despite “black economic empowerment” driven by the ANC government in post-apartheid South Africa.

In Angola, two-thirds of the population live on less than €1 (\$1.25) a day and only 25% of children are enrolled in primary schools (Guardian, London, 18 November 2011). This is the country which was the world’s fastest growing economy, beating China into second position, in the decade to 2010. Presently, it acts as a safe haven for Portuguese capitalism, a poster boy of the euro-zone crisis.

In a classic case of reverse economic migration between Europe and Africa, Angola has not only attracted about 150,000 Portuguese escaping joblessness but has also heavily invested its petrol dollars in Portugal. Angola’s state oil company Sonangol is the biggest single shareholder in one of the Portugal’s biggest banks, Millennium BCP.

As of June 2010 the value of Angolan investments in listed Portuguese companies was estimated at more than €2 billion, according to the Financial Times. Yet there is barely electricity and clean water in the country, even in the capital Luanda.

All this is symptomatic of the situation in Africa where economic growth is reflected in the opulence of the thieving capitalist elite and not in infrastructural development or the living standards of ordinary people.

But the capitalist strategists are not concerned about the fate of working people. In so far as there are natural resources to be exploited for super-profit, Africa is a bed of roses. As the Guardian (London) re-

ports: “There is growing confidence in Africa as an investment destination with the highest returns in the world” (28 March 2012). Hence, the global investment bank Goldman Sachs said in a March 2012 report: “Africa is something investors have to think about, for long-term growth (either participating in it or missing it).”

This drive to super-exploit Africa explains why the continent, which is rich in natural resources and fertile lands for agriculture, is dominated by multinationals and run on the basis of capitalist neoliberal policies to benefit the imperialist west.

The lack of, or primitive state of, necessary infrastructure has meant that Africa is still largely dependent on exports of primary commodities and only accounts for an abysmal 2% of world output.

The so-called ‘investors’ are mainly interested in commodity and extractive industries which, although driving growth, create few jobs. This failure to develop manufacturing explains why Africa, a classic example of jobless growth, cannot emulate the role of China as an engine of global capitalism despite its huge population and growing urbanisation. On the contrary, capitalism will continue to leave the continent prostrate.

Corruption

Africa’s woe is compounded by the characteristic corruption of its leaders. It is instructive however to state that corruption is not limited to Africa or developing countries.

Most of the resources that are left in Africa, after losing some to unfair trade and debt repayment, are stolen by pro-western corrupt leaders and then stashed away in private foreign accounts in Europe and North America.

Neoliberal capitalism, which entails privatisation and deregulation, has given more leverage to Africa’s political leaders to loot their treasuries since they are not committed to use the resources to provide infrastructure and the basic necessities of life.

But in the face of this situation the continent’s workers, youth and

poor are not passive. Africa has a rich history of repeated mass struggles against colonialism, and apartheid. More recently there have been struggles against corrupt, rotten regimes and for a better life, as exemplified by the mass uprisings in the Arab world, especially in North Africa, which claimed at least three long-serving dictators.

January 2012 saw the biggest general strike and mass protest in the history of Nigeria against the increase in fuel prices.

Miners in South Africa, in their struggle for better pay and conditions, have almost brought the

Huge increases in food and fuel prices mean a continued assault on living standards. Africa today reveals a continent blighted with mass poverty

mining industry to its knees. Mining accounts for a huge part of the country’s wealth and is also a symbol of colossal social inequality between workers and bosses.

The struggle of miners, in which DSM (CWI, South Africa) is playing a leading role (see pages 6&7), has helped put on the front burner the demand for the nationalisation of the mining industry, and also for a working and poor people’s political alternative to the ANC.

The continued mass protests of workers and youth in Europe, especially in Greece and Spain, against cuts and capitalist neoliberal attacks on jobs, wages, education and health care will continue to raise consciousness among the working people of Africa. New struggles in Africa will mean that there is no safe haven for capitalism in a world of crisis and will serve as inspiration to intensify the search for socialist alternative.

The Committee for a Workers’ International

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

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

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



China/Japan: What’s behind the island conflict?

Rising national tensions point to new turbulent era in east Asia.

Vincent Kolo, CWI (from the chinaworker.info website)



Georgia: Western-backed Saakashvilli regime loses election

But Ivanishvili’s ‘Georgian Dream’ is a false dawn for the working class.

Rob Jones, Moscow



Occupied West Bank: Protests against high prices and the Oslo Accords

Protests and strikes by thousands shake the West Bank.

Shahar Ben-Khorin, Maavak Sotzyalisti/Nidal Eshteraki (CWI in Israel/Palestine)

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.

Starbucks' trickery**Fighting the cuts in HMRC**

Try going into a Starbucks and refusing to pay for your coffee. You would soon find the long arm of the law on your shoulder.

However Starbucks regularly told their investors that the UK business is highly profitable, but told the taxman a different story. They claimed that their business in the UK shows a loss while raking in massive profits.

Household names like Starbucks and Vodafone have used accounting trickery which would get them labelled scoundrels if they were unemployed or disabled. But have no fear. Liberal Democrat Danny Alexander boasted that he intended to recruit 100 more revenue men to crack down on tax evasion. He did not say that 1,500 revenue men and women have been sacked from HMRC since this government was elected. This is taking disingenuous mendacity to an Olympic standard.

Derek McMillan
Brighton Socialist Party

Gamblers' luck runs out

Privatisation of state-owned industries has proved to be a lucrative bargain for the private owners but a disaster for customers and workers. The latest example of rip-off privatisation is the UK horse racing betting tote, which was set up in 1928 and privatised in July 2011 (after the Brown Labour government's attempted sale fell through).

This month, new owners Betfred will take a bigger slice from the tote pool leaving winning punters with less in pay-outs.

Of course, gamblers can expect little sympathy from the wider public but an effective 22% rise in the cost of the same product is hardly a glowing testament to the benefits of the free market.

Simon Carter
East London

Elect your local cops!

I received a pamphlet about the elections for Police and Crime Commissioners. It said that although they would be responsible for appointing Chief Constables and dismissing them, they themselves would serve for a three-and-a-half year term.

If you wanted to know who was standing as a candidate in your area you could either look online or telephone to order printed information.

Then it went on to state that you could use your vote for both a first and second choice of candidate - providing there are more than two candidates standing in your area.

If you have difficulty with reading, are visually impaired or do not have English as your first language, I'm sure everyone will be as happy with the 'information' given as I was - once I'd stopped laughing as I can just imagine the queues of people to vote in this election on 15 November!

Ruthie McNally
Worcester

Council tax sham?

Birmingham city council proposes to charge working age people at least 24% of their council tax under their response to the Con-Dems' proposals to 'localise' council tax benefit. A well-attended meeting on 18 October was decidedly hostile to the council's proposals.

The meeting unanimously carried a motion instructing the council to refuse to cooperate with the government and absorb the £10.9 million cost (out of a budget of £3.8 billion). It remains to be seen whether the public's views are translated into reality by the New Labour council or whether this is just another sham consultation

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

Enough is enough!

My late father was first a Communist who sold The Daily Worker on street corners in Glasgow long ago. He became a socialist with a passionate love of and respect for the working man and woman. He then became a Scottish Nationalist. When he passed away in late 2010 I felt real pride in his life of hard work, selflessness, generosity and honesty.

I have had it with the Labour Party after a lifetime of voting for them - except for the last general election when I simply could not support Gordon Brown. So, finally, I am here. The Socialist Party may have a long way to go but its stated principles and aims are closer to my own than those of any other party.

I grew up in Glasgow: I was very young but I supported Jimmy Reid and the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, to name but one cause. I loathe this extreme right-wing coalition government and their sadistic, unfair welfare cuts and other unethical assaults on decent, helpless people. Enough is enough!

Pauline Gallagher
Peterborough

Plebs united

"I asked a copper to buy a paper on the 20 October demo. He said "Us plebs gotta stick together. He also said: "Yes we should be out there marching too!"

John Fletcher
Newport

Liberal priorities

Foolishly I bought a copy of the Observer on 21 October, hoping to see a report of the previous day's TUC demo. Nothing there. There were two separate pages on a fast racehorse, Frankel, that was retiring and being put out to stud but nothing on hundreds of thousands of people resisting being put out to grass and being paid a pittance on retirement.

That paper's daily sister paper, the Guardian, had a minute report and an editorial which whinged that the march was smaller than last year's. True, but clearly the organised working class are as irrelevant to these paragons of the liberal press as they are to the outright Tory rags.

Sam Rivers

Orgreave 1984

Put police actions in the dock

Members and supporters of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) have drawn encouragement from the recent findings of the Hillsborough Independent Panel. The detailed exposure in the media of the shocking truth about the 1989 Hillsborough disaster was based on the South Yorkshire Police's records of their own appalling conduct (see the Socialist 734).

The trade unionists are calling for a new investigation into South Yorkshire Police's conduct at one of the biggest class clashes of the NUM's year-long strike for jobs in 1984-85.

The battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984 involved nearly 10,000 pickets and 4,000 police. Police attacked pickets with truncheons, made 93 arrests, and there were 59 injuries and the arrest of NUM president Arthur Scargill. Taken to court in 1995, 15 mineworkers proved that the South Yorkshire cops had significant parts of their evidence dictated to them by another police officer and that an officer's signature on an evidence statement was not genuine.

As Chris Kitchen, who was present as a 17-year old striker at Orgreave and is now NUM general secretary, said, miners had always said they were victims of police malpractice. He told the Guardian: "Most of the men were acquitted but those who accepted being bound over had a criminal record for the rest of their lives."

The NUM national executive will discuss whether to ask the police complaints 'watchdog' IPCC and

A Civil War Without Guns

the lessons of the 1984-85

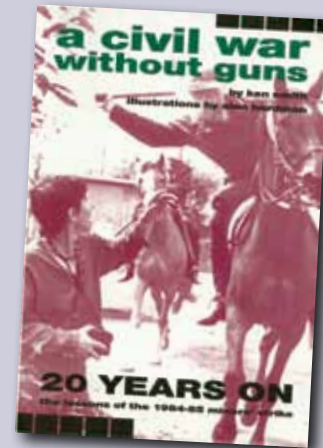
miners' strike

by Ken Smith

£6 including postage from
Socialist Books, PO Box 24697,
London E11 1YD

Order online:
www.socialistbooks.co.uk

Ring to pay by card:
020 8988 8789



the Director of Public Prosecutions to widen their Hillsborough investigations to include the same police force's behaviour and later cover-up in the miners' strike.

The miners' dispute was the major episode in the Thatcher government's planned and phased onslaught on the organised working class. As Ken Smith says in the Socialist Party publication 'A civil war without guns', the British capitalist state used all its resources to smash the powerful and militant NUM:

"It was not long after the unprecedented violence at Orgreave, provoked by the police, that Thatcher referred to the miners as the "Enemy Within"... Once started, Orgreave

was a battle that neither side could afford to lose.

"Thatcher and the Tories threw everything at it: state forces; propaganda: political pressure on the Labour and trade union leaders and the full force of the legal system against arrested miners.

"Police 'gladiators' were instructed from early on by police officers with loudhailers to "take prisoners". In reply the miners mobilised the biggest, most determined, pickets this country has ever seen."

Trade unionists and socialists will wish the NUM well in any legal action and much can be learned from a deeper study of the 1984-85 miners' strike.

'Priced out of renting a home, let alone owning one'

Mark Wright

A recent report by the National Housing Federation (NHF) shows that over the last three years there has been an 86% rise in housing benefit claims by working families - that's 417,830 more households now receiving the payments. What's to blame? The NHF says that the cause is a 37% rise in private rents and house prices rising three times faster than wages since 2001. Pay freezes and a poverty minimum wage also contribute.

This is another sign of an ever-deepening housing crisis in Britain that gives young people little chance of ever owning a property or being able to afford to rent.

In my local area, Hertfordshire and Essex, private rents are rising faster than property prices, which could lead to some of the steepest increases nationwide in the next decade, says the NHF.

The NHF says that years of not building enough homes will push charges in the area up by nearly two thirds (64%) in just ten years, compared to a 59% rise nationwide. In Herts, monthly rents are predicted to rise from £902 to £1,478.

House prices in Herts could rise 52%, and the county's tenants have faced average private rents rising 4% while real incomes actually dropped by 2%. In Essex monthly rents are set to rise from £773 to £1,267 in the next decade. Claire Astbury, a



TUSC protesting about the lack of affordable housing on the Olympic site during the GLA election campaign photo the Socialist

regional manager for the NHF said: "One in 16 East of England families is currently on the waiting list for social housing and it looks like the situation is going to get far worse.

"Successive governments have failed to tackle the under-supply of housing. Now time is running out... A whole generation are at risk of being priced out of renting a home, let alone buying one."

The main cause of these problems

is a huge shortage of genuinely affordable housing. We need rent caps introduced and properly enforced to make sure rents are always affordable to working class people. But the case for massive council house building is now overwhelming - if Labour councils won't oppose Cameron's diktats on public spending cuts, I'm sure the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition could show them how!

Far right attempts to build support in Leicester

A united, working class, anti-cuts alternative is needed

Steve Score

The English Defence League (EDL) continues to drag its travelling circus of violent anti-Muslim demonstrations around Britain. Despite infighting, dwindling numbers and some big defeats such as they received in Waltham Forest on 1 September, they still remain a threat. The biggest threat would come if they succeeded in building a support base in some local areas.

This racist organisation, based on a mixture of football thugs and far-right individuals, has relied on the anti-Muslim prejudice that was whipped up by politicians and the press in the period after 9/11 as justification for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Sections of the right-wing media continue to demonise Muslims.

Opposition

The EDL focus on anything that they think they can blame Muslims for, however ludicrous. However if their ideas gain a foothold, they would not hesitate to attack other sections of working class people including the trade union movement.

There is no doubt that defeats on the streets have hit the EDL. A quick look at the recent rant on YouTube by their 'leader' Steven Lennon (aka

Tommy Robinson) against his own supporters after the Waltham Forest debacle shows that!

But it is important that we continue to mobilise community and trade union opposition to the EDL on the streets when they attempt

11%

of those who had heard of the EDL said they would consider joining it, according to a YouGov poll

to attack local communities. This should involve building a democratic movement of opposition locally which aims to stop the EDL marching through and attacking areas.

This needs to be done by explaining why and how they must be opposed, including the role of the organised working class in the trade unions.

Opinion polls always have to be taken with a pinch of salt as they are ephemeral, often one-sided and influenced by the way questions are framed. However, a YouGov poll



photo Mina Boromand

published on 8 October revealed that 75% of people questioned had heard of the EDL, a third of people had an idea of what it stood for, 42% did not. Of those who had heard of it 85% said they would never sup-

port the EDL, but 11% said they would consider joining. Far more said they "sympathised with their aims".

While this does not signal that the EDL has substantial support, it does flag up dangers. Up until now it has not been a membership organisation, and has not really attempted to build a local base. The violence of the EDL's tactics undoubtedly puts off some who may have otherwise been attracted to its ideas.

The British National Party (BNP) in recent years, copying the tactics of many European far-right populist groups, attempted to shake off its neo-Nazi past by focussing on an electoral strategy. BNP members put on suits and downplayed their fascist roots. They achieved some

seats in the last local elections and got a derisory vote. But it is, for example, standing Carrol for the position of police commissioner in Bedfordshire on 15 November.

While organisations like the EDL are inherently unstable, the effects of the economic crisis are undoubtedly providing conditions in which the far-right can make gains.

Potential to grow

Whether it is the EDL, BFP, BNP or some other far-right organisation, there is a potential for them to grow at some stage if a mass, working class political alternative isn't built.

Cuts to benefits, cuts in public services, growing unemployment, the attack on wages, pensions and many more attacks are making people increasingly angry.

Add that to the feeling in many local areas that ordinary people have been abandoned by all the main parties including Labour, which is carrying through cuts at council level. Labour leader Ed Miliband has publicly committed to continuing the cuts that are making working class people's lives increasingly unbearable. If there isn't an anti-cuts political alternative put forward, the far-right can step into the vacuum.

A quick look at the growth of far-right parties in Europe points to the dangers that exist. The deeper the crisis, the more living standards are crushed by cuts and austerity, the more the danger.

Warning from Europe

In Greece we have seen the rise of the neo-fascist Golden Dawn, getting 7% in the May and June general elections. A recent poll even showed them ahead of former governing party Pasok (the New Labour equivalent).

Golden Dawn is a party that carries out violent attacks and even murders. Its violence is aimed mainly at immigrants and it has also attacked the left and LGBT groups.

We are not now facing this position in the UK but that doesn't mean we couldn't be at some point in the future if we don't build mass opposition to the far right and a socialist political alternative.

The situation that has developed on Thurnby Lodge estate in Leicester shows some of the dangers.

This is an overwhelmingly white estate that has around 150 Muslim families of South Asian origin living on it. The council recently sent out a request for bids for the lease on an old abandoned scout hut and initially awarded it to a Muslim group that has been meeting in a room in a local community centre.

In response to this, a local group called Forgotten Estates has been established. It argues that the hut should be used as a boxing gym for the local community.

The EDL is in the leadership of this campaign which has held protests at least twice a week over an extended period of time outside the community centre. The biggest of these had up to 400 local people. Muslim people going into the community centre with their children have been abused and intimidated.

This intimidation has to be opposed. The police do nothing to stop it. The tensions on the estate are high.

The EDL has opportunistically seized on the chance to portray themselves as defenders of the local community and build a base there. No doubt they are also considering standing in the next elections.

Nick Griffin of the BNP even showed up for one demo but the BNP have kept away since - perhaps as part of a deal with the EDL.

The EDL is almost daily whipping up racism and prejudice against Muslims on the estate. But there is also a genuine feeling among local people on the estate that they have not been listened to by the council.

The workers' movement has to respond to this. A debate has taken place over the approach.

The Socialist Party has argued that we need to build a campaign, based on local people, which



photo Senan

strongly opposes racism, fights for facilities for everyone on the estate and that doesn't counterpose the needs of the Muslim group to others on the estate.

Cuts

This means taking up the issue of cuts being made by the local Labour council in response to the Con-Dem government cuts. It means putting pressure on the council to find suitable premises for all parts of the community. But it also links to the need for opposition to the privatisation of local facilities and for a strategy by local councils to fight the cuts. On that basis we can explain the need for working class unity and can undercut the support for the EDL.

The local trades council executive has adopted this approach, although some groups have not. The Socialist Workers Party and others are simply arguing for the left to go onto the estate from the outside and campaign for the Muslim

group to get the scout hut.

The situation on this estate highlights the lack of a party that represents the interests of working class people. In the past perhaps the Labour Party would have had a local base that could have been used to undercut the EDL. That possibility no longer exists and many see the Labour council as not representing them.

Political alternative

A mass party, rooted in local areas, that campaigns in the interests of working class people is vital. This is why the Socialist Party supports the building of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) as a step in that direction.

The fight against the far right is absolutely bound up with the need for a socialist alternative to all the attacks raining down on working class people. It means unity in action on the streets, but it also needs a class approach and a socialist political answer to the racists.

RACISTS OFF OUR STREETS!

Build a mass working class fightback

Over 50 'supporters' of the far-right English Defence League (EDL), including many of their leaders, were arrested while on their way to a 'surprise' demonstration at a mosque in east London.

These racists have been banned from the area, meaning that they cannot legally take part in the EDL's 'return to Walthamstow' demonstration planned for 27 October.

A few days earlier Andrew Brons, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Yorkshire and Humberside, resigned from the British National Party (BNP) recently, accusing Nick Griffin, the party's leader and other MEP, of "having destroyed the party".

Brons, who is expected to lead a rival far-right split-off, claims that up to 90% of the party's membership, activists and former officials have already gone.

While these events might appear to suggest the far right is in crisis, a strong and united opposition remains essential. These groups must not be allowed to spread their racist lies and grow in numbers or confidence. That's why it is correct for anti-fascists to mobilise counter-demonstrations every time they try to march, as is happening in Walthamstow on 27 October.

Where possible, through the mo-

bilisation of big numbers, especially trade unionists and young people, the far right should be physically blocked from marching. On 1 September, the EDL was stopped from holding a rally in front of Waltham Forest town hall. A thousands-strong counter-demonstration 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 through 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.

Opposition needed

Labour councils and some community leaders often advise local people to stay away from such counter-demos. But why should racists be able to intimidate local communities? If the far right is not countered, attacks on Muslims, LGBT people, trade unionists and socialists will grow. This can divide the working class – just when we need to be united to fight the Con-Dems' austerity, often executed by Labour councils.

However, it is not enough just to call all supporters of these groups

'fascist'. Yes, their main base is among racists and football hooligans, but they can attract support from groups of disillusioned and alienated white working class people, angry at service cuts, housing shortages and unemployment. Yes, many are looking for a fight, but also a sense of belonging and empowerment.

The workers' movement and the left must show that we are an effective anti-cuts force. We need to attract young workers and the unemployed into the trade unions and through mass organised militant action, such as a general strike, show how society can really be changed for the benefit of the 99%.

So as well as confronting the far right when they march, anti-fascists must build united campaigns in local communities for jobs, homes and services for all. That means linking the anti-racist campaigns with fighting all cuts.

See page 11 for more on opposing the racist EDL and the far right

Protest against the EDL in Walthamstow

11am Saturday 27 October
Walthamstow centre, London E17
For latest developments see socialistparty.org.uk



photo Bob Severn

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!