



MAKE THE CORPORATE TAX DODGERS PAY UP!

● Nationalise gas, water and other utility companies

Starbucks, Google, Amazon, Pfizer – the list of corporate tax dodgers grows and grows. On top of that it has emerged that gas companies have allegedly been fixing the price of wholesale gas to further boost their mega profits. Becci Heagney explains another outrage in the utility companies.

Among the latest tax avoidance revelations, the Observer has exposed the water companies. Three main providers have paid little or no corporation tax, despite declaring hundreds of millions of pounds in profits and paying huge dividends to their shareholders.

Thames Water had a net cash inflow of £943 million in 2010-11 but only paid £26 million in tax and for 2012 they got a tax rebate of £79.6 million!

In 2012 Yorkshire Water paid just £2.9 million tax on operational profit of £303 million and one part of Anglian Water paid no corporation tax at all.

All of these companies paid their chief executives massive bonuses though. For example Peter Simpson, the boss of Anglian Water, got a bonus of £626,700 on top of his £300,000

salary. Collectively, between 2009 and 2011 these companies paid over £3 billion in dividends to their holding and financing companies.

Customers of these companies would be forgiven for thinking it strange, then, that their bills are going up this year. Anglian Water is increasing its bills on average by £22, Yorkshire Water by £21 and Thames Water by as much as £80 a year in 2014.

People feeling the pinch don't have much choice as in most areas one company has a monopoly and there is nowhere else you can go for lower prices. So much for Thatcher's 1989 Tory Party conference promise: "Once water is in the private sector, companies will...give the customer a far better deal."

These companies assert they are 'delaying', not 'avoiding', paying their tax. They borrow large sums of money and offset their interest payments against the amount of tax they are supposed to pay and also claim capital allowances on investments – promising to pay their tax 'somewhere' down the line.

We need to kick out these parasitical profiteers who increase prices, make massive profits but still refuse to pay tax.

All of the water companies should be brought back into public ownership. They should be run under democratic workers' control and management so that we have an efficient, affordable service.

The Socialist Party's programme includes:

- For mass trade union-led struggle, involving all those suffering under austerity, to stop all cuts and privatisation. The TUC must start preparations and name the day for a 24-hour general strike!
- Close the tax loopholes – make the 'avoiders and evaders' pay!
- Exact a 50% levy on the estimated £800 billion which the UK's top companies are hoarding and refusing to invest
- Immediately increase taxation on big corporations and on the super-rich
- Immediate re-nationalisation of the privatised utilities – including the water companies. All major companies that refuse to pay their taxes to be immediately nationalised under democratic workers' control with compensation paid only where need can be proven
- Build a new mass workers' party to provide a political alternative, based on struggle, to the pro-super-rich parties
- International solidarity with all those fighting back against the capitalist crisis
- A socialist alternative based on democratic planning of the resources of the planet to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority and the environment – not just of the 1%!

If you agree – join the Socialist Party. Call 020 8988 8777



photo Paul Mattsson

the **Socialist**

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Student demonstration: Escalate the struggle to fight fees, cuts and privatisation

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Socialist Students national organiser

The government's higher education reforms will "put students at the heart of the system", claimed universities minister David Willetts in 2011. To anyone with half a brain, let alone Willetts' famous 'two', this statement is laughable. Not only are students nowhere near 'the heart of the system', thousands have been priced out of it altogether. Last year university applications dropped by 20%.

For working class, and increasingly for middle class, young people, growing up in austerity Britain is full of anxious fretting and impossible choices. One cruel choice is between a degree costing £50,000 and years flitting between the low-paid, insecure jobs that offer temporary 'relief' from the misery of unemployment.

Ironically, 'choice' is what the Con-Dems claim to be all about. It's 'choice' that they say is at the heart of their vision for our education, 'choice' and its supposed bedfellow: competition. It looks something like this: for students – pay more, get less; for university managements – slash, burn and privatise.

Lessons from the US

According to Willetts, Britain's universities should look towards the US for inspiration. But of the million students enrolled with the US's for-profit providers in 2008-9, more than 50% had dropped out by 2010. Studies found that within these institutions 23% of revenue was spent on marketing, 19% went on profit and a mere 17% was spent on teaching. All this rather undermines the idea that the market will improve standards and place students centre stage.

Central to the government's plan to marketise higher education is the tripling of tuition fees of £9,000. This transfers the cost of funding education from society as a whole to the individual. Up to 80% of the grant paid directly to universities for teaching has been cut. When the government first announced its plans on fees it estimated the average university would set the rate at £7,200. Most institutions opted for charging the full whack.

But even with students paying extortionate fees most universities still can't balance the books. The big drop in student numbers is now being used as the pretext for cuts and privatisation across the country. In the post-1992 universities the burden is felt most acutely. At the University of East London lecturers are fighting a proposal to double their already huge workload. If allowed to go through this will almost definitely be a prelude to job cuts.

If the government gets its way only elite institutions will be able to weather the storm. But even there, the Con-Dems' agenda will take its toll. Increasingly academic staff are forced to follow only the most lucrative lines of research, with teaching sacrificed in order to make way for this.

While the education system has always been grossly unfair, this is a generation that has grown up being told that university needn't be unattainable. This is a generation of people who grew up being told that if they just worked hard enough, they could get a good job, have a good life, that the world would be at their feet.

Moving the goalposts

Now the government want to smash expectations early. They want to convince young people that the fault lies with them, that they're just not bright enough, not sharp enough, not hard working enough to succeed. To this end the government is moving the goal posts, making sure that school qualifications are not there to encourage attainment or nourish learning but to sift and stifle.

Modular exams are out because students have the audacity to do well at them, or to re-attempt them and try to improve on previous performances. GCSEs are to undergo an overhaul and be replaced with an English Baccalaureate, where only Tory education minister Michael Gove's approved subjects will be counted as important and where safe numbers can be guaranteed to fail.

This year's college students are already being forced to struggle by without EMA student payments. But many didn't even make it that far. Some institutions have reported a 50% drop in applications since the loss of this grant – for thousands a college education has been placed out of reach.

On 21 November thousands of students will join the National Union of Students (NUS) demonstration and march through London against all of the Con-Dem attacks on education. Students will be marching because they have understood that, really, they are being offered only one 'choice': fight back or watch as they smash our future.

We'll be marching to demand they scrap fees, bring back EMA and stop the onslaught of cuts and privatisation. We'll be demanding decent jobs as well. With graduate unemployment hitting new records and 40% of us still un(der)employed after two years, we say that we deserve the right to use our skills and talents and contribute to society.

The demonstration has been called by NUS under pressure from their membership. But it must only be the start. In 2010, students were let down by the leadership of their 'official' structures. Then, after organising an initial



photo Sheffield Socialist Students

demonstration, the leadership of NUS vacated the scene of struggle, and even went as far as condemning students who took part in the mass protests that followed.

What way forward?

Following the 21 November demonstration Socialist Students is arguing for mass public meetings and general assemblies to discuss where next for the movement on every campus. Student unions should host these meetings but where they refuse, Socialist Students will organise them with students who want to fight on.

We need to establish anti-cuts campaigns on every campus. On 5 December, chancellor George Osborne will announce another round of swingeing cuts in his autumn statement. Socialist Students supports a day of action on this date to make sure his announcement is met with protest. We need to demand that NUS follows this up with further national action in the spring term including walk-outs, occupations and protests.

And we need to discuss the strategy for taking our movement forward. Students have shown they can be an energetic and determined force in fighting cuts, but to maximise our effectiveness, we will need to unite with workers and trade unions. That's because, unlike students, workers have enormous economic power. For example, when tube workers go on strike, the city of London can be brought to a standstill.

For this reason Socialist Students supports the demand for a 24-hour general strike

against austerity. And we argue that students should take part too – striking alongside workers in a united fight to end austerity.

Finally, students who want to fight for a future need to get political. The government's relentless refrain is that there is no alternative to cuts and privatisation across the board. They're allowed to get away with this because all the main political parties, including Labour,

For meetings discussing the next steps in the struggle near your university, college or school, see

socialiststudents.org.uk

basically agree. They all agree that the 99% should pick up the tab for the crisis of the failed capitalist system – a system for the 1%.

They try to confuse us, blur the picture and muddy the water by talking about 'responsible capitalism' or trying to convince us that the deficit was caused by spending too much on public services. But all this is rubbish. There is an alternative.

The alternative is taking the wealth off the 1% – by nationalising the banks for a start – and using it to fund jobs, education, healthcare and public services for the 99%. It's this, a socialist alternative, that can provide a future for all. It's this that we have to fight for.

Workers and councillors must make a stand against 300 job cuts in Southampton

Southampton Socialist Party members

Labour-run Southampton council intends to axe at least 300 jobs and to slash services as part of its £20 million budget cuts for 2013.

It will mean librarians, street cleaners, social workers and many other workers who provide vital services, will be sacked. Funding for youth services and Sure Start children's centres will be cut and the council's residential children's unit for traumatised eight to 12 year olds will close.

Yet Labour won a majority

on the council in the May 2012 elections on the back of council workers' strikes and protests against the previous Tory run council which was pushing through similar cuts.

In those elections the Socialist Party – which stood candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition – warned people that unless Labour was prepared to challenge the government's funding cuts to Southampton, it would end up doing the Con-Dem coalition's dirty work. Unfortunately, this dire situation has now come about.

Instead of performing a collec-

tive handwringing, Southampton's Labour councillors should appeal to people in the city to support an anti-cuts stand. If not, they should move aside and allow genuine working class representatives to be elected.

Rebel councillors

Such councillors should stand with Coxford rebel councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, who have already shown their fighting commitment to vote against cuts and defend local services. They have won huge support from residents and unions.

A council that was prepared to fight the cuts would firstly use some of its £70 million reserves to allow time for a city-wide mass anti-cuts campaign to be built, mobilising the industrial strength of the trade unions.

Pressure from the trade unions on their national leaderships could push them into turning September's TUC conference decision – for a national 24-hour general strike against the government's austerity measures – into a reality.

Taking this defiant path is the only way to defend the jobs and services that workers and their families depend upon.

Terry Pearce adds

At a recent well-attended meeting of the Bracknell (Berkshire) branch of Unite, a resolution calling for a 24-hour general strike was passed overwhelmingly and will be sent to the union's executive council.

Also passed was a resolution opposing the Southampton Labour council's cuts to jobs and services.

Full support was agreed for the two Labour Against Cuts councillors in Coxford ward who voted against cuts.

It was agreed to invite them to our next meeting to explain their courageous stand.

Fighting to defend the NHS

Around England and Wales, anger is growing at plans being revealed for the future of the NHS. The most furious reaction is against cuts and closures in hospital services. Socialist Party members report on the cuts and campaigns from their areas.

Lewisham

On 8 November, between 500 and 700 residents and NHS workers in Lewisham, south London, put on an impressive show of strength at a protest meeting. This was in response to the Tory government 'special administrators' announcement of proposed cuts.

These would probably mean: Lewisham Hospital's Accident and Emergency (A&E) unit, and its maternity unit closing, a £36 million cut in staffing, leading to hundreds of NHS staff losing their jobs and the privatisation of many NHS services in Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley.

People squeezed into four different meeting places while speakers shuttled between venues to get their message across! A Lewisham A&E nurse and a local GP, Louise Irvine, set the tone. Louise showed the

£300m
of 'savings' needed
from Health Boards
across Wales

plans to sell as much as two-thirds of the hospital site.

There was a determined mood to fight these cuts and growing confidence that, if we organise, we can successfully defend our health services.

Local NUT teachers' union activist Martin Powell-Davies asked how a child injured at school could be speedily ferried across London's busy streets to cash-starved Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, or to overstretched King's College hospital in Camberwell, if Lewisham A&E closes. He called on trade unionists to use their strength to fight cuts, including through taking strike action.

Labour-controlled Lewisham council - which has introduced its own cuts locally - should be mobilising opposition across the borough. It should also be using its scrutiny powers to help defeat



photo Wales Socialist Party

this attack.

People would not accept any suggestion of 'divide and rule', where politicians campaign to save Lewisham's hospital - but call for cuts elsewhere instead. This must be a united campaign to stop health cuts across south London and to demand the privatisers and PFI blood-suckers get their hands off our NHS!

When Lewisham Socialist Party took our petition against the closures to our Saturday campaign stall, selling 40 copies of the Socialist, people asked in disbelief: "Why are they closing it? It was only refurbished this April?"

If you're ready to fight and determined to win, come to the demonstration on Saturday 24 November, meeting at Loampit Vale roundabout at 2pm, marching to Lewisham Hospital at 3pm.

Wales

The Welsh government plans to reshape the NHS in Wales. By 2014/15 spending per head on health in Wales will be lower than in any other part of Britain. Health Boards in Wales are drawing up individual plans and producing a 'South Wales Plan' to cut hospital beds, reduce the number of A&E units and specialise services in fewer hospitals.

The seven Health Boards in Wales have to find nearly £300 million of 'savings' - around 5% of their combined budgets on top of similar savings already identified in the previous year and the £1 billion estimated to have been cut from Health Board budgets since 2005.

These cuts led to shortages of doctors and other staff, jeopardised the quality and safety of healthcare and threaten the sustainability of services we depend on. But Abertawe Bro Morgannwg (ABMU) Health Board (covering Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend) proposes to accept these cuts and further reduce local services.

This will make matters worse by limiting accessibility to healthcare for the poor, those without transport and even whole communities. Socialists won't stand aside and see healthcare destroyed. We are chal-

lenging cuts in our Health Board but aim to link with like-minded people across Wales to fight for an NHS for the health needs of all the people of Wales.

Kent

Two meetings in Kent should give the Tories and Labour pause for thought. In Whitstable, a Keep Our NHS Public meeting attracted more than 50 people, while in Deal, one night later, another meeting on the NHS attracted about 30 people and voted to affiliate to Keep Our NHS Public.

At both meetings speakers with no connection with the Socialist Party, demanded independent candidates at elections to oppose both Labour and Tories for their attacks on the NHS. In Whitstable, Ed Miliband and Andy Burnham were

An opportunity now exists to build this into a movement which can link up with NHS workers and their unions, to oppose all local cuts and privatisations

denounced for their recent hypocritical conversion to 'defending' the NHS.

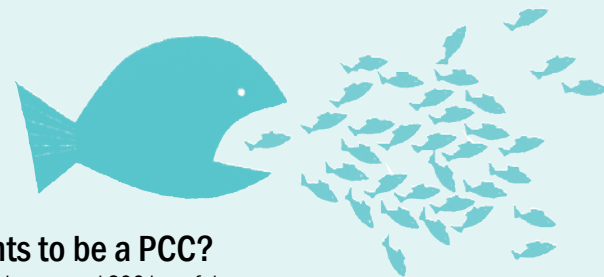
People haven't forgotten that Labour governments were responsible for so much damage through outsourcing, Foundation Trusts and pouring ever higher proportions of NHS funding into private coffers. Activists are determined to deliver a stinging retort to Tory cuts, but know Labour will not help.

Further meetings are planned around the area. An opportunity now exists to build this into a movement which can link up with NHS workers and their unions, to oppose all local cuts and privatisations.

When Socialist Party members raised this prospect, linked to the idea of a general strike to end Cameron's austerity, it received hearty cheers.

Sean Dempsey

Them...



Who wants to be a PCC?

On 15 November around 200 hopefuls will be 'battling' it out to become one of the 41 newly elected police commissioners around the country. So who are the candidates?

Well around four fifths are men. Most are members of the main three parties - several former or sitting councillors, MEPs and MPs. A quarter are former police or military. Each candidate has paid a £5,000 deposit to stand - not to worry though, if elected they stand to get salaries in the region of £80,000 a year.

It certainly appears that the candidates have a lot more interest in the elections than anyone else with turnout expected to be embarrassingly low.

B&Bs

In the last year there has been a 60% jump in the number of homeless children and pregnant women living in bed and breakfasts. And more than a third of families with children living in B&Bs are staying longer than the government's six-week limit - a 200% increase in two years.

The government's plan to tackle the problem includes giving councils powers to move homeless families straight into the private rented sector - but this is simply unaffordable for many, particularly as the cuts to housing and council tax benefit continue to bite.

Tax avoidance

While senior executives of Amazon, Google and Starbucks were quizzed by a committee of MPs about their tax avoidance, new companies to add to the list were still emerging. Pharmaceutical company Pfizer, one of the

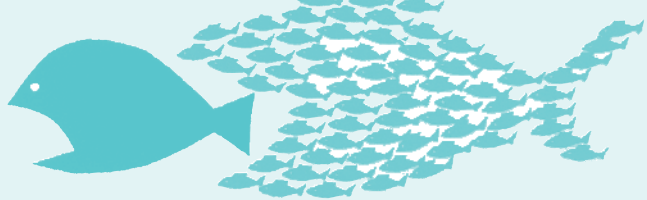
£0

Corporation tax
paid by drug giant
Pfizer

largest suppliers of drugs to the NHS, paid no corporation tax at all in the UK last year. This is despite a £1.8 billion turnover on UK sales.

The company, just like Starbucks,

...& Us



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

What we read

After a new survey shows one in three cases of major stress are caused at work, on the Nottinghamshire County Council intranet:

Latest news

A Section 188 Notice has been published listing 218.8 fulltime equivalent jobs to go across the County Council. National Stress Awareness Day 7 November 2012. Positive steps can be taken by everyone to reduce stress and increase a sense of wellbeing. (This follows immediately after the first item!)



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A real fightback against cuts

A Unison member

The consequences of the economic crisis for working class people is shown in the daily reality of life, more of us are struggling to make ends meet. But the crisis of British capitalism is also a crisis of leadership of the working class.

On the political front there is no mass party of the working class, hence the Socialist Party's campaign for a new workers' party. But there is also a crisis of leadership in many of the trade unions, including my union Unison.

In Wales, Unison and the other major unions capitulated before a struggle by agreeing a 'memorandum of understanding' with the local government employers. The unions agreed concessions on terms and conditions if jobs were protected. But no promises were given by the employers.

Since its implementation, terms and conditions have been eroded in most local authorities, often under the guise of implementing the Single Status regrading scheme.

With a couple of exceptions, including Carmarthenshire county Unison branch, all the unions and their branches agreed to surrender before any battle was fought.

The Welsh Assembly back-loaded the cuts it was passing on from the Con-Dem government, because of the Welsh Assembly elections this May. Now a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) press report released in October 2012 reveals a bleak future for public services in Wales, where nearly a third of the workforce work in the public sector.

The report states that local government spending per person has fallen by 8.4% in real terms since

its peak in 2009-2010. Councillor Aaron Shotton, WLGA deputy leader and spokesperson for finance and resources, said: "The cuts and the pressures on local government finances are only just beginning, and the long-term financial future of local government in Wales is challenging..."

This report and the bleak future it predicts pose a choice to the full-time and lay officials in Unison and other unions.

Do they stand up and organise a fightback against austerity or do they continue to capitulate and wait for a Labour government? If these leaders are not prepared to lead the fightback they should step aside for someone that will.

All too often, right-wing lay officials and full-time officers blame their members.

In Neath Port Talbot local government Unison branch a lay official has reported that the branch proposed to the council a 2% temporary pay cut to supposedly protect against worse cuts. This was because "a member suggested it and because members would not fight".

This is an abrogation of leadership. This weakness only encourages the employer to make further cuts, as this branch and its members are finding to their cost.

Some project that Welsh council spending could be reduced by as much as 18%. This could result in local authorities having to deliver spending cuts of up to 52% in unprotected services (WLGA press release).

Unison and other trade union members have got to get active and hold our leadership to account. Demand that they mobilise members, together with other trade unions, to defeat the cuts.

No to rural poverty



Members of the agricultural workers' section of Unite lobbied parliament on 12 November to protest at plans to scrap the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB). The AWB negotiates pay and fair housing provision and its abolition will open the door to increasing poverty in rural areas. Unite is calling for the period of consultation to be extended from four to at least 12 weeks photo Jane James

Drivers go to war with Tesco



Standing on top of an army vehicle! photo Alistair Tice

Alistair Tice

I've never been on a picket line like it! An armoured personnel carrier and a farmer's muckspreader blocked the gates to Doncaster Tesco's depot. Around 150 drivers, members of Unite the Union, and their families joined the blockade for photographs as police stopped the traffic and scab deliveries!

This 'stunt' ended another solid three-day strike by former Tesco drivers who have been outsourced to Eddie Stobarts (forever now to be known as "Scumbarts") and face the sack by Christmas.

The greedy Tesco bosses, not content with £3.8 billion profit last year, transferred the 186 drivers to Stobarts (ESL) in August. By September ESL had given 90 days notice of redundancy.

ESL drivers who are not in a trade union are on £2.50 an hour less than

the Tesco drivers. Tesco doesn't like all the bad press - every strike day a coachful of strikers pays a visit to a Tesco store or two, to leaflet the shoppers and get the local press down.

Eight days of solid strike action has forced ESL back to the negotiating table. Next week's planned four day strike has been suspended for talks on Thursday and Friday.

But if ESL comes up with another 'insulting offer' like it did last time, then the drivers are prepared to go all-out over Christmas.

Most of these drivers have given 20-plus years to the job, now they are on their fourth employer. Many are ex-miners and ex-army. Hence the tank! They have never been on strike before but are very determined and disciplined.

Please send messages of support to Unite shop steward Trevor Cheetham: lynncheetham@yahoo.co.uk

Virgin Media and the unions

Virgin Media announced during a conference call with CWU national officials on 2 November that they are running a referendum among staff asking whether they want the union recognition agreement to remain in force. Virgin want to de-recognise both the CWU and Bectu.

Virgin claim that they have received 'strong feedback' from staff saying that they no longer want the union to be recognised. They are organising roadshows around the

country to spread their anti-union message. The CWU union has decided not to leaflet these roadshows because they say the union-busters will tell members that a rival company or third force are interfering. This is a mistake and will increase the chance of the anti-union message being heard unopposed.

The ballot started on 7 November and will finish on 16 November. It has been called at very short notice and with a short balloting period to minimise opposition.

In brief

Support Ford workers

On Sunday 11 November, more than 15,000 people attended a demonstration organised by the Belgian trade unions for jobs and against the closure of the Ford car factory in Genk. The plant closure would mean the slashing of 4,000 jobs, without counting the subcontractors. November was a record month for the number of bankruptcies in Belgium. Like in Britain, layoffs and closures are hitting workers hard.

We need a united fightback. Workers need to organise under the slogan of the nationalisation of major companies, under workers' control, and to stop the redundancies.

In Britain, National Shop Stewards Network and Socialist Party members have been producing regular bulletins supporting the Ford workers fighting the closure of the Ford plants in Dagenham and Southampton. They have been distributed in Ford plants across the country.

PCS protest

Tens of thousands of Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members will stage 15-minute protests against plans to rip up working conditions in the civil service and related organisations.

These protests on 30 November are in opposition to a government 'review' of all existing terms and conditions, including hours and holidays, and family-friendly policies such as flexible and part-time working.

The union's national executive meeting in December will consider a timetable for a fresh industrial action ballot in the new year. The ballot will be designed to include opposition to the terms and conditions review and attacks on pay, pensions and living standards.

Injuries at work

Members of transport union RMT and postal union CWU protested outside parliament on 12 November. The protest was because of government plans to cut the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, which will affect workers in both unions and others. The government want to exclude injuries caused by trespass on the railway, which would affect train drivers traumatised by witnessing a suicide. Postal workers injured by dogs will also be excluded from claiming compensation if these changes go through.

"They Slash, You Burn"

Firefighters from across the country lobbied parliament on 7 November over horrendous proposed cuts to the fire service. The union has also taken out adverts in national papers with the slogan "They slash, you burn".

1,500 frontline firefighters' jobs have been lost since 2010, and the government plans to cut another 6,000 by 2015. In London, 17 fire stations could close, with further cuts to the number of engines at other stations.

London firefighters waged a massive battle in 2010. Fire bosses then were prepared to sack the entire workforce to impose shift changes.

In the FBU rally, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka gave his full support to the firefighters. He made the point that we have to fight all cuts - we cannot accept cuts to some services in order to save others - and that strike action should be coordinated.

Paula Mitchell

Academy teachers strike against pay cuts



Niall (centre) giving support from parents photo the Socialist

Martin Powell-Davies
NUT executive

The action by members of the NUT and NASUWT teaching unions at Stratford Academy in Newham east London escalated to two strike days last week. There is a three-day strike starting on 13 November.

The dispute was provoked by the bullying actions of the Academy management who insisted that teachers individually promise that they would not take part in the national action-short-of-strike-action jointly launched by the two teaching unions. All teachers refusing to 'repent', and sticking with their union's national campaign to defend

working conditions, then started to have 15% docked from their pay! On the picket line on 8 November, staff from other unions in the school expressed their support - and some suggested they would be transferring to the NUT to join the action. As well as myself from the NUT Executive, members of the Newham NUT committee and a local parent, Niall Mulholland, all came along to express support. Niall, along with other concerned parents, has called a public meeting on 15 November.

The NUT national executive has congratulated the Stratford teachers for their determined action.

• Please send messages of support to NUT rep, Steve Charles, on SteveC4151@aol.com

Attacks on BBC reach fever pitch

Judy Beishon

Socialist Party executive committee

Any sympathy for George Entwistle following his resignation as BBC director general after just eight weeks in the job was tempered by anger at his £450,000 pay-off and estimated £877,000 pension.

Entwistle, and two other BBC senior managers, had fallen victim to an avalanche of attacks on the BBC following the Jimmy Savile scandal and more recently a Newsnight programme that fuelled false accusations of Tory Lord McAlpine sexually abusing children in north Wales care homes.

Ironically, the ill-fated Newsnight decision to go ahead with the care home broadcast seemed partly an attempt to make amends after the earlier much criticised withdrawal of a Newsnight exposure of Savile's deeds. It was also a consequence of BBC management turmoil in the wake of that backlash.

Both incidents were a gift to the BBC's right-wing enemies and media competitors, many of whom detest the fact that the BBC receives £3.6 billion a year of public money. Leading the bandwagon of condemnation was billionaire Rupert Murdoch, still reeling from the exposure of News of the World's phone hacking crimes and his resulting failure to take over BSkyB.

Murdoch's mates

The Tory leadership's views and links with Murdoch and other press barons were shown during the Leveson inquiry, from former culture secretary Jeremy Hunt's expressed support for Murdoch's agenda, to Cameron's socialising with editors of News of the World.

Entwistle appeared inept during the Radio 4 interview that led to his resignation. But many people sprung to his defence. They included Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman who brazenly said Entwistle had been "let down by cowards and incompetents" and blamed "a series of cuts on programme budgets, while bloating the management".

There are many excellent, relatively low-paid (compared to senior managers and presenters like Paxman) journalists at the BBC who have been reported as 'tearing their hair out' at the way management handled the Newsnight dilemmas.

Newsnight's budget has been halved over the last five years and Entwistle's predecessor Mark Thompson presided over the axing of 7,000 jobs across the BBC in the years after he became head of the corporation in 2004. The cutting of a further 2,000 jobs, including about 800 in news, is planned by 2016 following the government's freezing of the television licence fee in 2010.

The cuts, partly stemming from pressure originated by profit-making media companies like Murdoch's, are very damaging to quality, investigative journalism. They reduce the pool of expertise and the time to investigate and check stories, and increase reliance on outside firms – the non-BBC Bureau of Investigative Journalism fronted the Newsnight report that caused the McAlpine storm.

Publicly owned

As a publicly owned corporation the BBC built up a reputation over decades for being a more reliable source of information than the media owned by big business. In June 2012 Ofcom reported a survey in which 65% of UK adults named BBC

One as one of their news sources, while only 37% named ITV, 23% Sky, and the highest figure for a newspaper was 16% for the Sun.

However, although the BBC has the major advantages of not being

Newsnight's budget has been halved over the last five years and Entwistle's predecessor Mark Thompson presided over 7,000 BBC job losses. The cutting of a further 2,000 jobs, including 800 in news, is planned by 2016 following the government's 2010 freezing of the television licence

influenced by advertisers and not lining the pockets of shareholders (except via privatised sections and partners), it is far from having the political independence, accountability to the public and openness called for by socialists.

Unelected Trust

Its governing Trust is not elected but is appointed by government ministers, with the present powerful Trust chairman being former Tory minister Chris Patten.

An indication of the attitude of ordinary people to Patten is that he was voted out of parliament in 1992, but not before he had done Margaret Thatcher's bidding by privatising the water industry and introducing the doomed poll tax. He then became the unelected governor of Hong Kong, paid more than the British prime minister and in his own words had "a fleet of cars, a yacht, a helicopter and scores of staff".

After that there was a spell as an unelected European Commissioner, followed by supporting the introduction of student tuition fees as chancellor of Oxford University. Say no more to reveal the nature of the BBC's top leadership, affecting its news coverage and all else!

Nevertheless, despite their deficiencies and inbuilt bias, programmes like Panorama and Newsnight can provide useful and interesting news, discussion and sometimes exposure. There is a danger that the sex abuse scandals will be used to undermine them and much else that is informative or entertaining from the BBC.

We must oppose all cuts in the BBC's funding and inroads of privatisation, and defend its existence as a publicly owned and run broadcasting company. A socialist government will need to release journalists from commercial, financial and political pressures and put the the BBC (and other major media resources) into the hands of democratically organised workers' control and management.

Then, the media can serve the interests of the overwhelming majority in society, giving democratically decided time and space for the expression of minority views and for a flowering of debate, communication and culture.



Cuts have played a big role in the BBC's crisis photo Iain Dalton

North Wales child abuse scandal

Dave Reid

Secretary, Socialist Party Wales

The BBC has become embroiled in a crisis over its coverage of child abuse scandals, but what is becoming forgotten is the issue of child abuse itself. Lost in the latest twists and turns of this scandal has been the fact that hundreds of children were horrifically abused and brutalised at the Bryn Estyn care home and other homes in North Wales in the 1970s and 80s.

Powerful and wealthy people were able to prey on child residents at the homes with impunity. The authorities, police and council officials helped to cover up the abuse for years despite numerous complaints.

As we go to press only a BBC executive has resigned and the only apology has been from one of the abused, Steve Messham. Their crime was to mistakenly claim that Lord McAlpine, Tory party treasurer and advisor to Thatcher, abused children from Bryn Estyn. It seems that in the eyes of the Tory press this mistaken accusation is worse than the abuse itself.

But those who were abused have not received justice. Steve Messham has been pilloried in the Daily Mail and disgracefully Tory David Mellor called him a "weirdo".

Hundreds of children at Bryn Estyn and at 40 homes across North Wales were abused in the 1970s and 80s. Keith Gregory, a Wrexham councillor who was abused at

Bryn Estyn in the 1970s by staff and others from the area around North Wales, says names of alleged abusers given to the 1996 Waterhouse Inquiry had been left out of the final report "because they were only interested in care workers and the staff of Bryn Estyn".

He said the abusers also included MPs, solicitors, judges, factory directors, shopkeepers and serving police officers who were not mentioned in the Waterhouse Report.

Victims

Victims have spoken of being taken out of the homes to visit abusers who were not employed within the care system. The police had refused to respond to claims of abuse by former residents at the homes and the authorities have appeared determined to protect the powerful abusers. Meanwhile any of the abused have suffered years of psychological trauma. Some have been driven to suicide.

Steve Messham has alleged: "In the home it was the standard abuse which was violent and sexual. Outside it was like you were sold," he has described being tied down and raped in a hotel room.

It was only in 1991, following the determination of a social worker in Gwynedd who reported abuse, that the police were forced to launch an investigation. 150 former Bryn Estyn residents came forward with abuse claims.

In 1994 a report commissioned by Clwyd County Council, which

was responsible for Bryn Estyn, was produced but never published. The council claimed its contents were "defamatory" and the report was destroyed. As we go to press it is reported that copies have been found in archives.

Two inquiries have now been launched by the UK government: one into the original abuse claims and another into the conduct of the 1996 Waterhouse Inquiry.

Concern has been raised that underfunded and austerity-hit services will be further stretched by the demands of the inquiries. While regimes such as at Bryn Estyn are much less common now, children in today's under-funded, privatised and fragmented care system are still very vulnerable to grooming, sexual exploitation and rape, as the recent Rochdale case shows. Also while the current media focus is on institutions, the vast majority of child abuse takes place within the family.

We demand:

- Justice for the abused. For a genuinely democratic and accountable inquiry into the abuse case, involving the trade unions with adequate, publicly funded resources
- Stop the intimidation of 'whistle-blowers'
- No cuts and privatisation in care homes and services. We need a fully-funded, publicly owned, democratically controlled service, run by care receivers and providers, families, the unions and medical/care professions

GREECE: ANOTHER 48-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE PARALYSES SOCIETY

But how can the struggle against austerity be won?

On 6 and 7 November Greek workers participated en masse in a 48-hour general strike against the New Democracy-led coalition of prime minister Antonis Samaras, which narrowly voted through parliament another tranche (€13.5 billion) of austerity measures, including tax rises and pension cuts. These additional cuts demanded by the 'Troika' (the European Union, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) are being forced upon workers at a time of mass unemployment and deep capitalist recession. In the early hours of Monday 12 November a majority in the Greek parliament voted through a further budget of draconian spending cuts for 2013. Paris Makrides, Xekinima, reported on the first day of the 48-hour strike. (Xekinima is the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers' International – CWI, the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated)

Another 48-hour general strike started on 6 November. How big was the strike and protests of the Greek workers and youth?

The strike paralysed Greece completely. Athens was like a deserted city as nothing moved except the demonstration of the striking workers. Not only were workers on strike but small shopkeepers as well, even taxi drivers, who together with the strike in public transport, paralysed Athens entirely. The picture was similar in every other city of Greece.

The numbers on the Athens strike demonstration however were not that big due to the lack of transport; workers and youth had no means of getting to the centre of Athens other than by foot. Despite this, we estimate that 30,000 to 40,000 people were on the streets of Athens.

The rally at Syntagma Square, which is intended to encircle the parliament building, where MPs vote on the new (third) Memorandum (new austerity measures), will probably be much bigger.* But there is always an element of uncertainty, as the broad population, including workers and youth, know that most probably there will be violent clashes largely between anarchists and provocateurs (secret police agents), on the one hand, and the riot police, on the other hand.

These clashes repel the mass of the population from taking part in the demos. If this element did not exist, we can safely say that this afternoon one million people, if not more, would be on the streets of Athens surrounding Syntagma Square.

What does the new, third Memorandum mean for the Greek people?

The latest Memorandum will be a disaster, added to an economy and society already devastated by the two previous Memorandums.

According to estimations of the Troika, Greece's GDP [total economic output] will be reduced for a sixth consecutive year. And public debt, notwithstanding the austerity meas-

ures that have been adopted these last years, for 2013 will reach €346 billion (189% of GDP) an increase of €66 billion since last February!

Over the last years, Greek people have paid much higher taxes, have seen their wages slashed, unemployment has reached 24% and youth unemployment 55% (these are the official figures). Public health and education have been destroyed and public services and companies privatised and sold off for peanuts. But European and Greek capitalists are not interested in the terrible social effects that their policies are having.

The third Memorandum contains new cruel austerity measures, such as an increase on the retirement age to 67 years, massive dismissals of public employees, more taxes, greater so-called 'flexibility' concerning labour relations and privatisations. And it is clear this will lead to more social misery and catastrophe, just like the earlier Memorandums.

How do you explain the fact that despite all the huge mobilisations of the Greek people, the Troika is still able to apply its anti-working class policies?

The Greek people's struggles over the last two years have been massive. They understand that they have to do something to stop the Troika's policies. So they participated in general strikes, refused to pay additional unfair taxes and occupied squares. People want to resist and fight.

On the other hand, the trade union leaderships don't! These leaderships do not want to overthrow the government because they are tied in with the government parties.

The parties of the Left support people's demands but do not have a plan about how the capitalist's policies will be stopped and how the New Democracy-led government will be brought down.

Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) recently called for new elections. But elections are not the Left's primary field of battle at this moment. What is necessary is serious preparation for

an indefinite general strike which, of course, will raise the question of power in society – who decides, who controls and manages the economy and society.

This is the only way to go forward, to overthrow the government and to pave the way for a Left government which will be based on workers' power, through democratic rank and file committees and assemblies in every workplace, neighbourhood, university and school, etc.

Is the huge anger of the Greek working class reflected inside the trade unions?

The role of the leaders of the trade unions is absolutely exasperating. But whatever they do they cannot stop the class struggle. People are outraged with the Troika's policies. This anger has pushed several rank and file unions and union federations to demand that GSEE and ADEDY (the private and public sector trade union centres) call an indefinite general strike, as the only reply that corresponds to the scale of the government's and the Troika's vicious austerity attacks.

However, as expected, the GSEE and ADEDY refused to call an all-out general strike and the unions demanding this action did not try to take the next necessary step, which is to coordinate actions between themselves; to prepare for and set a day of strike action and to call on the rest of the union movement to come out in coordinated, indefinite strike activity.

We are convinced that such an initiative, given the explosive mood in Greek society, would trigger an avalanche of class action and would push aside the official union federation leaderships. Militant, mass industrial action, as described, could maximise workers' mass pressure against the government and Troika and provide a perspective to defeat the attacks.

But what really infuriates working class people and drives them mad is that often a brake is applied to the strike movement by the parties of the Left. For example, a resolution for at least one week's strike action was



The willingness and determination of workers to struggle against austerity measures must be matched by that of the leadership of the labour movement

voted down on the Central Council of the ADEDY federation (civil servants' union) because of the votes of the KKE (Communist Party) faction. The resolution for a week-long strike had the support of 19 votes, with 17 votes against, but the KKE used its seven votes to defeat it.

In the journalists' union, two days ago, a similar role was played by the Syriza faction, which is the biggest faction in that union. The Pasok (social democrats) vote split, with half supporting the demand of the anti-capitalist Left for indefinite strike action. But Syriza voted, together with the conservative section of the union, to have only one 24-hour strike and some three-hour stoppages.

These examples show the extent to which the mass parties of the Greek Left are far behind the needs of the situation and the mood of the working masses.

What impact do these developments have on the political landscape?

Despite dissatisfaction with the Left, a big section of the population now regards a new government of the Left as the only hope on the horizon. There is, therefore, a huge turn in favour of

Syriza (although opinion polls reveal that Syriza's support has not essentially grown, but it is the largest party because support for the conservative New Democrats has fallen).

But this turn towards Syriza is not enthusiastic. This is because Syriza's political platform is not clear. People do not know exactly what Syriza is going to do if it takes power, and that makes them suspicious.

On the other hand, the KKE is becoming more isolated from the bulk of the working class because of its sectarian tactics. The KKE speaks, in general, about the need for "revolution" and "socialism" but it refuses to link this call, in any way, to today's reality and to the mass consciousness of people.

On the contrary, the KKE say that things are not 'mature enough' yet for system change. So, in practice, they have a 'maximum and minimum' approach (ie they make radical and general phrases for 'socialism' etc, while only putting forward minimum demands and without linking the two concretely), rather than a transitional approach – ie campaigning on the key issues of the day for the working class, while linking this up with the need for a workers' government and to change society.

In reality, as we can see from the union votes mentioned above and other actions, the KKE leadership functions like a strike-breaking force.

Despite Syriza's inadequacies, the struggle for a government of the Left is what the movement needs to campaign for and this is the approach of Xekinima (CWI, Greece).

Of course, we link this struggle to the absolute need for a socialist programme and the need to base this on rank and file assemblies and committees of action.

We emphasise that if a Left government, based around Syriza, fails to adopt a socialist platform this will represent a massive defeat for the Greek Left and the working class, particularly given the fact that the neo-fascist Golden Dawn received around 12% to 14% popular support in recent polls.

How is Golden Dawn being combated?

The far-right, anti-immigrant Golden Dawn is not invincible. Opposition to it is growing. There are many anti-fascist committees being set up. But the mass parties of the Left do not really understand how to tackle the problem of growing fascism. This re-

quires working class unity, combating the real danger and propaganda of the far right and also fighting for an end to cuts, and for jobs, decent homes, a living wage and for decent public services, health and education for all, etc.

However, things are changing. In September, every proposal made inside Syriza to create anti-fascist committees (usually made by members of Xekinima who participate in local branches of Syriza) was voted down. In the course of the last week, however, the central secretariat of Syriza changed its stance and is now in favour of anti-fascist committees.

The KKE, on the other hand, makes no such call but it has a sectarian, abstract approach towards resisting Golden Dawn and the need for a united front against the far-right threat. The KKE continues to live on its own isolated planet, refusing to understand what is happening around it.

How is the Left responding to the crisis?

Syriza is not the only field where developments are taking place. In the rest of the Left important developments are taking place. It is correct to say that the Greek Left, in general, is in

a state of crisis, which takes different forms for different parties of the Left.

There are splits inside Antarsya (the anti-capitalist Left Alliance); there is a mass exodus from the KKE; there are major clashes inside Syriza as the leadership turns to the right; and the Left current of Synaspismos (the main constituent force in Syriza) is reacting to this rightward turn but without clarity about what should be done. And, of course, the huge mass of Left voters remain outside the Left parties and formations.

In this context, Xekinima came together with other forces of the Left, from Antarsya and the rest of the anti-capitalist Left, and we have also linked up with forces inside Syriza to create the 'Initiative of the 1,000', as it has become known (1,013 individuals signed the launching statement before it became public).

This initiative bases itself on the need for a radical anti-capitalist programme, as the only way out of the devastating social and economic crisis.

This includes calling for a repudiation of the 'debt', nationalisation of the banks and the commanding heights of the economy, and planning the economy on the basis of meeting social needs, under workers' control and management, the programme put forward by Xekinima since the start of the crisis.

The programme also calls for a united front of the Left parties and support for a Left government, ie a government based around Syriza. At the same time, this means fighting against the reformist programme of the leadership of Syriza.

The majority of the Syriza leadership think they can manage the crisis better than the ruling class and do not prioritise fighting to get rid of the capitalist system and fighting for a socialist society.

The 'Initiative of the 1,000' has only been made public for a few days now but it has already been noted by the whole of the Left. It is an entirely new innovation, uniting forces from all sections and parties of the Left, on the same programme and with similar aims for the mass movement in the immediate period ahead.

Its development and potential is not yet clear. But it is certainly worth the attempt to build it. We will be able to say more about its role and perspectives in the very near future.

***[At least 100,000 people were present at the rally which took place on the second day of the general strike, Wednesday 7 November, according to estimates by Xekinima.]**

For a European-wide 24-hour general strike



As we go to press, workers in Europe are preparing, on 14 November, for a "day of action and protest" against austerity called by the European Trades Union Congress. To the fore of this anti-capitalist austerity protests are trade unionists in Portugal, Spain and Italy who have organised a one-day general strike.

Their action represents the opening shot in the call for a European-wide general strike demanded by the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) to fight the bosses' and capitalist politicians' attempts to off-load the capitalist crisis onto the backs of the working class.

In Belgium, a series of job cuts including the complete closure of the Ford plant in Genk has produced a mighty surge of pressure from below which has brought a general strike within reach.

In many countries at least symbolic or limited actions are being planned for N14. Alongside these in Britain, the campaign set in motion by the National Shop Stewards Network for a 24-hour general strike, which the TUC voted in September to "consider", is gathering momentum.

N14 needs to be followed up with a serious plan of sustained and escalating actions to both fight the attacks in each country and link them internationally, building towards a European 24-hour general strike.

For updates see: www.socialistworld.net

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine
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Why I'm standing for TUSC in Middlesbrough

[illegible]

USA elections: Voters reject right-wing agenda

Prepare to fight the bipartisan policies of the '1%'

Bryan Koulouris and Ty Moore,
Socialist Alternative
(CWI supporters in the US)

Tens of millions of people breathed an enormous sigh of relief upon hearing that Republicans Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan wouldn't be entering the White House. Union members, women, African-Americans, Latinos and the LGBT community correctly saw the Republican agenda as a vicious and real threat.

The right wing tried to steal the election with voter intimidation, suppression and populist posturing on the economy in the final weeks, putting over \$1 billion dollars in campaign cash into trying to disenfranchise the poor, young people and people of colour.

Barack Obama's vote was nothing like the excited and energetic campaign of 2008. This year, voter turnout was down by 12 million compared to four years ago. Most people voted for Obama as a 'lesser evil' rather than as the saviour they saw in 2008, who would bring "hope" and "change."

Last year's Occupy Wall Street movement made an impact on this election by bringing a discussion about economic inequality between 'the 99% and the 1%' to the forefront.

Pent-up anger

A brighter spotlight shone down on the record \$6 billion spent on federal election races, to the outrage of millions of people. Occupy's message against corporate domination also fuelled a healthy hatred for 'Mr 1%', Mitt Willard Romney.

Obama won this election in spite of his pro-Wall Street and corporate record - when banks received tril-



Most people voted for Obama as a 'lesser evil'

lions of dollars in handouts while social services were cut and millions of families lost their homes.

Many anti-war voters supported Obama, despite continued bombing of civilians in country after country, expanding Bush's model of an unaccountable imperial presidency, waging war in Libya, and drone strikes around the world.

The Obama administration begins its second term without any real mandate. Now, with the elections over, people's pent-up anger and frustration is set to boil over.

Demands for jobs, clean energy investments, education funding, housing rights, and solutions to an endless list of injustices will again come to the surface. And again, Obama will put the interests of Wall Street and big business first, provoking fresh outrage and opposition. The time is ripe for building new movements of workers and oppressed, politically independent of both corporate parties.

For the first time nationally, voters in Washington, Minnesota, Maine and Maryland voted in favour of same-sex marriage rights, marking a historic turning point in the struggle for LGBT equality.

Many other progressive ballot questions won across the country, from minimum wage increases, to defence of union rights, to measures against the racist "war on drugs." Minnesota voters narrowly rejected an attempt to enshrine the harshest voter restriction laws in the country into their constitution.

This shows a shift in demographics and a shift in attitudes among young people and workers. Combined with massive working-class anger, this is the basis for explosive movements in the next year.

Republicans

Romney based his strategy largely on a white male vote (especially in the South) and hopes of a low voter turnout. Republican tactics ever since the 1960s have been to win elections by whipping up fear and hatred among white voters. This strategy will be more difficult to implement in national elections, a reality that will become even clearer with coming elections, as the rising generation reaches voting age.

Romney's election defeat will deepen this crisis brewing in the Republican Party, which will be forced to redefine its identity or face becoming a permanent minority party.

While there wasn't a big shift in the composition of Congress along party lines, the changes in the Republican legislators are worth noting. The 'moderate' Maine Republicans and 'centrist' Dick Lugar are out of office as are several of the most crazed Tea Partiers. But the overall balance of power within the Republican congressional delegation has shifted even further right, setting the stage for more bipartisan gridlock.

Yet in Obama's victory speech, he repeated his stale pledge to "reach across the aisle" to the Republicans. In reality, Obama's bipartisanship is cynically designed to provide cover for his nakedly pro-corporate policies.

Both parties are preparing historic cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and other vital programmes before the end of 2012. This could provoke radicalism, street protests and further struggles. In this context, there will be opportunities to build mass, united working class resistance, anti-corporate electoral campaigns and a political party of the 99%.

The historic result for Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant in Washington State shows the potential to build the movement against capitalism (see below). Running openly as a socialist, Sawant got more votes than any Republican has ever received against Frank Chopp in this powerful Democratic politician's 18-year career.

Standing against budget cuts and corporate tax avoidance, and calling for public ownership of Boeing, Microsoft and Amazon, Socialist Alternative's electoral challenge helped popularise the ideas of democratic socialism, winning a projected 20,000+ votes once counting is finished. This is the best result for a local independent left candidate in 2012 and needs to be built upon.

To take advantage of this situation, organised resistance to cuts involving hundreds of thousands

Both parties are preparing historic cuts to vital programmes before the end of 2012. This could provoke radicalism, street protests and further struggles

of union members, Occupy activists, community campaigners and young people needs to be built. These coalitions will need to prepare for strikes and mass direct action to defend living standards against the corporate assault. Out of these struggles, we can lay the basis for what is needed - a mass party of working people with a democratic socialist programme.

The presidential election saw the threat of right-wing populism in the form of Gary Johnson, the Libertarian Party candidate. He got over one million votes, three times the votes won by the most prominent left presidential candidate, Jill Stein from the Green Party.

Like the Tea Party victories in 2010, this shows the potential for right-wing populist ideas to grow if the left and workers' movement fail to build a mass political alternative to the hated corporate establishment.

These elections took place in the fifth year of a grinding economic crisis and showed the deepening polarisation in US society. At root the political and social polarisation flows from the sharpening class divide and the growing desperation of tens of millions of workers.

Socialist alternative

Lacking a clear working class political voice in the elections, the contests between corporate politicians gave a distorted expression to the class anger. In this situation right-wing ideas could gather support, and the last four years have seen the rapid growth of hate groups.

On the other side, where a bold lead from the left is given, the class polarisation can also provoke people to consider far-reaching left-wing solutions.

There is a widespread search for ideas that can offer a way out of the capitalist misery overseen by both parties of big business. As the Socialist Alternative campaign for Kshama Sawant in Seattle illustrates, US society is becoming increasingly fertile for the rise of socialist ideas.

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:



Northern Ireland: Opposing austerity and sectarianism

Belfast 'Socialism 2012' debate and discussion event a great success.

Socialist Party (CWI, Ireland) reporters, Belfast



China: Bo Xilai and the crisis in the Communist Party

Power struggle exposes China's regime to further risks.

Vincent Kolo, (Chinaworker.info) from Socialism Today (see advert page 7)



Australia: Yarra council - one in five vote socialist across city

Socialists increase vote and retain Stephen Jolly's seat.

By Socialist Party (CWI, Australia) reporters Melbourne

Socialist Alternative wins historic 27% against Washington State House Speaker

Kshama Sawant, the Occupy-inspired Socialist Alternative candidate for Washington State House of Representatives, scored 27% (estimated 20,000+ votes) against Democratic incumbent Speaker Frank Chopp.

"We achieved this election result as an openly Socialist campaign that was largely ignored by the corporate media, with no corporate donations, on a shoestring budget," explained Kshama. "Occupy gave a voice to working people's rage at Wall Street, and our campaign gave voice to mass anger at the corporate politicians. It shows the potential to build a powerful left electoral challenge to the two corporate parties."

"This vote sends a clear message to Frank Chopp and the political establishment - we are coming after you!", said Kshama. She added: "Wall Street has two parties - working people need a party of our own."

Election night saw mass celebrations erupt in the streets of Seattle after the passage of Referendum 74 upholding marriage rights for same-sex couples. Speaking from atop a make-shift sound truck, Kshama addressed

a crowd of over 2,000 people: "If you think that the Democratic Party politicians did this for you, let me tell you it was us that won this! The fight for LGBT rights has just begun, we still need to fight poverty, homelessness, and workplace discrimination."



Kshama Sawant

Socialism 2012: 'A real tonic of hope'

In these grim days when the deranged greed of the capitalist class has brought the planet to its knees and shattered the lives of millions, last weekend's Socialism 2012 rally was a real tonic of hope.

The vigour and intellectual clarity of the main speakers was in a league of its own. The political sessions that I was able to attend were top quality, throwing light onto some very difficult to understand issues.

All in all it added up to an inspirational and unmissable weekend. So thanks to everyone whose hard work put it together.

An idea which resonated frequently over the two days was that the only force capable of ridding us of capitalism is the organised power of the world's working class.

This prompted me to enclose a cartoon which I drew in the early 1970s when I first began working full-time, initially as a printer for Militant (forerunner of the Socialist). But 40 years on I realise I could easily have taken the idea for this cartoon from last weekend's rally. Marxist ideas are not here today and gone tomorrow.

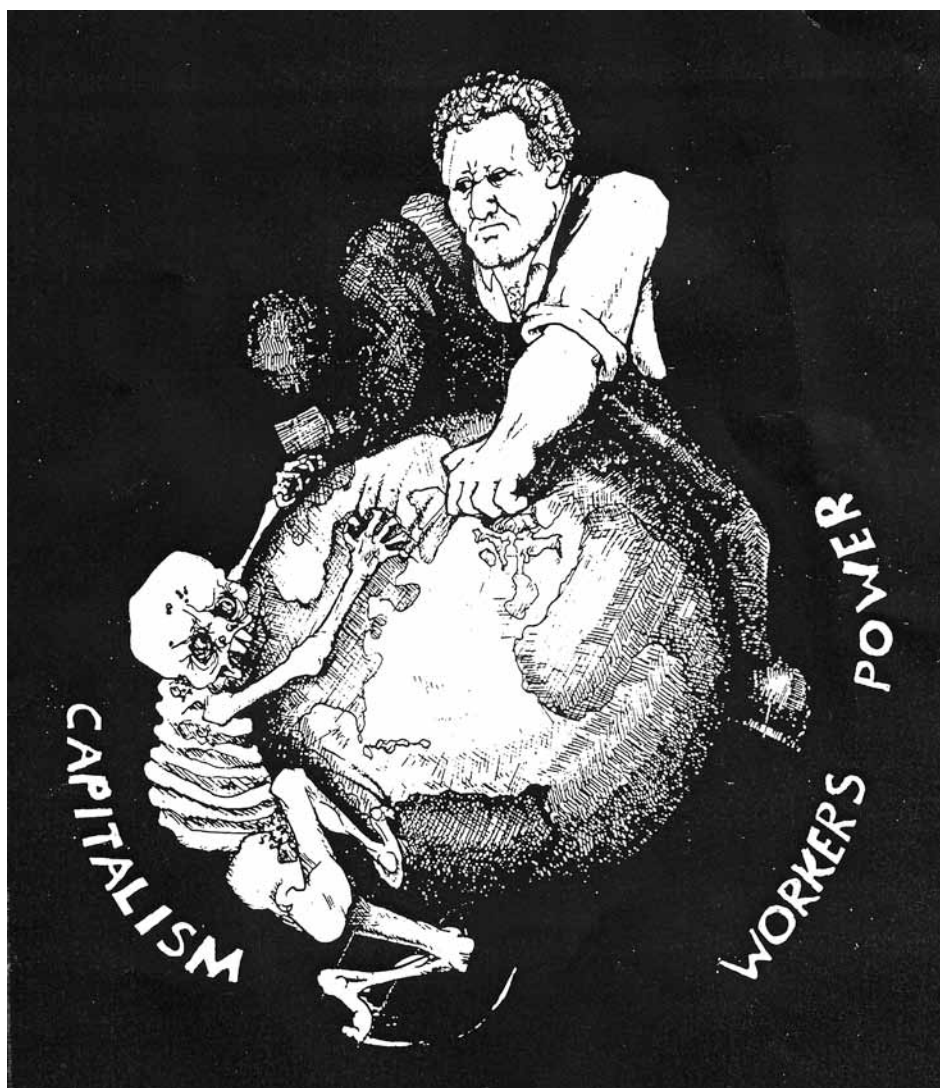
The only minor change I would make would be to draw capitalism in a tad less healthy state!

I've enclosed a £25 bribe in the hope of getting my drawing published but if this isn't possible chip it into the fighting fund anyway.

With warm regards to all my comrades,

Alan Hardman

Editors' note: we do not 'necessarily' require bribes to carry the work of artists, writers and other contributors to the Socialist! Alan's drawing and donation are gratefully received.



Alan's cartoon from the early 1970s

Greedy capitalists threaten ship

Martin Mayer, Unite Executive Council member for Passenger Transport and chair of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Road Transport

Section sent the Socialist his report of a dramatic stand-off in Ghana between a US 'vulture fund' and the Argentine government.

The dispute is over bonds that were defaulted on eleven years ago during the major financial crisis in Argentina.



ARA Libertad

The Argentine naval vessel ARA Libertad was seized because Argentina refuses to pay a \$20 million bond that the vulture fund demanded, as part-payment on that country's junk bonds, to release the ship.

The ITF trade union group has condemned the seizure.

The vulture fund, Elliott Management Corp, (led by financier Paul Singer) is majority shareholder (22%) in UK passenger transport multinational National Express (NEX).

Elliott is seen as a prime mover in NEX's union-busting stance in its US yellow school bus operations. ITF affiliate US International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) is battling for union rights for the NEX subsidiary's school bus em-

ployees in a joint campaign with UK union Unite.

Elliott's subsidiary NML Capital Ltd tracked the Libertad to the port of Tema in Ghana where it then got an injunction to hold the vessel until a payment of around \$20 million is made.

Elliott seeks repayment in full of \$172 million of Argentine debt bought in 2001 for 15-30 cents on the dollar.

Elliott's NML subsidiary claims to hold Argentine bonds with a face value of \$630 million which they now say are worth \$2.3 billion with accrued interest.

Argentina defaulted on \$82 billion in dollar-denominated debt and devalued its currency in 2002.

Talks with investors began in

2005, when the then Argentine president, Nestor Kirchner, offered 30 cents on the dollar to buy back the bonds, agreed by 93% of Argentina's creditors.

The Ghanaian court ruling is in nobody's interest except Paul Singer's and his multi-billion vulture fund operation.

It cannot be right that an independent capitalist institution can undermine international debt restructuring efforts with impunity – and at massive profit to itself. Argentina claims that seizure of their vessel is illegal in maritime law.

The international trade union movement is siding with the Argentinean people and their unions. The ITF is calling for solidarity messages: mail@itf.org.uk

Vultures with links to the top

The ITF often has to rescue distressed seafarers left stranded around the world, sometimes owed months of wages by wealthy ship-owners. It has major battles with multinational capital which fires trade union activists in other countries.

A current ITF campaign involves multinational giant DHL whose subsidiary sacked 20 union activists in Turkey.

Elliott Management Corp is no friend of trade unions and working people – or of poor countries crippled by debt in our global capitalist system.

Elliott donated millions of dollars to US Republican causes, making a substantial donation to Romney's presidential campaign.

It funded a US lobby for lower top rates of tax and for regulations favouring hedge funds like Elliott, including the right to claim payment in full – with interest – on defaulted foreign government bonds.

Profits

Such business made Elliott one of the most profitable global capitalist institutions, with average annual returns of a staggering 14%.

Buying up defaulted government bonds of the world's poorest countries and reclaiming their value in full – with interest! – is one of Elliott's most lucrative activities.

Elliott also bought junk bonds (mostly at 20% of their face value) from Delphi Automotive, US auto components firm, which filed for bankruptcy in 2005. In 2009, Singer's hedge fund group won control of Delphi and refused to either make up the \$7 billion shortfall in the pension fund or pay any more US workers' pensions.

Loans

In 2009, no US government bailout of GM or Chrysler could have worked without saving Delphi, which received more than \$12.9 billion in taxpayer-backed loans. Delphi then employed 25,000 union workers.

The original US bailout plan would have saved 14 US plants but the hedge funders demanded double the price the Treasury would pay for their "junk" bonds.

Elliott's profits from that bailout are estimated at \$1.28 billion, yet not one US union production worker now remains.

Out of 29 US plants only four remain employing 5,000 workers, as production shifted to China where 100,000 workers are employed to make those same automotive components.

Mitt Romney's wife Ann invested "more than \$1 million" with Elliott via her blind trust – so their smallest possible gain was \$10 million.

Che Guevara

Symbol of fashion or symbol of struggle?

Tom Baldwin
South West Socialist Party

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara is perhaps the most recognisable revolutionary icon, his image having graced countless posters and t-shirts.

For some it is just a fashion statement, but many are drawn to him as a symbol of the struggle against capitalism and the fight for a better world. Films such as the Motorcycle Diaries and the two-part biopic 'Che' reflect his enduring popularity and give a glimpse of how his political ideas developed.

Revolutionaries do not fall ready-made from the sky, but are formed by conditions and events. In 1950 the asthmatic Guevara began his series of travels around Latin America as a 22 year old middle class medical student, seeking only youthful adventure. But these experiences were to shape the rest of his life. On these journeys he witnessed the enormous class divide that existed between the "luxurious façade" and the real "soul" of the continent, the poor and downtrodden.

Seeing the struggles of workers and the poor everywhere he went, Guevara's attitude evolved from sympathy, through support, to active participation. It was also on these travels that he was given the nickname Che, due to his Argentinian accent.

26 July Movement

It was in Mexico in 1955 that Che first met Fidel Castro and joined his 26 July movement. At the time Cuba was under the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had come to power through a military coup. Its economy was completely dominated by US big business and wealthy Americans frequented the many Havana brothels and casinos.

Castro wanted a modern capitalist state in Cuba with some reforms for the poor. He envisaged a guerrilla struggle to overthrow only the dictatorship, not capitalism. Even after returning to Cuba he told a journalist: "we have no animosity towards the United States... we are fighting for a democratic Cuba and an end to dictatorship".

Che himself was, by this point, an avowed socialist but joined the movement as a way to get active in the struggle. He had previously criticised the Stalinist 'popular front' policy, promoted by the Cuban Communist Party. This was the idea

that in Latin American countries the working class was not ready to take power and establish a socialist society and instead had to make alliances with the 'progressive' sections of the national capitalist class in order to defeat imperialism. He had seen first-hand how these so-called progressive capitalists were prepared to use bloody repression against the workers to defend their own interests.

However, while correctly criticising this approach, Che did not propose an alternative. He had not absorbed the lessons of the Russian Revolution nor the writings of its leaders, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, particularly on the role of the revolutionary party and Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution.

Trotsky's theory

Trotsky explained that the capitalist class in countries with developing capitalist economies such as Cuba was dominated by imperialism and unable to play the independent role that it had in the capitalist revolutions such as in Britain. It was therefore incapable of carrying out its historical role and the tasks of land reform, establishing capitalist democracy and creating an independent nation state.

Trotsky argued that these steps could only be achieved through socialist revolution: nationalising industry, taking its ownership and control out of the hands of the capitalists and establishing a planned economy under democratic workers' control.

Trotsky said that the working class, even when in a minority, must lead the struggle against capitalism. The decisive role of the working class arises from its role in production and the collective consciousness which develops in the workplace and lays the basis for the collective democratic control and management of society. Because of isolation in rural areas and an individualistic outlook, the peasantry cannot lead such a transformation, but can still play an important role in the struggle.

This theory was borne out in the course of the 1917 Russian Revolution when the working class, in the period immediately after 1917, established the most democratic state in history.

But Che was not an active member of any organisation that understood the lessons of 1917. He instead saw the peasantry as the



Che Guevara

most revolutionary class and the methods of guerrilla struggle as the most effective. He was influenced by many factors, including his own class background, the abandonment of an independent working class approach by communist parties and the victory of Mao's peasant army in the Chinese revolution.

Cuban revolution

It was December 1956 when a small band of fighters, Che and Castro among them, landed in Cuba. The landing was plagued with errors and accidents and two days later, when the scattered guerrillas managed to regroup, they were reduced in number from 82 to just 20. But just over two years later they had forced Batista to flee the island.

Che thought the guerrilla struggle would ignite a revolutionary movement, especially among the peasantry. But while the guerrillas drew support, the mass of the population - especially the urban working class - were not active participants in the struggle.

Che gained a reputation as a courageous fighter and leader. He also organised political discussions among those under him and argued for socialist ideas within the 26 July Movement. The guerrilla forces grew as they were seen as the only force consistently opposing the Batista dictatorship.

In marked contrast to the brutal treatment they received at the hands of the regime, the guerrillas did not execute the soldiers they captured. Instead they discussed politics with them and let them go, winning an increasing number of defectors from the army.

On 1 January 1959, with his regime crumbling and the guerrillas approaching the cities, Batista fled the country. The only successful general strike since Che's arrival on the island was called for the following day, which greeted the guerrillas as they marched into the major cities.

Despite Che arguing for it, Castro's intention had never been the overthrow of capitalism. It was over a year later when he first described the revolution in Cuba as 'socialist'. He was pushed to take measures of nationalisation by the pressure of



With Castro

the masses combined with the reaction of American imperialism. As the US recoiled, Cuba developed greater trade and political links with the Soviet Union. The 26 July movement merged with the Communist Party and became the organ of one party rule.

Capitalism overthrown

The Cuban revolution broadly bears out the theory of the permanent revolution. Castro's vision of an independent, democratic, capitalist Cuba was impossible; the Cuban revolution overthrew capitalism. But workers did not play an active role in the revolution, so their role in the subsequent running of society was also passive. From the outset the planned economy in Cuba was controlled not by workers' democracy, but by a bureaucratic elite, reflecting Stalinism in the USSR.

Despite this, the revolution still brought huge improvements to the lives of ordinary Cubans. Illiteracy was eradicated in just two years and by the late 1970s life expectancy was 74, comparable to Britain and much higher than other Latin American countries, Bolivia's was just 45.

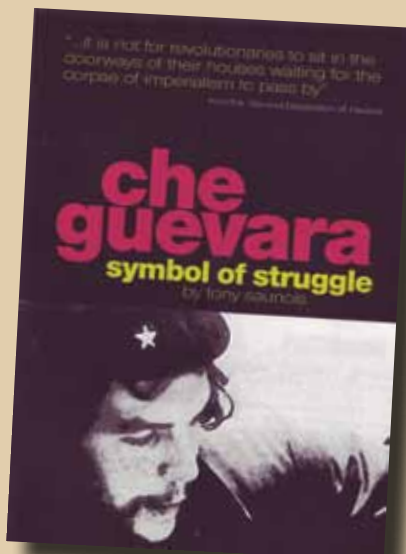
Showing the same spirit of self-sacrifice that had marked him out as a fighter, Che rejected completely the privileges of the bureaucracy. For this he must be saluted and it

is one of the reasons he's still so admired today. Despite his growing disillusionment and revulsion at the bureaucracy, unlike Leon Trotsky he did not propose nor fight consistently for an alternative. Instead he left Cuba in order to try and spread revolution abroad. This devotion to internationalism was another of Che's best characteristics.

The methods of guerrilla struggle, which succeeded in the specific conditions of Cuba, did not have the same effect elsewhere. In 1965, Che left for the Congo but his efforts were unsuccessful and he had to make a clandestine return to Cuba. In 1967 he appeared with a band of guerrillas in Bolivia. Sadly the failure to ignite revolution and resulting defeat of that struggle were to prove fatal to Che.

Che was captured and executed by the Bolivian army, backed by the CIA, at the age of just 39. Throughout his life, the injustices that Che saw motivated him to continue struggling for a better world. At the same time, the development of his political ideas never stopped. Works by Trotsky were found on him when he was captured.


Che Guevara's position as an icon of struggle is completely justified. But we would not be doing his life justice if we did not examine it 'warts and all'. His life is an inspiration for all those seeking to fight oppression and change society.



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Up to £9,000 tuition fees, with loan interest charged at 3% above inflation from the day you start. EMA student payments scrapped or facing cuts across the whole of Britain. Soaring youth unemployment and plummeting graduate job prospects. The haemorrhaging of Welsh university funding. Students have every reason to be furious.

It doesn't have to be this way.

The richest in our society are not only richer now than they were before the start of the recession, they are richer now than they have ever been. A staggering \$21 trillion is stashed offshore. The Tories dish out tax cuts for millionaires, but say that EMA is unaffordable. They won't listen to moral arguments - we have to fight for our future!

Two years ago 50,000 students flooded the streets of London in an attempt to defeat these attacks on education. It was a heroic fight, but the mood of students was not matched by the National Union of Students (NUS) leadership at the

time. Ultimately the protests were unsuccessful outside of winning temporary concessions in Wales.

However, society is in a very different place today. Every section of the working class, and large sections of the middle class, is now under attack in the name of austerity. Millions of workers have marched and taken strike action. By uniting with them, students can escalate our fight against cuts.

When lecturers took part in co-ordinated strike action against attacks on public sector pensions last year, students stood shoulder to shoulder with them on picket

lines. In March, 200 protesting electricians were kettled by police as they attempted to link up with a student demo. On 21 November, we want students, lecturers and workers to march together again on the NUS organised demonstration in London.

We need a democratic and fighting NUS that will confidently argue against cuts, give a lead, and prepare a strategy to win. The inspiring example of 500,000 students and workers marching together in Quebec demonstrates how a strong anti-cuts student movement, united with workers,

can achieve victory.

Socialist Students supports the hugely significant demand for the TUC to call a 24-hour general strike against austerity. We argue that students should also take up this demand and strike alongside workers on the day.

Let's make sure that the demonstration on November 21 is only the next step of a powerful student and anti-austerity movement that can stop the cuts and bring down this government of millionaires.

See socialiststudents.org.uk for reports from the demo and meetings in your area

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!