



KICK OUT THE CUTS COALITION!



When Tory Chancellor George Osborne presented his Autumn Budget Statement what he served up wasn't so much a speech as a load of lies spun together with well-rehearsed anti-working class hoopla. The Socialist unravels some of the Con-Dems' claims.

Lie #1: "The economy is healing"

With regard to the deficit, former member of the Bank of England monetary policy committee David Blanchflower explained: "the part-time Chancellor had fiddled the size of the deficit by accounting tricks". Behind Osborne's sleight of hand is 'growth' forecast cut from 0.8% to a contraction of 0.1%, and lower forecasts for future years too.

With trade and industry figures down now, instead of growing the economy is shrinking. What gets called a triple-dip recession is more like a constant bumping along the bottom.

Lie #2: The government is taking measures so "it always pays to work"

Research from the TUC shows that over the last 30 years, as pro-big business governments have legislated in the interest of the super-rich, the share of national income going to wages has fallen. Workers on the median income are now £7,000 a year worse off in real terms.

'Making work pay' requires a living minimum wage rate of at least £10 an hour and investment in a massive programme of socially useful public works to create jobs. Instead the Tory/Lib Dem coalition enforce workfare slavery on the unemployed. They

limit most working-age benefits to a 1% rise for three years, breaking the link with inflation, condemning millions to misery - driving the living conditions of those who can't work, or can't find work, or enough work, into the dirt.

Lie #3: "We're all in this together"

Where's the cap on rents? Or on energy and food price prices? And, if industrial-scale tax dodging, price hiking and wage cutting hasn't netted sufficiently obscene takings for the super-rich, Osborne has gifted them a cut in the rate of corporation tax - making it one of the lowest of the world's main economies.

£800 billion is lying idle in the bank vaults of the big corporations. While benefit claimants face cruel, destitution-threatening sanctions, big business refuses to spend these cash piles on investing in jobs and ser-

vices, because it sees no easy way to make a profit.

Lie #4: "There is no alternative"

Osborne says cuts may be painful but there's no other 'road to recovery'. This lie is compounded by the Labour so-called opposition confirming that they will maintain pay freezes and other cuts. But there is an alternative.

A socialist government would, for example, reverse the decades of corporation tax cuts and impose a 50% tax levy on big business's hoarded billions.

It would nationalise the tax-dodging privatised profiteering utilities and banking system under democratic popular control and use the resources to fund massive investment in decent jobs and public services. That could be just a start.

So don't just get angry with Osborne and Co. Get organised. Get socialist.



photo Paul Mattson

Stop press:

On Tuesday 11 December workers and trade union members responded to the National Shop Steward Network's call to lobby the TUC general council. They demanded a date for a 24-hour general strike in the first part of 2013. The general council agreed to send out a consultation to all affiliates.

Across England and Wales many workers and anti-cuts campaigners back this campaign. As we go to press there is a report from Knowsley where a packed 100-strong emergency meeting of the local government Unison branch voted unanimously for a motion calling for a 24-hour general strike.

See page 2 and shopstewards.net for more

the **Socialist**

The paper of the Socialist Party. Issue 746.

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

what we think

Prepare to resist austerity in 2013

Millionaire Tory Chancellor Osborne began his Autumn Statement speech with excuses for economic predictions reduced from 0.8% 'growth', to -0.1%, a contraction, and lower forecasts for years. Two days later the Guardian reported: "The City has put the UK on triple-dip recession alert after news that falling factory and North Sea production have sent the output of industry plunging to its lowest level in 20 years."

In reality the truth is the capitalist class in Britain, as elsewhere, have no solution to the deep-going crisis of capitalism they face. We've quoted Einstein's definition of insanity before, "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results", but it is certainly apt.

Osborne later pledged that a further cut in the rate of corporation tax to 21% from April 2014 - already among the lowest of the world's main economies - would bring us growth and jobs. But there is no evidence to show that previous reductions have had that effect - the opposite has happened.

On the one hand you have Amazon, Starbucks and co, corporate tax-dodging. On the other hand you have £800 billion lying idle in the bank vaults of the big corporations as they see no easy profit in spending it.

A government serious about improving the lives of millions would make a 50% levy on that stashed cash and use it to put money where it will make a difference - in working class and middle class people's pockets, through a massive programme of socially useful public works, through wage and benefit increases and real job creation not workfare, so we can actually spend money, raising 'consumption'. But they refuse to consider tapping their super-rich big business pals. In the same vein, Osborne decided against a mansion tax.

Blame game

Disgracefully but characteristically Osborne directed us to blame our neighbours for the cuts he announced, and talked about: "being fair to the person who leaves home every morning to go out to work and sees their neighbour still asleep, living a life on benefits ... we have to have a welfare system that is fair to the working people who pay for it."

The government's big lie, that we are divided into 'shirkers' and 'workers', must be smashed. They want us to blame each other

for the poverty conditions we face - but it is them and the capitalist system they defend that are to blame. This budget limits most working-age benefits to a 1% rise for three years, breaking the link with inflation and meaning misery for millions.

Look at the figures: on average there are more than five job seekers for every vacancy. And the majority of new claimants for housing benefit are working people - with an estimated six million stuck in precarious, low-paid work. The real shirkers are the millionaires and billionaires whose wealth is continuing to pile up - whether they work or not - while we are being put on rations.

Infrastructure

Again we heard about Osborne's fantasy infrastructure plans - this time £5 billion to go into roads, broadband, science, etc. We'd all like to see investment in socially useful and planned infrastructure, bringing jobs and improved travel and living standards but his inadequate measures will be paid for by fresh cuts across most government departments.

The Ernst and Young Item Club said that this amount would have "minor, almost negligible impact", and Guardian research shows that of commitments made in the 2011 Autumn Statement very few of the projects announced have progressed. This year the Chancellor pledged £1 billion for roads but the Guardian reports that of the 18 road schemes in last November's budget work has not begun on one!

That the gas strategy is to include consultation on incentives for fracking represents major threats to health and safety and to the environment.

Teachers will face the prospect of performance-related pay, a bully's charter in effect. Already the number of teachers who quit their jobs in English state schools has risen by almost a fifth in one year. See page 4 for more on this.

Education spending shows a blatant transfer of wealth and partial control from ordinary people to the rich vultures preying on our public services.

A smug Tory education minister Michael Gove will be given £1 billion, 'saved' from government departments to spend on expanding his pet academy and free school project - in effect privatising schools, eroding education workers' rights and democratic accountability and transferring land from the public to the private sector.



JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

If you're not yet a member of the Socialist Party now is the time to get involved! As a party we are playing a key role in the battle against austerity - putting forward a programme to arm the working class with the idea of what an alternative to cuts could be, with strategy and tactics based on the enormous potential strength of the working class and with socialist ideas to show there is an alternative to cuts, crisis and capitalism.

If you agree with what we say in the Socialist, take out a subscription to get the paper delivered every week, and to find out about joining text your name and postcode to 07761 818206, visit the website www.socialistparty.org.uk or call 020 8988 8777.

Fail, fail, fail

Labour MPs made speeches attempting to show that the Con-Dems are "failing, failing, failing", as Ed Balls, shadow chancellor, put it. But Labour is also failing - failing to put up any alternative to austerity.

Osborne has promised austerity into the next parliament. If Labour announced that they would cancel all these measures if they won the next election they would be enormously popular.

Local government is to have a year's 'respite' from the massacre of its budget, notwithstanding previously decided enormous cuts coming down the line in April. But the year after there will be a 2% reduction in spending. What does this mean? No let up from the Tories handing the axe down to local councillors.

If Labour councillors cannot find the courage, as the few rebel councillors in Southampton

and Hull have done, to vote against this annihilation of local services, they must step aside or face a challenge from people who will - and that means trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners standing as 'no cuts' candidates.

Action needed

The case for building a new mass workers' party that would actually oppose cuts is clear. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, involving the RMT transport union and other leading trade unionists, is an important step in that direction.

The best way to show the mass opposition to austerity is to support the call for a 24-hour general strike. There is no question the mood is there. See the workplace reports on page 4, largely unreported elsewhere.

In Scotland Unison delegates representing union members in local government, health, education, etc, unanimously supported a motion calling for a coordinated industrial action strategy, beginning with a one-day strike across Scotland and coordination with unions across the UK for a one-day strike.

The PCS union has announced a ballot for strike action in the New Year - that will provide the basis for other unions to join the action. Such action would terrify this posh-boy government - look at the measures they take to try to weaken the unions. Strike action would also massively build the confidence of working class people that we can defeat the Con-Dems.

Socialist alternative needed

With all this comes a questioning of what kind of a society we live in that sees children malnourished, pensioners dying in the cold, and hospitals closing - while there is no shortage of wealth. It's unsurprising that, with a comparable situation in the US, a Gallup poll has found 39% of Americans now have a "positive image" of socialism, 53% among Democrat voters.

The 30% vote for a Socialist Alternative (CWI) candidate in Seattle in November's US elections is further evidence of the search for an alternative to rotten capitalism - in the belly of the beast itself. The times are changing and this is not limited to the US.

In 2013, linked to making a 24-hour general strike our rallying call, the case for democratic socialism, based on planning to meet the needs of the '99%', the overwhelming majority, as an alternative to bankrupt, rotten capitalism must be made at every opportunity.

SPECIAL OFFER!

Do you know someone who shouts at pro-rich politicians on the TV? Who thinks the cuts must be stopped? Why not put them out of their misery - get them a subscription to the Socialist!

New Year special offer - 13 issues for £13 only!

Go to www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate, pay £13 and type 'New Year offer' in the message box. Offer valid until 13 January 2013

Brixton byelection, south London: We want a candidate we can count on

It may be cold outside but not as cold as George Osborne's heart and his brutal austerity measures. But he's not the only one.

Brixton has one of the highest rates of child poverty in Britain but Lambeth's Labour council still continues to attack and undermine children's services, such as the much loved One o'Clock Clubs.

Many families in the area are now dreading the forthcoming changes to housing benefit. London's property boom has certainly passed the poorest by - but has left Brixton with sky-high rents and very greedy landlords. The future for many looks bleak.

The council leader may have moved on to better things (new MP for Croydon North) but his legacy is the managed decline of an area rich in working class struggle.

That's why the Socialist Party wants the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to stand an anti-austerity candidate in the resulting Brixton Hill byelection to be held on 17 January.

TUSC is prepared to guarantee a candidate who is fully committed to no cuts and to fight those seeking to impose further austerity on working class people.
Steve Nally



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

Socialism Today



The Socialist Party's magazine December-January issue includes:

●World in revolt

Peter Taaffe looks at the key events of 2012 and outlines the way forward for class struggle.

And much more

£2.50 including postage from:
Socialism Today PO Box 24697,
London E11 1YD.

socialismtoday@socialistparty.org.uk
www.socialismtoday.org
020 8988 8773

Interview

Blacklisting: 'we will fight for justice in every way'

National Shop Stewards Network chair, Rob Williams, recently interviewed Dave Smith, a blacklisted construction worker. At last there has been publicity about the disgraceful blacklisting of workers, largely because Ian Kerr of the Consulting Association (CA) had to go in front of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee which is investigating these anti-union practices. Dave explains the significance of these new revelations.

What was the CA and how did the big companies use it to victimise union reps and activists?

The CA ran the blacklist for the 44 largest construction firms in the UK. It held a database of over 3,200 union members. The senior HR managers supplied information on workers - including work history and union activity.

What has been the effect on the lives of blacklisted workers?

The firms paid for access to the database. They checked the names of workers applying for work. If a name came up the worker was refused a job or sacked. Union activists were out of work for years. Some lost their homes. Two blacklisted workers from the Jubilee Line project in London have committed suicide.

After Kerr's testimony, what should happen?

GMB union general secretary Paul Kenny has written to every Labour councillor in the UK arguing that no blacklisting firm should be allowed to tender for publicly funded projects.

In September, 28 workers on the



Crossrail project were sacked. The shop steward, Frank Morris has been protesting daily. Crossrail and the contracting consortium Bam Ferrovial Kier deny wrongdoing. Does this show that blacklisting and victimisation is still going on?

Blacklisting is definitely still going on. Ian Kerr admitted that there was an awful lot of discussion at blacklisting meetings about the Crossrail project. He also admitted there was lots of blacklisting on the Olympics. We have known it for years - Frank Morris is the latest.

The Sparks' defeat of the Besna contract showed how workers can fight back and win. Two union reps at Ratcliffe and Grangemouth were suspended but through action and pressure by their members, both were reinstated. What does this show?

Blacklisting takes place across every sector of the economy; it is part of the struggle

between capital and labour - and is not likely to go away. But we will fight for justice in every way - in the courts, in legislation, in the press - but most importantly industrially.

The Besna and Crossrail dispute put blacklisting centre stage - thousands of flyers have gone into building sites. Thousands of building workers have responded by taking industrial action to defend our reps. It was interfering with production that won successes, not reliance on employment tribunals.

This is not about one or two people but a collective struggle based initially among blacklisted workers. We try to draw in support from the unions, lawyers, academics, politicians, Occupy and human rights activists. Our small fight is part of a bigger struggle to change the world.

The NSSN is part of the campaign against blacklisting. See www.shopstewards.net for reports and videos.

Merry Christmas from Starbucks

What a lovely Christmas present we've had from Starbucks this year! The company has generously volunteered to pay £20 million corporation tax over the next two years.

This is certainly a big amount of money... to most of us anyway. But Starbucks has made over £3 billion of sales in 13 years and yet paid no corporation tax at all in the last three. Starbucks' legal team continues to insist that everything was perfectly legal and that the company doesn't owe a penny. They're just feeling charitable - nothing to do with the public outrage and beginnings of a boycott.

What if we all take the same attitude? We could phone up our local councils and say that we don't fancy paying our usual £80 (for example) a month council tax bill. We won't pay anything for the next few years. But after that we'll be very generous and volunteer to pay £5 a month for a while. Would we be congratulated for being socially responsible? No, we'd be pulled in front of a judge.

And not only does Starbucks'



photo Paul Mattsson

'decision' make light of the entire concept of taxes, but the company's bosses have the cheek to try and claw back any losses by slashing their workers' conditions. They've forced workers to sign a new contract cutting paid breaks, maternity leave and sick leave.

We can't blame it all on Starbucks though. The PCS union estimates that there is £120 billion avoided or evaded in tax by the super-rich eve-

ry year. And the government sits idly by. Cameron claimed it was 'morally wrong' for Jimmy Carr to avoid tax. But he and his cronies don't take any real action. In fact, they and previous New Labour governments cut the jobs of the people who collect the tax!

So that lovely present in the shiny paper with the big bow turns out to be nothing but an empty box.

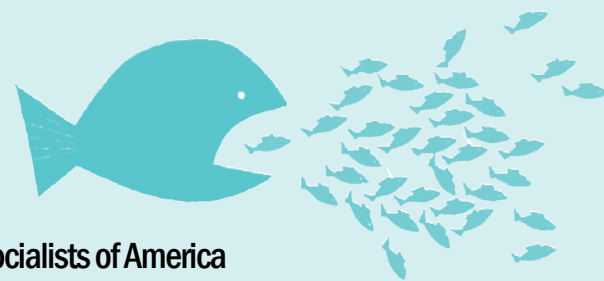
Sarah Wrack



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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

Them...



United Socialists of America

A recent poll by Gallup in the US has shown that 39% of Americans now view socialism positively. This comes less than a month after Kshama Sawant, member of Socialist Alternative (CWI US) won 30% of the vote in her challenge for the House of Representatives in Seattle.

How much?!

In 2010 when the coalition government voted to increase university tuition fees to a maximum of £9,000 a year, hundreds of thousands protested in opposition. The thought of having to spend £27,000 on a three year degree is more than enough to put off many working class students. But now it turns out even that is an underestimate.

Government figures show that the real cost of a degree, taking into account the interest paid on loans could be £100,000. So much for universities minister David Willetts claiming the £9,000 a year would be worth it because graduates would earn an extra £100,000 over their lifetimes.

Unemployment

There is a growing crisis of unemployment among some sections of ethnic minority women, a group of MPs has shown. Some groups are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts. The politicians say that at least a quarter of this is due to prejudice and discrimination. Many women have taken drastic action to try and overcome these attitudes - some going as far as changing their names or removing their hijabs to 'appear more white'.

Homelessness

The coffin of Michael Gething was carried through Totnes in a procession of local people after he died of hypothermia. He was homeless in a town with no homeless shelter and it was -2 degrees outside. People who attended the funeral spoke of their shame that this had been allowed to happen in their town. But in reality it's not just in Totnes. People like Michael die all around the

country, every week. A study last year showed that, on average, homeless people die 30 years younger than the rest of the population. And it's not the working class people 'lucky' enough to have a home who should feel guilty - it's the politicians who are slashing jobs, housing benefit and social services.

PF Why?

The Autumn Statement outlined plans for a new-look Private Finance Initiative. One difference from the old PFI (introduced by New Labour) is that the government will increase equity stakes to improve investors' credit ratings and try to entice more pension funds and insurance companies to invest. But this could raise the price paid by us over the 20-30 year lifetimes of the projects - and the price was plenty high enough with the old type!

Swiss banks

In the bustle around the Autumn Statement and its outlining more cuts to welfare, you might have missed news of one of the accompanying documents which showed that there is an estimated £40 billion of UK taxpayers' money being held in Swiss bank accounts. While the Swiss government is now taking limited steps to open up their banking systems, for years these huge sums have been hidden in these accounts to avoid paying tax in the UK.

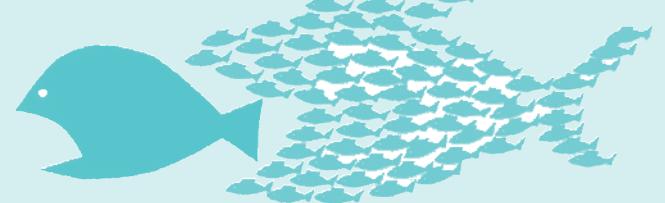
Happy new year!

Wondering what 2013 holds? A couple of predictions have been made already:

One in six charities say they may have to close next year because of a combination of cuts to public funding and falling donations from the public, according to the Charities Aid Foundation. One in three are worried about having to cut services. So much for the 'big society'.

And at the same time, the IPPR think tank tells us unemployment could rise by 200,000 over the next 12 months. This is expected to include 86,000 16-24 year olds joining the dole queue bringing youth unemployment well over a million again.

...& Us



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

@tweets this week

Dan Crowter

David Cameron on #XFactor posing with disabled kids & families?! He's been robbing benefits from disabled people & closed Remploy factories!

Nancy Taaffe

BBC News - Council reserves now stand at £12.9bn, says report. Labour councils should spend & mobilise against cuts

NSSN

The #NSSN would like to thank all who came along to lobby the #TUC this morning, it doesn't stop here we go back to our unions now

Gove goes to war on teachers' pay

The attack on teachers' pay unleashed by education secretary Gove is a declaration of war on teachers and teaching unions. National Union of Teachers (NUT) executive member Martin Powell-Davies explains why on his blog: electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk. This is an extract.

We have to urgently announce a programme of escalating national strike action in defence of teachers' pay - and call on other trade unionists and parents to support us in a battle to defend education from a government intent on ruling schools by fear and intimidation and on cutting costs to help accelerate school privatisation. Gove wants all progression up the pay scale to depend on performance-related appraisal decisions.

After two years of a pay freeze, Gove has announced that schools could also opt not to award next year's paltry 1% annual increase. This leaves teachers open to attack by bullying managers.

Moving jobs could mean moving back to the bottom of the pay scale. With school budgets being squeezed, Gove wants the 'market' to be used to enforce pay cuts as teachers are forced to compete for posts by offering to be paid less than their colleagues.

Gove has also made clear that these attacks are just the start. He wants a "second stage of reform" to follow - which would be the complete deregulation of pay and conditions.

The NUT press release said: "Our



Fighting school privatisation photo the Socialist

members will not see this as anything other than a further attack on their pay and conditions. Pay and pensions are at the heart of the current disputes with the secretary of state.

"Together with the NASUWT, we represent nine out of ten teachers who will be appalled by these proposals, coming as they do on top of pension contribution increases. We will be meeting with them next

week to discuss the way forward."

Those talks need to result in an immediate decision to call an urgent joint national strike, as the first day in an escalating programme of action. The NUT national executive meets on 13 December.

Backed up by the policy agreed by TUC Congress, teaching unions should also plan to coordinate strikes with other unions looking

to take action next year, such as the PCS civil service union who have just announced a new national ballot for action over jobs, pay and pensions.

Michael Gove may have made a major miscalculation. He has assumed that the failure of the NUT and NASUWT leaderships to take further national action over pensions means that teachers are not up for a fight.

But if a clear lead is given and a clear plan of action spelt out, then teachers will respond overwhelmingly to a call to national strike action.

We need to make sure that teachers go off to the Christmas break knowing that we are gearing up for decisive action in the New Year. If we let these 'pay-by-performance' attacks succeed, then teaching will become a completely demoralised and divided profession.

Our action campaign has to be combined with a campaign to explain to the public why these attacks will damage education and why parents and teachers need to fight together against Gove's attempts to divide and dismantle locally accountable comprehensive education.

Tesco drivers' blockade



The picket line tank... photo A. Tice

After eight days of discontinuous strike action, the Doncaster Tesco drivers started an indefinite strike on 6 December. 180 Unite members have been outsourced by Tesco to Eddie Stobart Ltd (ESL) who now want to sack them all.

On 8 December around 250 drivers, families and supporters gathered round, and on, the now famous tank parked outside the depot gates before marching into the town centre and onto the Church View store.

Then on 10 December the drivers upped the ante. Strikers split into two pickets and blockaded both gates to the distribution depot.

It took the police around an hour to arrive and during another hour of negotiations nothing moved in or out. This action will have hit Tesco hard. Reports from workers in the warehouse coming off shift at 2pm spoke of hardly having any pallets left in the warehouse.

I left the picket at 3.30pm and four hours later a text from the Unite branch chair said: "We are still here, lorries all over out here".

Earlier I overheard a policeman say "It's not like the miners' strike." Well some of the strikers are ex-miners and some are ex-army and its getting more like the miners' strike and more like a war, a class war!

As one driver said on Saturday: "Why should things function so that the little people carry on getting shafted by big businesses like Tesco." Well today a lot of little people stopped Tesco functioning!

• Please send messages of support to Trevor Cheetham c/o lynncheetham@yahoo.co.uk and donations to Dave Beck, 6 Wildene Drive, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 9SN made out to "8-9/490 branch, TGWU, Tesco Contract Doncaster"

Alistair Tice

Striking against 'mock Ofsted's'

Alistair Tice

Over 30 members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) took strike action on 6 December at Westfield Sports College, a secondary school in Sheffield.

The dispute is about management's insistence on conducting observations in the style of schools inspectorate Ofsted, what the teachers are calling "mock Ofsted's". Initially the Head wanted a "two day window", meaning that teachers could be observed at any time within a two-day period.

This was brought down to a "one-day window", but the NUT has rightly insisted on the implementation of the NUT/NASUWT protocol that the times of observations should be agreed at least five days in advance.

This issue has been brought to a head by the school implementing "deep coaching" for any teachers judged to have performed poorly in observation. This is the equivalent of teachers being put in Special

Measures, and a step before being put into the Capability procedure which stays on a teacher's record.

The NUT members have been given confidence into taking action by the NUT's national action short of a strike. A further two-day then three-day strikes are planned over the next two weeks.

Most of the 20 or so on the picket line were young teachers. Many students joined the picket line before going into school. They didn't have to do any maths on that day as the entire maths department was on strike!

Joint branch secretary of Sheffield NUT Toby Mallinson told me: "This is dictatorship not leadership. It's about looking for failure. It puts teachers under even more stress and undermines their confidence which in turn undermines their performance. This strike is about who runs the school. Is it just the head or is it all the teachers and staff? This strike gives teachers the confidence to stand up to management bullying."

Please email messages of support to: nutsheffield@btinternet.com

Bristol postal workers fight bullying

Tom Baldwin

Dressed in Santa hats and with spirits high, around 40 postal workers and their supporters joined the picket line on 10 December at the Bristol South East delivery office.

Members of the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) reported the strike was rock solid, with Royal Mail having to bring in managers from as far as Reading and Cardiff to staff the depot.

The strike was called in response to management bullying. Complaints even include being followed to the toilet by managers.

Workers plan to strike again on 17 December if their issues are not addressed. So far the strike is limited to one office. But at a rally outside the gates CWU speakers reported



Picket line Santas photo T. Baldwin

that other branches had donated to their strike fund and that a number of other workplaces were considering action on the same issue.

They explained these were not isolated incidents but part of the push for Royal Mail privatisation.

In order to make Royal Mail more attractive to profit-hungry privateers, bosses are deliberately trying to weaken the union and cow the workers. The CWU should plan to coordinate action nationally to defend their members.

In brief

Defend the Four

The Hackney Unison branch committee has unanimously passed a motion welcoming the decision of Unison to withdraw its High Court appeal against witch-hunted Socialist Party members Glenn Kelly, Onay Kasab, Suzanne Muna and Brian Debus, which has probably saved the union £100,000. A week after the ban on holding office being lifted by Unison, Brian Debus was elected as a shop steward for Shoreditch Library. But the Bromley branch is still being run by unelected regional officials with no lay member control. The motion calls for a lay member-led review into the way senior unelected officers have been allowed to waste large sums of money, challenging legal decisions and using regional supervision against branches as a form of mass disciplinary action. The motion will go to Unison's national conference unless blocked by the Standing Orders Committee. If it is, stand by for another campaign. See <http://youtu.be/HDDKmGNAYLw> for the Reel News film about the witch-hunt and the Defend the Four campaign.

Mid Yorks NHS



photo Iain Dalton

Admin and clerical workers at the Mid Yorks health trust have been fighting downgrading proposals. After their three-day strike on 20-22 November, they were invited for talks by the trust. But then a member of the strike committee was threatened with disciplinary action following an "incident" during the strike. The strike committee unanimously agreed to refuse to attend any negotiations unless this blatant attack was withdrawn. Management have not backed down so the committee agreed to support any further action against the downbanding and the victimisation of members for taking strike action, voting for a branch wide ballot if necessary.

Bromley bins

Bin workers in Bromley will begin a series of strike action in the run up to Christmas and over the New Year. The union's repeated calls to bosses at Veolia Environmental Services to re-instate four unjustly sacked workers for alleged gross misconduct have fallen on deaf ears, leaving Unite with no option but to issue strike dates. Strike action will begin with 24 hours on 14 December 2012, then 48 hours from 27 December and 24 hours from 31 December. More than 80% of refuse workers, working out of the Churchfields refuse and recycling centre, voted in favour of strike action in a recent ballot.

Website

For updates and new workplace reports see: www.socialistparty.org.uk

NHS in crisis

Student nurse says: Give us the resources to provide care!

Becky Johnson,
Student nurse

A recent report flagged up rising death rates and a chronic bed crisis in the NHS. It doesn't take a brain surgeon to see that if you have an overcrowded hospital, are forced to discharge patients prematurely, and have a shrinking budget for a growing and aging population, the service will suffer.

The day after the report, the national press vilified nurses as uncaring and lacking compassion. Of course, there is poor care out there, but the vast majority of us, for the overwhelming majority of time are committed to doing the best we can by our patients, despite the system we work under which sets us up to fail.

We wouldn't work the hours we do for the money we get if we weren't driven by compassion for ordinary people at their most vulnerable.

David Cameron spoke in Prime Minister's Question time. Did he defend nurses as committed professionals, striving to provide care on a shoestring budget?

No, he called us "angels". How offensive!

We are not - for the most part anyway - on a mission from a God. We nurse because we care!

The government cuts our budgets and gives services over to profit makers.

They should invest in the NHS. We need more beds, more quali-



Nurses don't want to be called "angels" photo Paul Mattsson

fied nurses and healthcare assistants with better training to go with it.

If you cut staff numbers, care will slip. If you cut our pay and pensions, nursing will be less appealing and if we are demonised in the press, morale will reach rock bottom. Give us the resources to provide care, so we can do what we're trained to do!

Jacintha Saldanha

I was sad to hear the news about Jacintha Saldanha, the nurse who mistakenly put through a prank call to Kate Middleton from an Australian radio programme. Given how publicly the profession as a whole has been attacked in the press, you have to wonder the level of fall-out she must have feared.

Those pro-privatisation politicians who call her death a tragedy should examine their own role in creating a culture where it is acceptable to vilify individuals who make mistakes working under enormous pressure.



Lewisham

The sham consultation in south-east London against cuts in hospital services ends on 13 December and decisions are due in the new year. Mass opposition has been shown in the community, in particular to threats to close Lewisham hospital's A&E. Many health workers now see the need for their unions locally and nationally to develop an even deeper campaign of action, centred around industrial action. The community opposition has scared the health bosses. Strike action, mass protest and resistance are the only language Tory cutters really understand, and would force them to back down.

Hinckley

On 8 December Hinckley, in Leicestershire, had its biggest demonstration in years when over 100 ambulance workers and supporters marched against the local ambulance station's threatened closure.

Local Union stewards organised the protest against East Midlands Ambulance Service's proposals to close the region's local ambulance stations, cutting the number from 66 to 13. This money-saving exercise would cost lives.

There are many small campaigns on this issue at the moment. These need to be linked up by regionally coordinated action, called by the trade unions, and a national campaign against all attacks on the NHS.

Hinchingbrooke

The chief executive of the first company to take over running an NHS hospital has stepped down. Ali Parsa, CEO of Circle Holdings who took over Hinchingbrooke hospital in Cambridgeshire, took with him a £400,000 pay-off. Last month the National Audit Office announced that the hospital was £4 million in debt, twice the 'target level'. Wasn't the Con-Dems' false logic that private ownership would bring stability to NHS finances? No to the privatisation of our NHS!

Welwyn

Patients explained to Socialist Party members what they thought of the plan to downgrade the Queen Elizabeth II hospital services in Welwyn.

One woman was angry because her son, who has Down's Syndrome, was relocated to Lister hospital in Stevenage. An elderly stroke patient at the QEII was sent to Lister as the service at Welwyn was cut. Once there, this patient was discharged immediately with aspirin medication only to be diagnosed with a cerebral haemorrhage weeks later. Socialists will rally support to defend our NHS. We also aim to stand Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates, locally in next year's county council elections to stand up for a real alternative to cuts in vital services.

Private health: the figures don't add up

Jon Dale

Vulnerable patients with learning disabilities were subjected to a regime compared to torture at a privately owned hospital, Winterbourne View, a BBC Panorama undercover report exposed in 2011.

Now that hospital's parent company, Castlebeck, is likely to be taken over by another private healthcare company. But in the world of private health companies, nothing is straightforward.

In 2006 Castlebeck owned 17 specialist hospitals and care homes for adults and young people with learning disabilities, including Winterbourne View. The company was sold for £255 million to Castle Holdings Limited, a company associated with Barchester Healthcare Group, itself a subsidiary of Lydian Capital Partners.

The NHS paid £3,500 a week for each patient at Winterbourne View. Castlebeck profits increased from £6 million in 2006 to £31 million in 2009. Barchester was registered in Jersey and Lydian in Switzerland, so little if any tax was probably paid on these profits.

The company's business model was to use unqualified staff with minimal pay and training, ignoring the horrific treatment of patients that developed.

"Castlebeck Ltd," a report into Winterbourne said, "appears to have made decisions about profitability, including shareholder returns, over and above decisions about the effective and humane



Former Labour health minister Patricia Hewitt

delivery of assessment, treatment and rehabilitation." Following the Panorama programme, two of the company's care homes were closed.

Castlebeck had borrowed £431 million, including £223 million from banks. The banks have now stepped in to sell off the company and recoup their debts.

Partnerships in Care, the probable buyer, is the second biggest private provider of mental health hospital beds. It is run by another company, Cinven, based in Guernsey. Patricia Hewitt, former health secretary in Tony Blair's government, was appointed as an adviser to Cinven, paid £60,000 for 18 days' work a year.

The biggest private company in the mental health hospital 'market' is Priory Healthcare, taken over in 2011 by Advent International - a



Care home residents and workers fight for their future photo the Socialist

huge US-based global corporation.

Revenues of UK private sector mental health hospitals are £1.1 billion. 85% of this money comes from the NHS. In 2011 there were 10,000 private mental health hospital beds, compared to 23,500 NHS beds.

An even higher percentage of care homes for learning disabled and mentally ill adults are run by the private sector. 78% of all care places are private - worth £2.86 billion in 2009 to the companies providing them.

Most of this privatisation was under the last Labour government, which is why we need a new mass workers' party to stand for rebuilding the NHS and kicking out the profiteers.

Otherwise big business will keep sucking profits out of the NHS and more patients will suffer in future Winterbourne Views.

NHS

Articles from the Socialist

£2.50 including p&p



Available from
PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
020 8988 8789
www.socialistbooks.org.uk
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

South African miners' struggle

'An historical faultline'

The recent determined struggle of South African miners, who have braved bloody repression by state forces, has created political shockwaves throughout the country. The intensification of working class struggles has exposed not only the ruthlessness of the capitalist system but also the rottenness of the ruling ANC government and its allies in the trade union bureaucracy. Weizmann Hamilton of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), the Socialist Party's sister party in South Africa, spoke to the Socialist about how these developments have propelled the beginnings of a new workers' party with a socialist programme, onto the political agenda.

There cannot be any question about the historical significance of the recent strike movement of the miners; specifically, the massacre that took place on 16 August at Marikana when 34 Lonmin workers were mowed down by police. It is no exaggeration to say that that single event constitutes an historical faultline in the post-Apartheid history of South Africa (SA). The impact of the event on the consciousness of the entire population, but especially the working class, will determine the country's future political course. Because what was revealed in those 300 seconds of gunfire - the biggest atrocity in the country since the 1960 Sharpeville massacre - was the role played by all the key political and social forces inside the country.

It clarified in the minds of the working class the class character of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) government and its relationship to the mining bosses and the role of the state and the trade union leadership. All of these things were laid bare by the massacre in a way that no other event could have, ie it sharply posed the nature of the tasks and the challenges that face the working class in SA.

One thing is clear, the massacre was the result of a plan that had been thought through by the state, together with the bosses, and carried out as a premeditated act. It is inconceivable that the decision could have been taken to try and drown the strike in blood without it having been authorised politically by the tops of government. In that sense the administration of president Jacob Zuma has the blood of the Marikana workers on its hands.

The manner in which the trade union leadership of Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and, principally, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), has reacted to these events, has reinforced the conclusions that workers had been drawing prior to the massacre about what the NUM had been turned into.

There is a widespread understanding - even expressed in the media by capitalist commentators - that the NUM has revealed itself as a 'baas boy' union, ie a union of the bosses.

There is a widespread contempt for the leadership of the NUM. Everything they did subsequent to the massacre was to reinforce those conclusions.

The historical tragedy of these events is that the NUM - the most powerful and influential union, whose history confirmed the most militant traditions of Cosatu - was revealed to be the conduit through which everything that is rotten about the trade union movement has been channelled.

The NUM leadership has degenerated to such a level that even after the Lonmin

workers, despite the massacre, courageously continued the struggle, forcing management to capitulate into conceding a wage settlement ranging from 11% to 22% - at the highest end, not far off the miners' original demand for R12,500, the NUM leadership could not bring themselves to acknowledge that achievement. On the contrary, they denounced the agreement!

The NUM general secretary, Frans Baleni, earns R100,000 (£7,000) a month from the subs of his members and yet he had the temerity to go to the workers and say to them that the demand for R12,500 a month is unrealistic and that it will do damage to the economy!

'Intolerable'

In the first instance, the workers had risen up in support for a demand for a decent living wage. And given the substantial profits of the platinum bosses and throughout the mining industry, then the demand for R12,500 a month was entirely realisable.

But it was the fact that the miners rose up against the entire arrangement for the perpetuation of their own slavery; that is the most significant aspect of the strike.

They were also rising up against the authority of the NUM as the principal instrument for the maintenance of their own subjugation by the mining bosses.

This was why the strike was 'intolerable' to the mining bosses and the state and why they deemed it necessary to try and crush the strike in blood. But of course it has had the entirely opposite effect because, now, the NUM is hated beyond the platinum mining industry. With that this has led to a precipitous decline in the authority of Cosatu itself.

Cosatu and the NUM leadership has completely failed to appreciate the historical significance of what took place on 16 August. Instead they have attempted to restore the NUM as the recognised organisation of the miners. They even went to the extent of actually organising a "hands off the NUM" demo on 27 October in Rustenburg to, in the words of the Cosatu president, S'dumo Dlamini, 'reclaim Rustenburg out of the hands of counter-revolutionaries'!

So against who was this demo being directed at? The workers themselves and, of course, the DSM.

Strike committees

Fortunately the clashes between the mineworkers and the Cosatu officials were not as bad as we had feared. Nonetheless, it was a humiliating experience

for Cosatu's leadership. For a long time they were prevented by their own former members (miners in Anglo Platinum) from getting to the stadium for a rally and could only hold it under the protection of the police!

Similarly, when Cosatu's general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi attempted to address thousands of striking miners at the Orkney Mine in Klerksdorp he was chased away. He later blamed, falsely, the DSM for this humiliation.

This is the beginning of the end of the NUM in the platinum industry and in the whole of the mining industry but it is also potentially the beginning of the unravelling of Cosatu itself. This is not a certainty but if the leadership does not change course, combined with its failure to address the critical class issue in SA and in particular its determination to remain inside the trap of the Tripartite Alliance (ie the ANC, Cosatu and the SA Communist Party), then it is likely that it will completely disintegrate.

The SACP reaction to the Marikana uprising was to say that the workers were being misled by a 'Pondoland vigilante mafia'. In other words workers are incapable of comprehending their own oppression and exploitation!

There are a whole host of 'conspirators' who the Cosatu, NUM and SACP leaders identify for the Marikana uprising. They blamed the Chamber of Mines for creating Amcu, attributing the strikes as arising out of rivalry with the NUM. In fact, AMCU is the accidental beneficiary of the collapse of authority of the NUM.

Some workers have joined AMCU but now have misgivings because AMCU does not have a radical alternative programme to the NUM and because the main leadership in the mines is the independent workers' strike committees.

It is these committees where a framework for the embryo of a new trade union federation exists.

As far as the DSM is concerned the committees need to become the repositories for the restoration of the militant traditions of the working class in the trade union movement.



The massacre



Celebrating victory

The DSM's role in developing workers' struggles

Our role is, partly, to be the memory of the working class so that it can retie the knot of history between the old traditions that created Cosatu in the struggle to defeat apartheid, and the new tasks facing the working class today.

Last year we took the initiative of calling an Assembly for Workers' Unity (AWU). Its purpose was to face one of the most important challenges in front of the working class. There are three main theatres of struggle.

One is the protests against corruption and poor service delivery, which are growing in intensity and frequency. There have been some 11,000 protests over poor service delivery this year.

Then there has been an enormous increase in workplace action among organised workers.

And then there are protests by students against debt and academic and financial exclusions, in particular over the unaffordability of tuition fees and of student accommodation for working class students.

There is a permanent class war taking place along these fronts in the country.

However, there is no coordination of the service delivery protests and even of the workplace disputes and no coordination of the student strikes.

The student formations have become a mirror image of their political counterparts because they operate as the student wings of the ANC and PAC (Pan African Congress) etc.

They have become training acad-



Protesting after the massacre

emies for the new post-Apartheid elite. At their conferences you see luxury cars in the parking lots. And yet these formations are meant to be representative of the working class!

So our approach was to encourage the coordination of struggles within each theatre and across them. This is the concept behind AWU.

The AWU pulled in organisations like the Thembelihle Crisis Committee, and invited the Socialist Civic Movement in Mpumalanga, and others, to promote a common programme and platform of action, for example a single day of action for service delivery protests starting in the regions, then provincial and finally on a national basis.

We didn't get the response we were hoping for but nonetheless it laid down a marker for future struggles. And it is this same approach that we developed among the striking mineworkers.

Our first tactic was to bring together all the efforts of the struggling miners; because up to that point the Lonmin workers were protesting on their own, as were the Anglo Platinum workers.

There was a common determination to struggle but no common demands and without any coordination. So we did the obvious thing and encouraged the establishment of strike committees and on a coordinated basis to campaign, firstly, for a general strike across Rustenburg, and then to call for a wider general strike of the miners within the country. At the same time we promoted the idea of unity between the working class communities surrounding the mining areas and the strikers.

In Limpopo we have had great success in getting the communities on board not only to support the mineworkers but also the idea of a mass workers' party, which was endorsed at a mass meeting of 5,000.

A resolution proclaiming a new mass workers' party has been discussed by all the miners' shaft committees

Building a new mass workers' party on a socialist programme

The strike has elevated the question of a political alternative for the workers firmly and irrevocably onto the agenda. The idea of a new mass workers' party is now part of the political discourse inside the country. Many commentators recognise that this demand has been injected into the political situation by the DSM.

The DSM is now taking the initiative to take matters forward. On 15 December plans to launch the new mass workers' party will be announced by the DSM and the miners' national strike committee. Already, at a meeting in Limpopo, 5,000 workers endorsed the call for a mass workers' party.

A press conference, preceded by a rally of the mineworkers, will proclaim the political independence of the working class from the tripartite alliance in which they have been incarcerated. The new party will target the 2014 elections.

The press conference will happen the day before the ANC's conference, the run up to which has exposed sharp factional conflicts and is likely to prove to be the most divisive conference certainly since 2007 and the eviction of

Thabo Mbeki as president. The ANC's authority is in such decline that the strategists of capitalism are encouraging the historically-white liberal opposition Democratic Alliance to "change its demographics", ie elect more blacks to leadership positions to give it greater appeal to black workers, as well as other political alternatives.

A resolution proclaiming a new mass workers' party has been discussed by all the miners' shaft committees.

The idea will be to launch the new party on 23 March 2013, coinciding with the Sharpeville massacre anniversary. Before that there will be various events, rallies, marches, and a recall campaign of councillors so that they can be substituted with real fighters from the new party.

It will be a broad formation with provision for the participation of existing organised political entities. We will be approaching a number of organisations to be part of this process.

We are confident that such a new party will fill the political void that has long existed on the left in SA. This will be the crowning achievement of the Marikana uprising.



Memorial meeting for the massacred workers

Marikana Commission of Inquiry

According to Jacob Zuma the motivation for the establishment of the Marikana commission into the massacre is 'to establish the truth' because no one, apparently, knows why it happened!

Prior to the massacre on 16 August, ten people had died at Marikana. Consequently, the workers took the decision to relocate away from the mine and to go to a nearby koppie (small hill) and demanded that management should come and discuss with them.

The forces of the state had prepared by portraying the miners who carried traditional weapons as being provocatively armed. A radio interview on 15 August, between management, the NUM and AMCU, publicly stated that negotiations would take place the following day.

When AMCU turned up management was nowhere to be found. Later management said that all negotiations were off. It is clear that the decision had been taken overnight to end negotiations and that the strike was going to have to be crushed. Three thousand police were deployed from the tactical response unit with military firepower. Armoured vehicles were deployed, helicopters with snipers and reels of razor wire to trap the workers.

Incidentally, the majority of the 34 dead miners were not killed at the spot shown on the TV footage when police opened fire, they were killed elsewhere. Some had bullet wounds to the head suggesting executions. Evidence has also been tampered with.

What revelations have so far emerged

at the commission completely confirms what workers knew. It is clear that the tops of the ANC and NUM regarded the situation as an 'intolerable' defiance of state authority.

The ANC's Cyril Ramaphosa, in particular, is implicated in the massacre. Beforehand he had described the strike as an 'act of criminality'. Ramaphosa is the former general secretary of the NUM who sits on the board of directors of Lonmin (he has a 9% share in the company paid for by Lonmin itself).

Ramaphosa's reputation has been tarnished irreparably. This is a man who was once a leading worker militant who has become one of the world's richest individuals.

The role of the commission with its four-month long investigation is partly to take the sting out the situation but is also to cover up the government's culpability.

It will probably result in some naming of scapegoats, in all likelihood junior level police officers. The overwhelming mission is to ensure that the government is not held responsible.

Even in advance of the commission's outcome Cosatu's leadership has confirmed its political support for president Jacob Zuma.

Marikana represents the biggest atrocity since Sharpeville and yet Cosatu has not organised a protest but instead tried to rehabilitate the discredited NUM, whose shop stewards at Lonmin, incidentally, have their offices next to the police station!

[illegible]

Mass protests in Egypt against Mursi and his reactionary constitution

David Johnson

Big demonstrations have opposed Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi's attempt to seize new powers and railroad through a repressive Islamic constitution. Marchers chanted: "The people want the downfall of the regime."

There have also been large demonstrations supporting Mursi. In a brutal reminder of the methods of former president Hosni Mubarak, Mursi-supporting thugs have attacked peaceful demonstrators, aided by the security forces.

The draft constitution was rushed through the Constituent Assembly after a 15-hour sitting. Liberals, women and Christians in the Assembly walked out in protest at the draft in November.

Mursi called a referendum for 15 December to approve the new constitution. His haste is a reaction to the massive opposition to his power grab. He has now backed down from his attempt to stop any legal challenge to his authority, but only until the new constitution is in place.

The draft constitution contains many clauses that threaten any opposition in the future. It states: "The individual person may not be insulted." Mubarak used similar methods to gag opponents to his rule. Criminal prosecutions for "insulting the president" have increased since Mursi took office. Journalists could be imprisoned.

The draft allows civilians to be tried in military courts "for crimes that harm the armed forces." The military's economic interests and power to set its own budget are left intact and exempt from any democratic control.

Workers in military-owned com-

panies could face military trial for strikes or occupations. Again, the Mubarak regime had a similar law.

On 9 December Mursi granted army officers authority to make arrests, further restricting limited rights won since the 25 January 2011 uprising.

Women's rights are left vague and open to different interpretations. Already women and girls have been assaulted and had their hair forcibly cut for not wearing the veil in public.

The police are given powers to "preserve public morality," opening the prospect of restrictions on civil liberties, including rights to assembly, freedom of speech and expression, as seen in Iran or Saudi Arabia. The eight million Christians feel particularly threatened by such powers.

Austerity

The constitution dispute is taking attention from other attacks on workers and the poor. The government has also been negotiating with the International Monetary Fund over a \$4.8 billion loan. Subsidies on butane gas and electricity have been cut as part of the linked austerity programme.

Mursi announced tax rises on



Many Egyptians fear a reimposition of dictatorship under Mursi

many consumer goods and services - only to postpone these hours later until after a "social dialogue". Such indecision suggests sharp disagreements within the government and the ruling Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The FJP attacked the president's tax

rises and demanded they be put on hold. They fear a backlash could lose them the constitution referendum.

Prime Minister Hisham Qandeel has said the government was committed to enhancing "the business environment... making Egypt an ideal destination for foreign direct investments." The rich elite in the leadership of the Brotherhood aim to profit from the privatisation of large sections of state-owned industries.

Anti-trade unions

Decree No.97 aims to strangle the growing independent trade unions. Only one union would be allowed in each company, preventing new independent unions from challenging the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF).

ETUF executive members over 60 years old (most of them) will be replaced by new members appointed by the Minister of Manpower (a Muslim Brotherhood member). Before 25 January 2011, 22 of 24 members of the ETUF executive were members of Mubarak's National Democratic Party. The Brotherhood aims to replace Mubarak's appointees with their own.

Several opposition parties have formed the National Salvation Front. It is led by former chief of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission Mohamed El-Baradei and former presidential candidates, Amr Moussa (an ex-Mubarak minister) and Hamdeen Sabbahi (a left Nasserist).

While protesting alongside the NSF against Mursi's power grab and the undemocratic draft constitution, socialists need to keep their separate identity.

The programme and previous record of El-Baradei, Moussa and similar capitalist politicians cannot inspire those who support right-wing political Islamist parties to split away. But a split along class lines in the support for political Islamism is possible.

Workers need their own party, based on the independent trade unions. A socialist programme of revolutionary change can appeal to workers, the poor and the youth.

A socialist constitution would include genuine democratic rights for all, as well as the right to freedom from poverty, homelessness and illiteracy.

Free education and healthcare, pensions for the elderly and disabled, a decent minimum wage - these are all fundamental rights that will not be conceded by capitalist politicians, whether from right-wing Islamist or liberal secular parties.

Kazakhstan: Free Vadim Kuramshin!

Vadim Kuramshin, campaigner for prisoner rights and member of the Socialist Movement Kazakhstan has been jailed for 12 years.

The charge against Vadim, that he allegedly attempted to extort money out of Mukhtar Uderbaev from the Kordai regional prosecutor's office, was clearly fabricated.

Under judge Nurmukhammat Abidov this latest trial was rushed through and the sentence declared without either Vadim himself or his advocate being present in the courtroom! They were replaced by a court appointed lawyer who sat there as if he was just an extra piece of furniture.

From the trial's beginning the judge took the side of the prosecution. Not one objection from the defence was upheld, neither de-

fence or prosecution witnesses were questioned. Some of the prosecution witnesses appeared by Skype in which members of the "security organs" showed no reluctance in instructing the witnesses how to give the "right evidence". Vadim himself was not even allowed to see the documents submitted to him.

At the end of August 2012 a jury found Vadim not guilty of this charge and he was freed from the court.

However the Kazakhstan authorities are out to seek revenge on this fighter against corruption. He was again arrested and dragged before the court. This has so annoyed the members of the previous jury that they have formed their own action committee in defence of Vadim Kuramshin.

●Please send urgent protests at this vindictive jailing of Vadim Kuramshin demanding his immediate release, to the Kazakh embassy in Britain: Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov, 33 Thurlow Square, London, SW7 2SD. london@kazembassy.org.uk

Also to the General Prosecutor of Kazakhstan at: procuror@nursat.kz

Please send copies to kazakhstansolidarity@gmail.com and campaignkazakhstan@gmail.com

Commemoration marking the first anniversary of the notorious massacre of unarmed people by state forces in Zhanaozen, Kazakhstan.

Sunday 16 December, 2.30-6pm.

Venue: The Horse Hospital, Colonnade, Bloomsbury, London WC1 1JD
£5 waged, £3 unwaged. Get tickets at www.eventbrite.com/event/4921581583
Films, poetry and live music.

Speakers: Weizmann Hamilton, Democratic Socialist Movement, South Africa (reporting on the Mariakana massacre); Peter Taaffe, general secretary Socialist Party; Mick Whale, Campaign Kazakhstan secretary (recently returned from Zhanaozen). campaignkazakhstan@gmail.com

Sri Lanka: Solidarity with Jaffna students

Protests outside Sri Lankan embassies against the brutal suppression of Tamil students in Jaffna, have taken place around the world.

An emergency protest outside the Sri Lankan High Commission in London to demand the immediate release of Jaffna University students was organised on Friday 7 December at less than 24 hours' notice by Tamil Solidarity.

The protest launched a new campaign, Release All Political Prisoners in Lanka. A campaign is also being rolled out by the United Socialist Party (the Socialist Party's sister party in Sri Lanka), along with other left groups, in Sri Lanka called Movement for the Release of Political Prisoners.

At the London protest Socialist Students national organiser Claire Laker-Mansfield explained that students in the UK were shocked at the brutal treatment meted out to students in Jaffna after they tried to organise a memorial event to remember the people who lost their lives in the 30 years of bloody war.

Paul Murphy, Irish Socialist Party MEP, in a statement, demanded the immediate release of the arrested Tamil students and all political prisoners.

Paul continued: "The arrest of these students under the Prevention of Terrorism Act just for

participating in a peaceful protest shows how much democratic rights are under attack in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government must end this immediately and release all political prisoners.

"This repression also further exposes the false claim of the govern-

Tory MPs who are happy to accept hospitality from the blood-soaked Rajapaksa regime, would be exposed

ment that it is improving the conditions for the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka. Students should be released without delay."

Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, pledged to build solidarity and support for further protests in the trade unions. He added that those Tory MPs who are happy to accept hospitality from the blood-soaked Rajapaksa regime, would be exposed.

Leading trade unionists in Britain have also given support to the campaign.

For updates see www.tamilsolidarity.org

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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



The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world.

www.socialistworld.net

Austerity UK: 'I want to live, not just exist'

A public sector worker

An ambulance worker fighting the proposed closure of his ambulance station told me recently: "I want to live, not just exist." As a single mother, struggling to even 'exist', I understand this sentiment.

I have two part-time jobs at my local school, on a 'pro-rata' basis. Support staff only get paid when the school is open. One of my jobs officially pays just above the minimum wage, but I have to budget for 52 weeks but only get paid for 39 so I'm really earning below minimum wage.

Two jobs are not enough to cover my monthly rent and bills, especially in the winter with gas and electricity prices permanently rising. The small housing benefit I get is cut when my wages go up slightly in months when I work more hours. Tax credit pays the rest of my bills, travel and clothing with

no money for anything else.

My wages haven't kept up with inflation, so I rely on my credit card to buy food. When I reach my credit limit I must choose between eating or feeding my family - no choice - so sometimes I go hungry.

With interest payments and monthly bills increasing I exist in a permanent circle of debt with no escape, unlike bankers who still make profits and get enormous bonuses.

I would like a full-time job. But businesses are closing, public sector jobs are being cut and full-time jobs replaced by part-time ones. There are few jobs and many people are competing for them.

Bus fares to get to jobs further afield are prohibitive, services have been cut and I can't afford a car. I have good qualifications but these are out of date. There is no help with the cost of retraining. When I was offered a course to update my teaching skills, I could not pay for the fees or travel for this.



photo Senan

I cannot get a council house because there is no government programme for building new ones and the few left are in great demand by people in circumstances worse than mine. So we live in privately rented accommodation, paying huge rent to a landlord who goes on several exotic holidays a year and lives in a luxury house. I can't afford to go out and seldom have a holiday.

We hear a lot about "scroungers"

in the media but I know from my experience of being unemployed how much effort it takes to squeeze any money out of the state, and how demoralising the whole process of claiming out-of-work benefit can be, especially if you're unemployed a long time.

I often think about a life without the constant struggle to eat, keep the house warm, be dressed appropriately, have some sort of so-

cial life, all without the worry about what the future holds.

I know I'm better off than many people in this country and with the government intent on destroying working class people's lives with its cuts, things will get much worse. I am fighting for the basics now and for a future socialist society where millionaires don't control us and we can all make the most of our lives without just trying to 'exist'.

A quarter of a million hungry people will have used emergency food banks by the end of this year. That is four times as many as two years ago. Shockingly, many of them are working

Fracking - gas profit dash could wreck climate

Pete Mason

In his Autumn Statement, Con-Dem chancellor George Osborne announced a new 'dash for gas' including fracking, the technology used to obtain gas and oil trapped in shale rock.

Fracking in Britain was suspended after earthquakes were caused around Blackpool by fracking operations, but the moratorium soon ends. In the US, a 5.7 magnitude earthquake occurred in Oklahoma, while a Geological Survey report concludes that: most, "if not all of

the earthquakes [in the USA] since August 2001 have been triggered by the deep injection of wastewater" in fracking.

60% of Britain's countryside could potentially be exploited for shale gas as Osborne looks to Texas - which produces more CO2 emissions than all but the top six countries in the world. Texas has 48,000 jobs relying on fracking.

Osborne intends to water down Britain's commitments to cutting emissions and threatens renewable energy programmes, which, if properly pursued, would create as many jobs as fracking does in the

USA, while saving the environment rather than wrecking it.

Eight million gallons of water and carcinogenic chemicals are used to frack a well, then disposed of deep in the earth, where they contaminate groundwater and poison the surroundings. Methane released into groundwater by fracking rises through fissures and water wells where it can be ignited at the tap.

US reports claim over 1,000 documented cases of water contamination next to areas of gas drilling as well as cases of "sensory, respiratory, and neurological damage due to ingested contaminated water."

David Kennedy, who heads the statutory body advising the government on meeting its carbon reduction goals, severely criticised Osborne's announcement, saying the dash for gas through fracking, "would not be sensible, or compatible with meeting carbon budgets and the 2050 target" and would damage investment in renewables.

The UK target is to cut emissions by 80% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels. David Cameron consequently vetoed Kennedy's appointment to a post heading the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

Osborne's government puts energy company profits before the welfare of the planet. This is the cheapest way for gas companies to find energy. Remove the Con-Dems and bring the energy companies into public ownership, so we can plan a future without global warming.



Anti-fracking protest in the USA

Workers will fight austerity

Rob Williams, NSSN national chair, replied to an article "The British have no fight in them any more" by Nick Cohen in the 9 December Observer.

Nick Cohen would have us believe that working people's resistance is next to non-existent in the face of the Con-Dem austerity offensive. Nick wasn't the first with this pessimistic view.

In November 2010, on the eve of Osborne's first Autumn Statement, setting out an initial cuts target of £81 billion, Jeremy Paxman asked then TUC leader Brendan Barber: "Why aren't British workers like those in Europe?" Paxman contrasted the TUC's modest 3,000-strong rally that day with the mass protests and strikes raging across Europe.

However, between that Autumn Statement and now, we've seen the greatest mobilisation of working class and middle class people for decades. On 26 March 2011, well over half a million marched on arguably the largest union-led demonstration in this country's history.

On 30 November last year we saw possibly the biggest single day of strike action since the 1926 general strike as public sector workers took action to defend their pensions.

That day could and should have been the beginning of the type of concerted and co-ordinated industrial action that could have forced the

government to retreat on pensions as they've u-turned over 40 times - from culling badgers to the pasty tax. But because the cuts have been unrelenting, millions of workers still see the need for the unions to strike together to stop the austerity programme destroying our lives.

On 11 December, the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is lobbying the TUC general council to call on the union leaders to name the date for a national strike of workers across the public and private sectors - effectively a 24-hour general strike. The NSSN believes that such joint action would be hugely popular and well supported.

Strikes, that are almost a daily occurrence but rarely reported by the media, from the victorious construction electricians early this year to the Tesco delivery drivers who are currently on all-out strike in Doncaster, show that willingness to fight is absolutely present among workers in this country. The PCS union has announced a strike ballot early next year; we call on other unions to join them to build a 24-hour general strike.

Rob Williams,
www.shopstewards.net

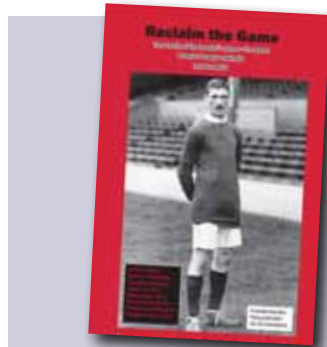
Reclaim the Game

The death of the people's game - the great premier League swindle by John Reid

A London Socialist Party publication
£3.00 including postage

Available from Socialist Books, PO Box 24697, London E11 1 YD
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk
www.socialistbooks.co.uk

020 8988 8789 for bulk orders



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 1 YD, 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.



A very Them & Us Christmas quiz



Each week the Socialist's Them and Us column brings you the best examples to show that we're definitely not 'all in this together'. How much attention have you paid to their highs and our lows? Try our 20 questions of 2012 to find out. Answers in the shaded box below.

- 1) Who surprised us all by quoting Marx and saying "workers of the world unite" at Tory party conference this year?
- 2) What was Cameron referring to when he said: "I seem to remember I was in Leeds station at the time. The choice was to have one of their small ones or their large ones. I've got a feeling I opted for the large one and very good it was too."?
- 3) Five 'young gun' Tories published a book called "Britannia Unchained: Global Growth and Prosperity". In it they identified the biggest problem facing the economy - what was it?
- 4) Fill in the missing words from this text message sent by Rebekah Brooks to Cameron:
Brilliant speech. I _____ twice. Will love ' _____ together'.



In happier times, Murdoch and Brooks

- 5) Grandparents-to-be Charles and Camilla spent £170,000 to pay Camilla's sister to redecorate their holiday cottages. In this Jubilee year public spending on the royals has been on the up. But what one thing are they doing to keep their spending down?
- 6) 1.6 million 20-40 year olds live where?
- 7) What proportion of the increase in housing benefit claims since 2009 has been working families?
- 8) Who was given temporary exemption from corporation tax this summer?
- 9) The deposit to stand in the police commissioner elections was a whopping £5,000. But what was the turnout?
- 10) A survey carried out by the Guardian showed 83% of teachers notice what about some of their students when they arrive at school in the mornings?



- 11) What has the Trade Union Reform Campaign and drunken revellers shouting "Mein Fuhrer" as they rampaged round a ski resort, got in common?
- 12) What is the average amount involved in benefit fraud?
- 13) What was the average amount that MPs had to pay back as a result of the expenses scandal?
- 14) The ratio of executives' pay to workers' pay was 47:1 in 2000. What was it in 2011?
- 15) The Department for Work and Pensions publishes figures for the amount of unclaimed benefits every year. What was the figure for 2010-2011:
a. £1 billion
b. £5 billion
c. Even more
- 16) Portcullis House is the building used by MPs for meetings etc. It's got lots of posh fixtures and fittings, including 12 fig trees. How much do these cost a year?
- 17) The supporters of gas and electricity privatisation in the 1980s argued that it would result in lower energy bills for consumers. What percentage have energy bills actually increased since 2004? (Hint: They've gone up seven times faster than wages.)
- 18) IMF boss Christine Lagarde berated the Greek people for being tax dodgers. But what is her (tax-free) salary?



- 19) The government has had to re-organise the way that milk for under-fives is provided because some companies were inflating the amount they were charging per pint. Bearing in mind that a pint of milk is about 45p, what were some companies claiming?
- 20) Singer Whitney Houston died in February this year. What percentage did the price of her iTunes compilation go up by within hours of her death?

night. All in the best possible taste of course. Although he got the sack from his Parliamentary Private Secretary job as a result. Seemingly unable to learn his lesson he tweeted during the Olympics opening ceremony: "Thank God the athletes have arrived! Now we can move on from leftie multi-cultural crap. Bring back Red Arrows. Shakespeare and the Stones!" You couldn't make it up.

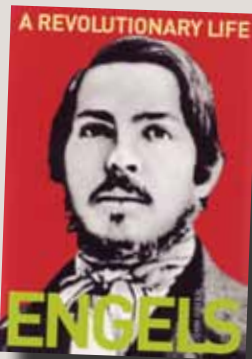
(12) £59 a head
(13) £1,858 a head.
(14) 102:1
(15) £12.3 billion
(16) £30,000 (And we've been paying that for the last eleven years.)
(17) 120%
(18) £2298,000 a year
(19) £1
(20) 60% (Apparently the original price was wrong...)

(1) Chancellor George Osborne. Though he seemed to have missed the point as the statement was in reference to asking workers to give up all employment rights.
(2) The last time he'd had a party. The place he claimed to have bought it from had closed down two years earlier.
(3) Idleness.
(4) Cried, working
(5) Freezing pay for their staff.
(6) With their parents
(7) 85%
(8) Sponsors of the Olympics.
(9) 15%
(10) They are hungry.
(11) Tory MP Aidan Burley is head of the campaign, which is dedicated to making the anti-trade union laws more repressive. And he was filmed last winter celebrating at his friend's 'Naz-themed' stag

Great offers from Socialist Books

We have many books which would make good presents for your family and friends - both political and less political - and we have selected just a few here.
If you would like advice don't hesitate to phone. Look at our website www.socialistbooks.co.uk or we can send you our list.

- **Red Star Over Russia: A Visual History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to Stalin's Death** 350 large format pages of great photos and posters. £24.99
- **Communist Manifesto, Wages Price and Profit, Capital, Socialism Utopian and Scientific** Small pocket hardback, gold trimmed pages £7.99
- **Engels: A Revolutionary Life** by John Green, 345 pages £10
- **My Life: an attempt at an autobiography** by Leon Trotsky, 600 pages £18.99



- **Karl Marx** by Francis Wheen, 430 pages £8.99
- **Rosa Luxemburg** by Paul Frolich 332 pages £12.99
- **Communist Manifesto and other revolutionary writings** Paine, Mao, Gandhi, Babeuf, Owen, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Che, Proudhon, £4.50
- **Classics**
Usual price £16,
Xmas special £12
- **The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists** by Robert Tressell
- **Germinal** by Emile Zola
- **Martin Eden** by Jack London

Bargain Packs

A. Three Classic Historical Novels
Usual price £27,
Xmas special £21

- **The Grapes of Wrath** by John Steinbeck
- **The Jungle** by Upton Sinclair
- **Love on the Dole** by Walter Greenwood

B. Trotsky - Recently republished and topical history
Usual price £30,
Xmas special £24

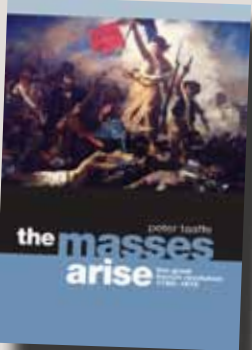
- **Writings in Exile** eds Paul LeBlanc and Kunal Chattopadhyay
- **The Essential Marx** 43 page introduction and edited by Leon Trotsky
- **Problems of the Chinese Revolution**

C. Revolutionary tradition
Usual price £30,
Xmas special £15

● **The masses arise: the great French Revolution 1789-1815** by Peter Taaffe

- **France 1968: Month of Revolution - Lessons of the general strike** by Clare Doyle
- **Marcel Martinet: Poet of the Revolution** by George Paizis

Please Add 15% postage and packing. We can also Christmas wrap and send direct to your friends and family with a personal message from you.



Send the order to:
Socialist Books,
PO Box 24897,
London E11 1YD. Phone 020 8988 8789. Fax: 020 8988 8787
Email: bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

HANDS OFF OUR NHS!

The Tories have been caught lying about spending on the NHS. They claimed that they have increased spending on the NHS in each of the last two years.

But they were caught massaging the figures by the UK Statistics Authority.

Spending in 2009-2010 was £105.1 billion. But spending in 2011-2012 was lower, at £104.3 billion.

They've quietly altered their website.

But this is just the latest in a long list of attacks on the NHS. Labour opened the door to cuts and privatisation in England and the Con-Dems are marching through it.

Labour is cutting spending on the NHS in Wales even more than the Tories in England.

We have to fight every cut and every closure.

Defend every job and the wages and working conditions of every health worker.

Ending privatisation and bringing services back in-house would mean money could go to health services instead of profits for the healthcare vultures.



Marching against austerity on 20 October - this needs to be followed up with strike action photo Senan

The Socialist Party calls for:

No cuts in NHS spending. A well-funded service, free at the point of use, to provide for everyone's health needs.

End big business profiteering from the NHS! Abandon the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). No to private polyclinics, Independent Treatment Centres, Clinical Commissioning Groups and private hospitals.

End 'payment by results'. Take all health services and buildings back from big business and place them under public ownership. Publicly fund and integrate them with the rest of the NHS.

Nationalise the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries, and all private health providers, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. Bring them under working class control and management.

Abolish Foundation Trusts. For democratic control of local health services by elected health workers and community representatives as well as elected representatives from local and national government.

Axe the Health and Social Care Act which is speeding up cuts and privatisation.

End NHS job losses and low pay. For a 35-hour week without loss of pay.

Give health workers an above-inflation pay increase. No pension cuts.

For united national action to defend the NHS, with organised trade union action at its centre, supported by anti-cuts campaigns and service users. For a new mass workers' party to fight for the NHS and against cuts and privatisation.

For a socialist programme and a planned economy to end poverty, bad housing, unemployment, dangerous workplaces, pollution and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill health.

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!