

# Greedy energy companies threaten blackout

# NATIONALISE

# THEM NOW!

Pete Mason

**E**nergy bills have risen by 40% since 2007. 15% of households are living in fuel poverty – crushed by bills and facing an impossible choice: food or fuel? Meanwhile, Phil Bentley, former boss of Centrica, snatched between £13 and £15 million in pay, shares and pension pot when he left earlier this year.

'Competition' and the 'free market' in energy, the fictional big business solution to the endemic corruption and bribery that infests capitalism, has ended in a complete failure – a cartel of six identical money-grabbing companies.

Now, as a result of Miliband's threats – not to nationalise or lower energy prices

but merely to limit prices to their current exorbitant levels for 20 months – the big six threaten to pull the plug on Britain's energy supplies and 'freeze the jobs and livelihoods' of the 600,000 workers in the industry.

The vast majority can see that privatisation has proved once again a licence for daylight robbery. Four out of five people realise that the big energy companies 'maximise their profits at the expense of customers', YouGov found last week.

The energy market has 'consistently failed' both the public and the investment needs of Britain, Ed Miliband told the big six. These companies put short-term profit before long-term planning.

Socialists call for the immediate nationalisation of the energy industry (with compensation to those in proven need only) – but let's not leave the old bosses in charge. This is what happened when Labour nationalised the energy and other

industries decades ago, retaining the old regime of anti-worker mismanagement, sloth and corruption.

A nationalised energy industry should instead be managed democratically, centred on elected representatives of the workers through their unions, who would remain on a skilled workers' wage. Together with a socialist government, a democratically drawn-up plan for a carbon-free energy industry could then be implemented, guaranteeing existing jobs and creating thousands more.

Drawing in a nationalised transport industry, socialist public ownership can prioritise lower prices and protect the environment, instead of funnelling vast profits, dividends and payouts to a few bosses and big shareholders.

Two-thirds of the population know na-

tionalisation is the right thing to do, but they don't have a mass political party which represents them. Labour rejects this solution. It goes without saying that the Con-Dems are not on our side.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition ([www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)), which includes the Socialist Party and the RMT transport union, pledges to 'Invest in a publicly owned and controlled renewable energy' sector and to 'produce for need, not profit, and design goods for reuse and recycling'. Let's make this the music of the future.

the **Socialist**

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what we think

# Capitalist parties offer nothing to the 99%

**T**ory conference has not yet heard from Prime Minister David Cameron but already it's apparent that the crucial words "Even more misery" have been omitted from the conference centre's billboard. Currently it only reads: "for hardworking people". Chancellor George Osborne's vision of even more savage cuts until 2020 gave the lie to that.

Osborne's Orwellian new idea, 'help to work', is more like help to the workhouse for the 212,000 people who have been out of work for two years or more. Long-term unemployment has soared by 390% under the Con-Dems. The government's own Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that one million jobs in the public sector will be lost by 2015.

Following the Labour Party conference the week before, representatives of the 'big six' energy companies have been threatening a blackout in response to Ed Miliband's timid plan to freeze energy prices for 20 months. Mark Steel quotes Neil Woodford, the largest shareholder in the energy company Centrica, in the Independent: "If Centrica can't make money supplying electricity then they won't supply it. The lights will go off, the economy will shut down."

But Con-Dem cuts are forcing 'hardworking people', and would-be 'hardworking people' who cannot find work or enough work, to turn the lights off on themselves. Real Life Reform researchers found that low-income families in the north of England are typically spending £3.30 a person a day on food.

Energy bills eat up over 10% of their income and that's during the summer months, estimated to double once the cold weather hits, so many have to choose between eating and heating. Food banks have reported they're under pressure to provide food which doesn't need to be cooked as people can't

afford to turn their cookers on! Separate research found that half of people going to the parasitic £2 billion-pay day loan sector sought help with bills.

So it isn't surprising that Ed Miliband's speech, with its talk of action on sky-rocketing fuel bills, childcare, apprenticeships and votes at 16, appears as a welcome relief from the onslaught of Con-Dem cuts: bedroom tax, universal credit, benefit caps, job cuts and so on. An Ipsos Mori poll for Mumsnet found Labour 13 points ahead of the Tories.

But a price freeze is akin to attempting to empty the ocean with an egg-cup when it comes to addressing the problems faced by working class people in Breadline Britain. Bills are already too high. Almost seven out of ten people are in favour of renationalising the energy companies. The energy companies' response to the mild threat from Miliband to stop the profits free-for-all will only increase the demand for renationalisation.

## Renationalisation

Socialists call for the immediate renationalisation of the energy companies, and the entire industry, under democratic workers' control and management. This should form part of a democratic socialist plan for the economy. Given that 'big six' shareholders received £7 billion in dividends last year most people will agree that compensation should only be paid on the basis of proven need.

Miliband and Labour have, however, made it crystal clear that they will not take this step, or any that seriously threatens big business. In interviews with the increasingly more right-wing BBC following the speech, Miliband insisted that he was in favour of 'responsible capitalism'. There is nothing 'responsible' about the energy companies' threat to switch

off the lights following Miliband's modest proposal to slightly trim their profits.

Capitalism is a system built on exploitation for profit for the 1%. It is necessarily 'irresponsible' to the needs of 99% of the world's population. That's why a socialist transformation that puts the wealth of society into the hands of the working class under a democratic plan is needed.

Labour, however, does not stand for socialism – despite Osborne comparing Miliband to Marx. But many looking for a lead from Labour would support socialist policies. They will be disappointed. Labour Party conference voted overwhelmingly for renationalisation of the railways – but the Guardian reported that senior Labour sources signalled that the leadership was prepared to ignore the motions in its election manifesto.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes argued that Labour could scotch Royal Mail privatisation by promising to renationalise the service if elected in 2015. Postal workers will be angered to read Labour so-called rising star Chuka Umunna's comments in the Huffington Post: "Our immediate priority on entering office ... would be to safeguard the services consumers and businesses get from a privatised Royal Mail."

While the few policies coming out of Labour conference will be welcome they will not compensate for Labour's anti-working class record: introducing health privatisation and tuition fees, maintaining the anti-trade union laws and prosecuting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in government. Labour councils are still passing on Con-Dem cuts and putting council employees on zero-hour contracts. The Labour-led government in Wales is slashing the NHS, closing A&E services across south Wales.

A warning for Labour comes from France.

President Francois Hollande made pre-election promises to tax anyone earning over a million euros at a rate of 75%. He has failed spectacularly to deliver, attacking pensions and promising greater spending cuts. Now Hollande, with an approval rating of 23%, is a strong contender for least popular French president of all time. This could be the future for a Labour government that is committed to maintaining Con-Dem spending cuts.

It is also a warning to the trade union leaders who argue that fighting for a Labour victory in 2015 is the best way to fight the cuts. And to those who seek to reclaim Labour for the working class. The Labour leadership displayed utter contempt for the votes of delegates at the party's conference.

## New voice

It is also attempting to kill off any remnants of the collective voice of the working class in the party. Unions must debate how to build a new mass political voice for the working class. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (www.tusc.org.uk) represents steps in this direction. A new party must be part and parcel of the struggle against austerity.

There is a mood to fight – the marvellous demo in Manchester made that abundantly clear, as have the reports from the picket lines of the teachers and firefighters' strikes. No doubt members of the FBU, NUT and NASUWT unions will be disappointed that the firefighters march on 16 October could not have been coordinated with the next round of regional teachers' strikes, including in London, on the day after. Such coordination is urgently needed – and it is demanded. The demand for the TUC to name the date for a 24-hour general strike remains key and must be central.

# Big business puts profits before environment

Geoff Jones

The world is heating up – this is now beyond argument. A report from the UN has now backed the 97% of climate scientists who believe human activity to be the main cause.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – set up by the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organisation in 1988 – was produced by 34 scientists from 15 countries. Their conclusion? Climate change, brought about by human activity, is already happening. The only argument is over the scale of the catastrophe.

The IPCC concludes that since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, glaciers and the polar ice-caps have shrunk, the sea level has risen, and the concentrations of 'greenhouse gases' methane and carbon dioxide have increased. The rate of sea level rise since the mid-19th century has been greater than in the last 2,000 years. Erratic and disastrous weather events – hurricanes, floods and drought – increase as the world's weather patterns are disrupted.

The report concludes that human influence has been the main cause of warming since the mid-20th century. Continuing to burn 'fossil fuels' – oil, coal and natural gas – along with rising deforestation, will cause further warming and changes in every aspect of the world's climate.



**A programme for tackling greenhouse gas emissions needs nationalisation under democratic workers' control**

It states: "Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of carbon dioxide are stopped... Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions." However, the report cautiously holds back from discussing the human consequences of climate change – droughts, food shortages, rising sea levels – which have been detailed even in mainstream media like the National

Geographic magazine. Nor does it make any suggestions for action that governments should take.

So what has been the response? Around the world, government reactions range from outright refusal to accept scientific fact (Tony Abbott, newly elected Australian PM) to wringing hands but refusing to act (Barack Obama). In the UK, the Con-Dems, who once claimed to be the 'greenest government ever', now back the environmentally damaging pro-

cess of 'fracking' while cutting support for renewables – wind, tidal and solar power.

Ironically, for those who argue that anything we do would be futile while China continues to build coal-fired power stations, China not only manufactures 80% of the world's solar panels, but is installing renewable energy faster than any other country.

For workers in Britain, energy company Centrica's cancellation of



**Campaigning for a socialist solution to environmental catastrophe** photo Paul Mattsson

plans to expand gas storage capacity because the Con-Dems failed to provide enough subsidy shows exactly who calls the shots. Big energy companies, interested only in profits, will always go the 'quick and dirty' route. The only way forward, not just for British workers, but for the future of the planet, is the democratic renationalisation of the big energy companies.

Workers internationally must join together in demanding a programme for the reduction and final elimination of fossil fuel energy generation world-wide, coupled with a programme to help those communities – mainly in the poorest areas of the world – damaged by climate change and rising sea levels.

# Tory millionaire tells Britain: 'Back to the workhouse!'

Ken Douglas

Millionaire chancellor George Osborne announced at Tory conference a plan to keep the country on rations until 2020!

Sentencing ordinary people to another seven lean years he might as well have been Joseph interpreting the Pharaoh's dream for all that his analysis had any basis in reality. But his message that those hit hardest by the cuts are going to be hit even harder was the chilling conclusion.

Hard-pressed families are facing £22 billion of cuts to benefits and tax credits, 70% of which will hit families with children. Osborne's family won't be hit - he has a personal fortune of over £4 million and stands to inherit even more from the family business, along with a knighthood.

Doing his best impression of Mr Bumble, the beadle in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Osborne unwittingly invoked the memory of the hated Victorian workhouses that slowly starved the poor to death.

There has been no austerity for the rich though. The number of millionaires in the country has doubled in the last two years with an additional 32 billionaires created.

## Flipping hypocrisy

People shouldn't get benefits for nothing, he declared. This from the MP who 'flipped' his housing expenses allowance to get his mortgages paid off on his mansion in Cheshire and his house in London - ending up with a profit of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

But in reality his speech underlines the political bankruptcy of the Con-Dem coalition.

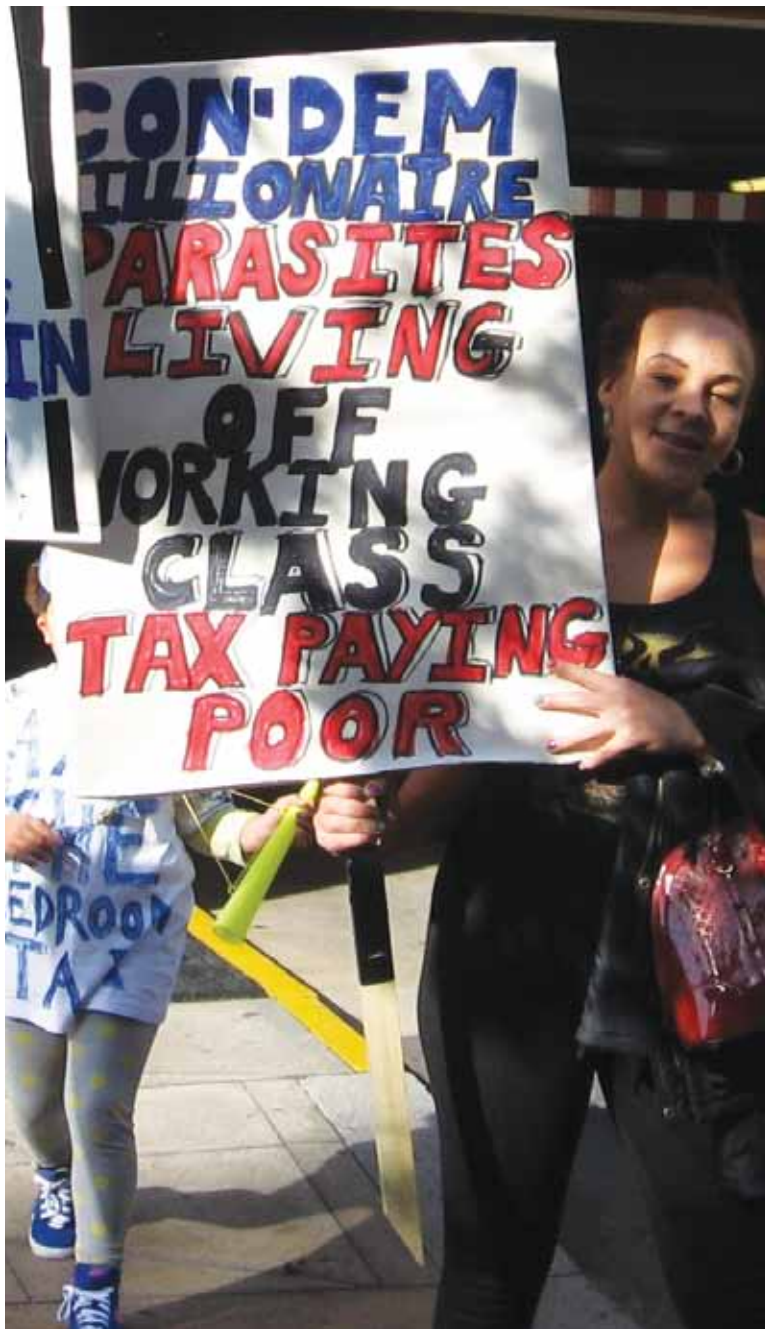
"Without a credible economic plan you simply don't have a living standards plan," he declared in a jibe at Ed Miliband's announcement that Labour would trim the fingernails of the gas and electricity cartels with a two-year price freeze. But Osborne's economic plan has no credibility.

The so-called deficit reduction strategy, which was forecast to balance the books by 2015 on the back of an economic recovery, has comprehensively failed. Laid bare, however, is the growing inequality caused by the Con-Dems' attacks on living standards and public services - the government of millionaires' real agenda.

Osborne tried to pin the blame on the 1997-2010 Labour governments, saying that historically it always fell to the Conservatives to undo the damage done by 'socialism'. But it was the Thatcher government who smashed Britain's manufacturing, deregulated finance and let rip the credit and housing bubbles that led to the crash in 2008.

## Little difference

Blair and Brown's New Labour simply carried on the policies put in place by the Tories. Commenting on Osborne's speech, Benedict Brogan in the *Daily Telegraph* summed this up: "For most Tories, let's admit it, life under Labour came to be no bet-



Manchester Tory conference protesters photo A Ford

People shouldn't get benefits for nothing, Osborne declared. This from the MP who 'flipped' his housing expenses allowance to get his mortgages paid off on his mansion in Cheshire and his house in London - ending up with a profit of hundreds of thousands of pounds

ter or worse than if they had been in charge."

The Tories appear confident that attacking benefits is a sure route to popularity but there are signs of unease even among the faithful that, particularly in the current supposed

economic recovery, their policies have resulted in a steep decline in living standards, unprecedented in the post-war period. That is why Osborne pledged not to raise fuel duty, and why a Tory declared at the conference that they would be mad to oppose Miliband's proposal.

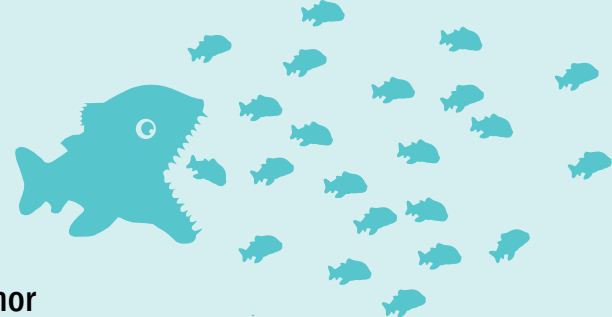
## Faulty forecast

The chancellor concluded: "For the sun has started to rise above the hill and the future looks brighter than it did just a few years ago." The sun, however, has always continued to shine on the rich, who in this period of austerity have been enjoying the financial equivalent of a heatwave.

Osborne's speech does show, as did Miliband's before him, that they can dimly begin to sense the huge anger developing against the cuts and the obscene wealth that continues to be accumulated.

The only thing that is holding that anger back is the leadership of the TUC who again failed to do anything except reassure the Tories that they would not rock the boat too much. However, the Tories, the Lib Dems and New Labour will be making a huge error if they mistake the mood of the TUC leaders for the mood of the working class.

# Them...



## Dirty donor

A money broker run by big Tory party donor and former party treasurer Michael Spencer has been fined £55 million for Libor interest rate rigging. Spencer, who owns 16% of the City dealer Icap, has donated £4.8 million to the Conservatives. Libor affects £300 trillion of financial dealings internationally. Icap email records have shown rewards including increased bonuses, champagne and a Ferrari on offer for rate rigging. Spencer, who has enjoyed private dinners with David Cameron after donating, was Tory treasurer while some of the rigging took place. The Tories claim calls for the party to give up Spencer's donations to charity are "nonsense".

## Dodgy dealers

But maybe Mr Spencer can seek solidarity from his JP Morgan brothers in the US. The country's biggest bank is facing a \$11 billion settlement to stop investigations into the bank selling bad mortgage bonds. You know, the sort of thing that resulted in the banking crisis. This is after the bank was fined \$920 million in September for the "unsafe and unsound practices" that enabled the dodgy dealings of traders like the London Whale, who lost £6.2 billion. Meanwhile, back in Britain, the Financial Conduct Authority has slated small and medium lending firms for mishandling two-thirds of Payment Protection Insurance claims.

**US budget crisis: see [socialistalternative.org](http://socialistalternative.org)**

## Tax fat cats - not bedrooms

David Cameron has said that reversing the Con-Dems' cuts in corporation tax would be "nuts".

However, a Sunday People survey has shown that there's one tax cut that a majority of people would support.

60% said the bedroom tax - which steals money from 660,000 poor households - should be abolished.

This has increased from 45% in February. Even a third of Tory voters now think it should be scrapped.

Bedroom tax arrears continue to escalate - as tenants can't pay. In just 12 Merseyside housing associations, arrears have increased by £2.2 million in a year.

## Entrepreneur's instinct

Never miss the opportunity to make money out of death, or so might say the stall holders at the Tory party conference. Margaret Thatcher memorial goods include babygrows displaying the slogan "iron baby".

Also on offer is an (adult) T-shirt with "you turn if you want to" scribed on the front. Maybe the back points out that she was forced to turn - and resign - after a mass non-payment campaign of 18 million people, led by Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) forced the Tories to get rid of the poll tax.

Or maybe not.

## Blair Force One takes off

When in office, Tony Blair considered having a personal prime ministerial jet. Alas, the idea was grounded due to cost. But now, free of the poverty that being PM entails, and helped by charging €400,000 an hour for giving speeches along with the income of dictator advisory firm Tony Blair Associates, he has been able to fly in style.

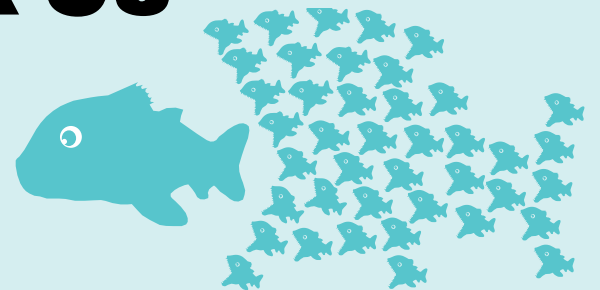
The £30 million Bombardier Global Express BD-700 costs £7,000 an hour to hire. For that, you get your own 2,100 cubic feet cabin, which can include a luxury state room with a double bed and bathroom.

However, it's not been reported whether the millionaire war-monger has asked for missiles to be included in his plane rental package.

## Helping your own

'Stop the banker bashing,' Tory chancellor George Osborne would say. He's bringing the European Union to court over limits on banker's bonuses. From January, EU laws will limit bankers' bonuses to just 100% of salary (or 200% with shareholder agreement). Can't you just feel the bankers' pain? But don't worry. George is taking legal action as he believes it will make the financial sector 'riskier'. Unlike that virtually risk-free bonus-filled banking sector that's described above.

# ...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

## What we heard



photo A Roberts

"Join me and I will save Southmead, says Darth Vader"

This was the Bristol Post headline that reported how 78-year old David Prowse, who was the man inside the villain's costume in the original *Star Wars* film, is campaigning to save Southmead youth centre.

"As someone who has used this youth centre during my time in Bristol, I know how important it is for children in the community," said Prowse, who also played the Green Cross Code man in the 1980s road safety campaign. No wonder stormtroopers are starting to read the *Socialist*!



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# Solid support for teachers' strike

Teachers in the Midlands, Yorkshire and Eastern regions walked out on 1 October in an impressive show of strength. Thousands of NUT and NASUWT union members attended rallies and demonstrated their anger at education secretary Michael Gove's attacks on pay and conditions. Reports are still coming in but these are a sample. For updates see: [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)



One of many enthusiastic rallies and picket lines photo Heather Rawling

“Stand up for education - Gove must go!” is what hundreds of teachers were chanting as they marched through Nottingham on the day of their strike. The well supported march and rally was applauded by passers-by as it made its way through the streets into the city centre. This made a big difference to the teachers who were saying “it’s good that parents realise we’re striking for their children”.

One teacher spoke to the Socialist: “It’s a myth that teachers have short working days, long holidays and easy work. We’re concerned that children have enough pressure already, they should enjoy primary school, not be set to figures and results”.

Many supported the demand for a national strike in November, enthusiastically taking the Socialist Party leaflet, and also the demand for co-

ordinated action with other trade unions.

**Becci Heagney and Geraint Thomas**

## Sheffield

Around 2,000 teachers joined the march and rally in Sheffield. Most schools in Sheffield were closed but a few heads tried to keep schools open with non-union staff, so were picketed.

There was strong support for the Socialist Party petition, “Sack Gove, not teachers,” calling for national strike action.

Toby, Sheffield NUT joint divisional secretary, told me that there needs to be a plan for sustained industrial action, a strategy to defeat Gove, not just protest. And many teachers said that they need to link up with other public sector workers like firefighters and postal workers.



Unimpressed by the education secretary... photo Alistair Tice

At the packed-out indoor rally, the TUC rep called for “mass industrial action” and NUT general secretary Christine Blower called for coordinated strike action. Teachers will demand that they keep to their words.

**Alistair Tice**

## Leicester

Young teachers proved Beth Davis, NUT president wrong when they took strike action and demonstrated to defend education and teachers’ pay and condition. At a Leicester City NUT meeting she had said young teachers weren’t interested in striking to defend pensions.

Yet in a rousing speech at the demo rally, a young teacher Hardeep Kang explained why young teachers were supporting the NUT: “Generations of teachers before us fought, campaigned and defended

teachers and education. Young teachers can’t sit back and let the government dismantle state education. It’s our job to defend their hard won gains.”

About 300 teachers, young and old, marched through Leicester including teachers from the troubled Uplands Junior School.

The firefighters are keen to link their struggle with the teachers. Rank and file FBU members have called for teachers and firefighters to strike together on 17 October. This would be a magnificent show of solidarity and opposition to the government’s austerity measures. It could be a means of building for a 24-hour general strike to unite all workers affected by worsening pensions, pay and working conditions. It could force the government to listen to the voice of working people.

**Heather Rawling**  
NUT life member

## Liverpool pay victory

**Dave Walsh**

Workers at the King and Fowler metal finishing firm in Liverpool have achieved a stunning victory after six one-day strikes. Their action came about after six years without a pay rise and mistreatment from their anti-trade union boss who refused to recognise Unite the Union.

The result of their action was a 3% pay award with immediate effect, along with a two-year deal of 2.5% in April 2014 and 2% in April 2015. They also secured an agreement for time and a half for bank holidays and overtime as well as time in lieu for all hours worked on bank holidays.

As well as these improvements Unite has now secured a recognition agreement which was achieved after it built its membership from 18 to 48 - the vast majority of the workforce.

Dot who works at King and Fowler said: “people like us needed to make a stand and we did make a stand”. Donna Bernard from Unite said: “The union will stand firm with its members when faced with ruthless bosses who think they can get away with treating their workers in this way”.

## The fight against academies in Leicester

**Simon Robinson**

Leicester NUT, personal capacity

Rushey Mead School is a large secondary school in Leicester. It has been an ‘outstanding’ school for years and has strong links to the local community.

It is also a brand new school building, one of the last few to get this funding before the government pulled the plug.

Leicester is still a relatively academy free city. So it came as a shock to staff, students and parents when school management announced last year that the school would be ‘exploring’ the idea of converting into an academy.

Angry teachers met immediately and agreed to send a message of opposition to the governors. Over 80 letters were sent to the next governors’ meeting, only to be ignored! The Rushey Mead anti-academy campaign was therefore launched with the aim of organising staff, parents and students.

The NUT spent the summer break campaigning, leafleting festivals and local housing. We are now in the middle of the ‘consultation’ period, ending early in October.

A successful meeting of parents and staff - past and present - heard the Leicester City council education leaders and the Mayor voice their opposition to the academy and fully support the campaign!

Various reasons for the plans are



Leicester is a thorn in the side of Gove's strategy photo Heather Rawling

given - financial advantages, being able to ‘support’ failing schools and other ‘freedoms’ are quoted at us. The reality is that the school management see the future of the school as an academy ‘business’ - already a Teaching School, it will oversee a ‘family’ of primaries and even larger schools while selling services and support.

The ‘Executive Head’ of a local academy, Ash Field Academy, David Bateson OBE, is also on the management board of Rushey Mead Teaching School.

Ash Field became an academy 18 months ago and has just unveiled a new pay and conditions policy that dismantles everything that the NUT and other unions have won within Leicester City.

There is no doubt that this will be the future for staff at Rushey Mead should it become an academy!

We demand that the school stays within the local authority. Gove sees Leicester as a thorn in the side of his academy strategy - we refuse to let him get a foot in the door of the city!

## In brief

### Grangemouth

Unite members at the Grangemouth oil refinery in Scotland have voted overwhelmingly to strike over the unfair treatment of union convenor Stevie Deans. Stevie is also chair of Falkirk Labour Party. He was suspended from the party after the Labour leadership falsely accused Unite of interfering in the selection of a new parliamentary candidate.

The Grangemouth management then used this as an excuse to suspend him. He was reinstated after a walkout by the workforce but has been under ‘investigation’ since. Now 81.4% of the Unite membership has voted to strike in his defence, on a 86% turnout. Unite is calling on refinery owners Ineos and Petrochina to “step back from the brink” and has also contacted BP who own the Forties pipeline, which Grangemouth powers and which provides 30% of the UK’s North Sea oil.

### Royal Mail

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members are balloting for strike action over pay, pensions and privatisation. The result is due on 16 October. But the government is attempting to push ahead with privatisation by publishing a prospectus and likely share prices. Trading is due to begin on 11 October. The earliest strike date is 23 October.

### Crown Post Offices

CWU members working in the 372 Crown Post Offices were on strike on 30 September and 1 October over closures, jobs and pay. 1,500 jobs are under threat and the workforce has not had a pay rise since April 2011. Senior managers have enjoyed a bonus pot of £15.4 million and the Post Office posted profits of £94 million in August this year.

### UCU ballot

Members of the University and College Union working in Higher Education are balloting for industrial action over pay. The ballot closes on 10 October. After four years of effective pay cuts, their pay has dropped by 13% since 2009. Unison and Unite members are also voting over the same issue.

### Uplands school

Three suspended NUT members at Uplands Junior School, Leicester have been reinstated following a heroic struggle including strike action. The headteacher has been suspended.

NUT members had taken strike action opposing plans to axe several teaching assistants’ jobs before the summer holidays. There were also concerns about the behavior of the headteacher and governing body at the school.

It has emerged that the now suspended and discredited head Tim Luckcock (yes I have spelt his name correctly) and the governing body spent over £48,000 on legal fees in the last year - a phenomenal amount for a school. This would have paid for the classroom teachers they sacked in the school reorganisation.

Unfortunately three teaching assistants have been made redundant. Unison and GMB members have vowed to continue the struggle with a new appeal.

**Heather Rawling**

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Fighting austerity	Will there be a general strike in Britain?	65 years since its creation - can we save the NHS?	How can we beat the bedroom tax?
Other	What caused the 'great recession'?	40 years since Pinochet's bloody coup in Chile: what lessons of the coup need to be learnt	Zero-hours, organising the unemployed and the role of a trade union rep today
Revolution and counter-revolution in the middle East	Egypt and Tunisia in turmoil	A cauldron of civil war - what programme should socialists put forward in Syria?	
Political representation for the working class	For councillors against the cuts - TUSC's electoral challenge	What form will a new mass workers' party take in Britain?	Forum: what conclusions should we draw from Miliband's 'clause IV moment'?
Internationalism	USA - can socialist ideas be built in the belly of the beast?	What future for Cuba?	Sri Lanka - 30 years since 'Black July' and the start of the Civil War: is a new period of struggle opening up?
Anniversaries	20 years on: the murder of Stephen Lawrence, police racism and the battle to stop the BNP	30 years on: Liverpool: a city that dared to fight	75 years on: the founding of the Fourth International
Society	Are socialists feminists?	Art, literature and socialism	Can capitalism deliver equality for disabled people?
Other	What's the role and relevance of a revolutionary party today?	Fracking, HS2 and nuclear power - socialist planning for the environment	European elections - how can socialists best counter Ukip?
Other	 <div><b>Rally for Socialism</b> Saturday 2 November 6.30pm Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, NW1 2JB Speakers include Peter Taaffe - Socialist Party general secretary, Bob Crow - RMT transport union general secretary and a South African miner</div>		South Africa - birth of the Workers' and Socialist Party

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# Rochdale care workers dig in



It is important that the Future Directions staff win this dispute photo Paul Gerrard

**Paul Gerrard**

"I'm on less money than I was 15 years ago. It's very difficult... you worry about whether you're going to lose your home." Striking care worker Karen Shatwell, explained on TV why she was on strike against cuts in wages and conditions imposed by Future Directions in Rochdale. Her wages have been slashed by nearly £500 a month.

Faced with up to 30% wage cuts

Future Directions staff have already had 20 strike days since the dispute started in May. Now Unison has authorised a further ten days of action.

This is unprecedented backing for the 110 workers involved, and shows how important it is that they win. As well as the strike action Unison is pursuing employment tribunals for all the staff. If successful they will probably bankrupt the company.

The workers have had several lively and popular rallies in the

town, but the real enemy is the Calderstones NHS Trust 20 miles away because - believe it or not - it owns Future Directions. So on the first day of their latest bout of strike action Unison members took the battle to Calderstones and held a noisy protest outside the annual members' meeting of the Trust. Sheepish men in suits winced as they had to walk past the demo on the way from their, no doubt, copious lunch to the AGM.

Paula Braynion is Calderstones

Director of Operations and Nursing as well as being Managing Director of Future Directions. She recently received an 'undisclosed' pay rise 'in view of her extra duties'!

All the directors are still on their NHS salaries, all the while trying to pick up social care contracts across the North West in a strategy which John Morrison, Unison steward, describes as "expansion through exploitation".

He added: "We're still striking, still fighting. 98% of us have elected to carry on the dispute, and we will continue till they negotiate - or we'll see them in court".

- Messages of support to John at morrisonmoz1@aol.com
- Donations to Helen Harrison of Rochdale Unison, 46 Richard Street, Rochdale, OL11 1DU

These workers are suffering massive attacks on their living standards because a quasi private company, Future Directions - which is actually owned by an NHS trust - has won a bid to provide social care for people with disabilities. This service was once provided by Rochdale council. The company previously operating the contract pulled out, declaring it could not provide the service without making cuts.

Being at the mercy of a network of increasingly cost-cutting organisations is the future for health and other public service workers unless these public sector vandals are stopped in their tracks.



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# FIGHTING TO DEFEND OUR NHS

## Save Chase Farm hospital services!

It has just been officially announced that both the A&E and maternity service at Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield, north London will close and be re-located to two other north London hospitals by December 2013.

The threat to these services at Chase Farm began under the last Labour government, and there has been a long running and well-supported local campaign in support of keeping existing services at Chase Farm. This has included large demonstrations, a massive local petition and the election of two councillors to Enfield Council on the 'Save Chase Farm' party ticket from 2006-2010. Enfield North Tory MP Nick de Bois has publicly come out in opposition to the decision and supports the legal action now being taken by Enfield's Labour council to delay these decisions.

### Clinical reasoning?

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) claims these changes will bring an improvement in service provision, based on clinical reasoning.

But Save Chase Farm ex-councillor Kieran McGregor has said that 158 women in labour were turned away from Chase Farm and Barnet hospitals in 2012 because there were not enough beds.

The CCG's true reasons, however, were hinted at when two medical directors speaking about keeping the services at Chase Farm said: "There are serious concerns about the sustainability of services going into another winter" and "What we are doing now is no longer sustainable".

A wider national concern for the whole of the NHS is that Mike Farrar, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said at an earlier stage of the Chase Farm downgrading in 2011: "It is absolutely right that the secretary of state has taken what we know has been a difficult decision. Chase Farm has been a major test case for the whole NHS... There are a number of places where we need to make similar decisions for service changes of varying sizes up and down the country. In some cases, this will involve taking out posts and beds where it is in the interests of patients."

The local campaigns to save services at Chase Farm Hospital continue, including appealing to the workers there. We also need to continue to demand that the TUC name the day for a 24-hour general strike to stop this and all cuts nationally.

**John Dolan**  
Haringey and Enfield Socialist Party

## Cut queue jumping

The latest Bupa advert uses charming children to promote a benevolent cuddly image.

If someone were to use children to, shall we say, oppose NHS privatisation, you can just imagine the Daily Mail chocking on the carpet fulminating about indoctrination and propaganda.

The role of Bupa is to help people with money to jump the queue for healthcare. Queue jumping is the only crime which carries the death penalty in Britain. In this case it is those at the back of the queue who suffer and die waiting for care while Bupa pushes the ones with money to the front.

Medical care should be based on

health not wealth. If I want to see a cardiologist I have to wait months and then sit in an unprepossessing waiting room for three hours. They then take my blood pressure and say it is a bit high!

If a private patient wants to see the same cardiologist on the same NHS hospital they pick the date and time.

Every Tory cut (or Labour cut come to that) makes more people see bribing their way into healthcare as an unfortunate necessity and increases Bupa profits. We need a health service which would make Bupa irrelevant. The political elite are not interested but the 99% are. We need a party to represent us.

**Derek McMillan**



145  
Lords and  
75 MPs have  
recent or current  
links to private  
healthcare

Almost  
700 GPs  
are paid at least  
£200,000 a year when  
their income from private  
medicine is taken into  
account



photos Paul Mattsson,  
Claire Job and Elaine  
Brunskill



## Mood for action on march against Tories

**Matt Kilsby**  
Salford Socialist Party

On 29 September well over 50,000 protesters descended on Manchester to tell the Tories that they and their policies are not welcome in the city. Earlier in the day, Socialist Party members from across Greater Manchester had taken part in a 400-strong feeder march from Salford. Three coach loads of protesters came from Bolton, largely thanks to an inspiring anti-bedroom tax campaign that has united trade unionists and housing association tenants.

Joan Pritchard-Jones, Unison steward and care worker in Bolton, told the Socialist: "It is great to see so many like-minded people here to defend our NHS and to show our disgust at the unprecedented Tory attacks on our public services". Another protester from Salford told us that: "the Con-Dems are only interested in profit and don't care for the working class; that's why we must stop them."

In the run-up to the conference people from Manchester and neighbouring towns and cities were disgusted to hear reports that delegates to the Tory conference were to enjoy free transport around the city. Meanwhile, a huge area of public space around the conference venue and the swanky Midland Hotel where most delegates are staying had been fenced off, staffed by a massive police presence. All this in a city where a shocking number of people are living in poverty and feeling the sharp end of the cuts.

Reportedly the biggest demonstration in Manchester since Peterloo in 1819, there was a defiant and angry mood against the Tories' plans for the NHS, privatisation, the bedroom tax and massive

spending cuts that are causing misery to millions. As protesters gathered at the start of the march in central Manchester, it became clear that the number of marchers far exceeded the 25,000 that the TUC had estimated in the preceding days. It took more than two hours for all the protesters to reach the start of the march. At its biggest the demo stretched for a mile through Manchester.

As it set off, speakers from the NSSN spurred on the marchers from an alternative platform at the side of the road. There were massive cheers for every call for mass co-ordinated strike action and the need for a 24-hour general strike to not only defend the NHS but defeat austerity itself.

### Link up the struggles

As the NSSN leaflet given out on the demo said: "We lobbied the TUC Congress earlier this month to call on the unions to organise a 24-hour general strike. But a strike this autumn that coordinated all those unions and workers currently in dispute – the teachers, firefighters, Royal Mail workers, civil servants and lecturers, alongside the many others taking action every day like the One Housing workers in London and the victorious Wigan Hovis strikers – would be a massive step in this direction."

Marching through the city centre, we received warm applause from Sunday shoppers and passers-by. As we reached the conference venue, the march slowed down as protesters delivered a hail of boos to passing Tory delegates.

It was noted that a number of Labour Party members and local councillors joined the protests. While we are pleased that the Labour Party finally appears to be providing a modicum of opposition to the government, turning

up on a march against the Tories simply does not go far enough. If Labour councillors really were prepared to fight alongside us, they would vote against and refuse to implement Tory cuts that are having a devastating impact on our public services and jobs.

### Socialist Party on the march

Throughout the protest, Socialist Party members were chanting slogans and raising the demand for a 24-hour general strike to defend the NHS, fight austerity and sweep away this rotten coalition government, backed up by the huge party banner along the assembly point and many stalls, gazebos, posters and flags throughout the route.

This demand certainly chimed with huge numbers of protesters who were eager to sign our petitions, buy the Socialist and discuss with us how we can make a general strike a reality. Hundreds of copies of the Socialist paper were sold with dozens of people wanting to join the Socialist Party.

Paddy Dillon, PCS rep from Manchester who attended the march with mem-

bers from his union branch, told us: "Me and my fellow members have been out on strike a number of times over the last 12 months. But it is only by the unions getting together and coordinating strike action that we can kick out this government".

There was a clear recognition from the protesters on Sunday that demonstrations on their own will not bring down the Tory government. Marches are excellent for raising consciousness among the working class, but it's only by hitting the government where it hurts, through industrial action, that we can start to make meaningful gains.

Everyone on the march, every trade unionist, community campaigner and activist together can make a general strike a reality. So get your union branch to adopt the model National Shop Stewards Network model motion, which calls for a general strike (below). Organise a local debate and get coverage in your local paper.

We must do whatever we can do to add force to the idea that marching is one thing (and we did that again in huge numbers in Manchester), but that it is mass industrial action that can kick out this government of millionaires.

- This [union / anti-cuts organisation] welcomes the 60,000 strong TUC demonstration outside Tory Party conference on September 29th.
- This mobilisation reflects the growing anger and frustration at the continuing Con-Dem austerity offensive which has been a disaster for working class people, the poor and an increasing number of middle class people.
- The scale of this crisis is shown by the numbers of people forced to use food banks and payday loan companies because of the savage cut in living standards due to real cuts in pay, welfare cuts and employment practices such as zero-hour contracts. George Osborne's speech at the Tory Party conference was a clear signal that the Coalition intends to intensify its assault on working people.
- Massive local demonstrations against NHS cuts this year in Lewisham and Stafford as well as the huge numbers not paying

the hated bedroom tax – 50% in Scotland – show that people aren't prepared to accept these brutal cuts.

- The trade unions with over six million members are still the most powerful force in society.
- We call on the TUC and the trade unions to organise a 24-hour general strike against austerity, which would unite behind the union movement all those suffering from the cuts.
- As a vital step towards this, we call on all those unions, such as PCS, NUT, NASUWT, FBU, CWU, NAPO, UNITE, UNISON, RMT, BFAWU and others currently in dispute or planning action to coordinate strike action, including on the most appropriate date this autumn.
- Local strike rallies in towns and cities should then be organised open to all trade unionists and everyone else under attack.

## All main parties culpable for cuts in Wales...

News on the Monday of Labour Party conference was dominated by the NHS in Wales. The Con-Dems attempted to use the crisis in NHS care in Wales – deep cuts, rising waiting lists, queues of ambulances outside of hospitals, emergency care wait times – as a stick with which to beat Miliband and Labour.

Wales, the Con-Dems point out, is the one area of the UK with a Labour government and the NHS is collapsing.

Working class people in Wales aren't going to take lectures about the NHS from the Con-Dems. We're fully aware that in England, the Health and Social Care Act, with its rampant privatisation, is leading to the destruction of services. We consider ourselves fortunate not to have the worry about the same level of privatisation or of the NHS in Wales being subject to new PFI schemes.

will be the lowest in the UK – threatens the quality of services provided.

A letter from A&E consultants to health minister, Mark Drakeford, makes this clear: "Emergency departments across Wales are on their knees. Local health boards are being pressurised into meeting their financial targets, so acute hospital beds have been closed to save money."

"The result? Our emergency departments are at the point of meltdown. Most days, they are seriously overcrowded. This jeopardises safety and puts patients at risk – there is clear evidence that death rates go up if patients requiring admission remain in emergency departments for hours while they wait for ward beds to become available. This is happening right here, right now, across Wales."

### Alternative needed

At Labour conference, under questioning from the press, Miliband was forced to admit that there are problems with NHS services in Wales but then blamed the Con-Dems and said that Labour was doing a good job of spreading the cuts 'fairly' in Wales. Is this the best that a La-

### Crisis

This doesn't mean that we agree with Ed Miliband's glowing assessment of the Welsh Government's stewardship of the NHS in Wales. Deep cuts are damaging

NHS services. A report in Wales Online last week asks whether the NHS in Wales will be able to cope over the coming winter. The answer is far from positive.

Health unions warn that morale is at rock bottom. Welsh Labour had promised that there would not be redundancies in the Welsh NHS. Staff at Cardiff and Vale Health Board, facing 384 redundancies, know how hollow this promise is.

Health workers report the drive to meet financial targets – incorporating cuts that will mean in the next financial year that spending in Wales on the NHS

One  
in five GP  
board members of  
Care Commissioning  
Groups has a financial stake  
in private health companies  
that their CCG has  
contracts with

23%  
of nurses  
report being  
bullied by  
managers

## ...and the wacky ideas keep coming

Recently Labour's Assembly Member for Cardiff Central, Jenny Rathbone, spoke to the Wales Retired Members Branch of UCU on the All Wales Government health policy.

This policy has been developed into 'reconfiguration', where under the guise of reorganisation many Welsh communities will lose facilities in their areas. Quite wrongly the supporters of this mistaken policy argue that it is not financially driven and would be necessary even if the Tories were not making cuts.

All these arguments

bour Welsh Government can do - decide how best to make Con-Dem cuts?

Working class communities of Wales deserve more. We need political representatives that will stand up to the Con-Dems, not make their cuts - representatives that will fight all cuts to give us the NHS we need. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in Wales is working now towards giving working class voters the opportunity to vote for such representatives in 2015.

**Ronnie Job**

were trotted out by Jenny Rathbone who astounded the meeting by suggesting that those being treated in A&E departments resulting from their own behaviour should be charged for services provided. When asked for clarification Jenny lamely referred to drunks ending up in A&E!

So, not only will the people of Wales suffer as a result of cuts being demanded by a party in London that few, if any, of us ever vote for, but the entirely gutless attitude of Welsh Labour politicians in carrying out Tory cuts is compounded by their threatening us with policies any Tory would be proud of.

These policies will be resisted by working class men and women across Wales who can rely on the total support of the Socialist Party in their fight.

**Andrew Price**

**TUSC  
AGAINST  
CUTS**

[www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

[illegible]

# Sudan: 'Down with the regime!'

## Solidarity with protesting workers, youth and women

**Halema**  
Sudanese activist

Workers, youth and oppressed women have taken to the streets of Sudan after the hated al-Bashir regime (National Islamic Front) doubled the prices for fuel and cooking gas on 23 September by cancelling the fuel subsidy. The protesters chanted slogans which included: "The people want the fall of the regime!" and "Freedom, Freedom!"

The cut in the subsidy has also increased the price of food. Protesters have met huge and violent repression from the state. Activists and doctors at a Khartoum hospital say over 200 people have been killed by the regime, with many more injured. Police have arrested over 1,000 people from several cities and are using violence in house-to-house security sweeps.

In the areas of Wad Nubawy, al-Thawra in Sudan's twin capital city of Omdurman and al-Kalaklat in south Khartoum demonstrations were met with a violent response from the police.

Protesters were chased by police in cars to prevent them from blocking a main street in al-Thawra. Eyewitnesses in Wad Nubawy and al-Kalaklat said that police used live ammunition and tear gas.

On Saturday 28 September security forces fired on hundreds of mourners marching after the funeral of a protester killed a day earlier.

Eyewitnesses also say mass arrests of young people were carried

out from inside the neighbourhoods without notifying their parents. However, the protests are continuing, including a demonstration of female students from Ahfad University in Omdurman-Khartoum.

The government has imposed a media blackout. Newspapers have had issues confiscated and others forced to stop printing, prompting a group of journalists to call for a general strike. Internet access has also been blocked.

Already the situation for the mass of the population was dire. The unemployment rate is 20%. More than two million people live in poverty (average income is less than \$1 a day) with an estimated 300,000 people not having access to food and water.

The government says it will give financial assistance to 500,000 families to offset the price hikes. This may prove to be too little, too late to dampen the protests.

### Repressive regime

Bashir's National Islamic Front is a repressive regime of right-wing political Islam. When it came to power in 1989, the first thing it did was to launch the Public Order Act.

This is designed to oppress women. Article 152 of Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act allows for the flogging of women. It hands a disproportionate amount of power to the enforcer, making him simultaneously judge, jury and executioner.

Doctors' and lawyers' unions in Sudan have called for a general strike. Solidarity protests have taken



Protesters in Sudan fighting the regime have braved police violence

place in the USA and in London, outside the Sudanese Embassy.

The trade unions, farmers' organisations and students must arm their struggle against price rises with the demand to take Sudan's resources into democratic public ownership and control of the economy, and for a government made up of workers and the poor.

Urgent is the building of a mass independent working class movement that draws in all the oppressed sections of society.

A socialist programme will also

be essential for the working class and oppressed masses to begin to resolve Sudan's problems of under-development, war devastation, indebtedness and poverty, and provide lasting solutions to the country's various ethnic and religious conflicts.

- Reinstate the fuel subsidy and reverse all price rises
- Build a mass movement of workers and the poor
- Down with the al-Bashir regime. For a workers' and poor people's government

### 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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

### www.socialistworld.net

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



### Tunisia: State repression of political opponents escalates

Send protest to Tunisia's Justice Ministry at: [mju@ministeres.tn](mailto:mju@ministeres.tn) and copies to the CWI.

CWI reporters Tunis

# End this modern-day slave labour

## Strong independent unions needed to stop worker exploitation

**Dave Carr**

Fifa, the world football authority, has expressed concerns about players enduring temperatures of 50°C in the 2022 World Cup finals in Qatar, but already the extreme heat and appalling 'slave labour' working conditions have killed many migrant workers building the country's stadiums and infrastructure.

According to a Guardian investigation, Nepalese workers, who constitute the single largest group of labourers in the oil rich, monarchy-run state, have been dying at a rate of one a day during the summer.

More than 700 Indian workers died in Qatar between 2010 and 2012, and the International Trade Union Confederation predicts that

another 4,000 migrant workers from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka could die on Qatar's building sites before a world cup match takes place.

Many workers according to the investigation complain of being forced to work in searing heat with a lack of water. Inadequate food, filthy and overcrowded accommodation and unpaid poverty wages from employers who retain the workers' passports, complete this picture of modern-day slavery.

Yet the Qatar regime, which has sponsored armed Jihadist groups in Libya and Syria and is lavishing an estimated \$100 billion on world cup infrastructure, denies any responsibility for the ill-treatment of its huge imported workforce. Instead, an embarrassed government spokesman claimed that humane treatment of migrant workers was the government's "top priority".

At the same time as this slavery scandal was making the media headlines, workers on Brazil's football World Cup 2014 and athletics Olympic Games 2016 infrastructure projects were found to be living in makeshift camps in "conditions analogous to slaves".

These workers, including indigenous Indians, reportedly paid \$220 to secure work on the promise of earning \$625 a month. But they were not immediately employed and instead languished in appalling accommodation.

As members of LSR, the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Brazil, recently explained in the Socialist, the construction projects related to the World Cup are also "causing

the removal of thousands of families from their homes to make way for real estate speculation."

"Stadiums are privatised, corruption runs rampant in the construction projects of the Cup; super-exploitation of construction workers has caused accidents and deaths; contractors in collusion with state governments are profiting exorbitantly, while the rights of residents of big cities are trampled on."

But there has been a fightback. In June LSR members reported that they participated in a millions-strong protest movement in over 100 cities which shook the government of president Dilma Rousseff into rescinding transport price hikes and promising widespread social reforms.

### Fightback

Low-paid garment workers in Bangladesh recently have also taken to the streets to demand higher wages and acceptable working conditions.

The plight of these workers came to prominence last April when over 1,100 workers lost their lives and 2,500 were injured when the unsafe Rana Plaza garment building collapsed near the capital, Dhaka.

The day before the disaster inspection teams had found huge cracks in the building's structure.

But while shops and a bank on the lower floor immediately closed, the owners of the garment factory above told employees to continue working, despite the obvious safety risks.

There are an estimated 5,000 fac-

4,000 migrant workers could die on Qatar's building sites before a world cup match takes place

tories in Bangladesh paying around 3.2 million workers as little as \$38 a month to make clothes for western-based companies such as Primark, Matalan, Wal-Mart, Benetton, etc, in a \$19 billion industry.

The striking workers - who despite generating huge profits for multinational companies are paid the second lowest (to Burma) wages in Asia - have demanded more than a doubling of pay to achieve a \$104 minimum monthly wage.

It is clear that the bosses and governments both globally and locally will not voluntarily protect workers when there are vast profits to be made.

Workers enduring conditions of modern slavery must organise into independent trade unions and be prepared to take strike action to bring the exploiting bosses and compliant governments to heel. International solidarity action can assist workers in such struggles.

Only strong union organisation can fight to improve workplace health and safety and drive up wages to acceptable levels. But the struggle to end capitalist exploitation once and for all must be linked to the struggle of workers for a socialist society.



### Sri Lanka: Provincial elections shows Rajapaksa regime can be challenged

Building a left alternative; link fight against regime with struggle of oppressed Tamils and system change.

United Socialist Party (USP - CWI Sri Lanka) reporters



### Netherlands: Thousands demonstrate against government cuts

Dutch people want a real alternative to austerity.

Pieter Brans, Socialist Alternative (CWI Netherlands)



Anti-government protest in Brazil

## the Socialist postbag

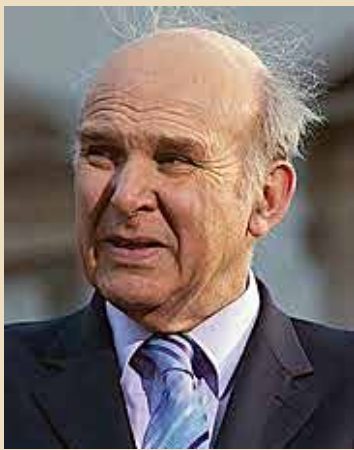
**Do you have something to say?**

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

**Expensive study**

As a University of Northampton student, I know students don't get much financial help if they keep living where they are studying over the summer holidays. Students commonly return to their permanent address as they couldn't afford the rent and bills for the summer. Even if they go home, they still pay a retainer usually between a 25% - 66% discount off the rent they normally pay for one term (three months). I stayed living in Northampton this summer to get an early start on my dissertation. The last instalment of loans for an academic year is in April. I got £2,200 but my remaining rent for the last term was £1,245, plus £974.25 summer rent, totalling £2,219.25. Luckily a £500 bursary from the university helped, but a form to apply for Access to Learning Fund for students in financial hardship asked me for bank statements and to explain every expenditure over £100. Explaining why I buy books or bought tickets to go home is a joke. It could be used to exclude some students who need the funding from getting it. More money should be available to students in financial need over the summer holidays, for international students who cannot afford to go home and students who want to use the summer holiday before their final year to study.

**Nicola White**

**Cable's qualms**

**Vince Cable**

When questioned recently if there could be an early end to the Con-Dem coalition Liberal Democrat Business Secretary, Vince Cable asserted: "It's certainly possible". The media jumped on this statement and talked much of perceived 'disloyalty'. However an inspection of the Con-Dem coalition's track record is more illuminating. The Lib Dems are part of a coalition which attacked: students (rise in tuition fees), those on benefits (bedroom tax), public sector workers (attacks on pay and pensions), public and private sector workers (changes to tribunal law), the disabled (the invidious Atos assessments), and the unemployed (Workfare). They also endeavoured to initiate a war. What possibly remains for Cable and the Lib Dems to have qualms about?

**David Hamblin, Cardiff**

**Save Chartist mosaic**

The Chartist uprising of 1839, when thousands of men descended on Newport from the South Wales Valleys in probably the first working class movement in history, has been enshrined for years in a stunning 35 metre long mosaic. This always grabbed my attention



**Part of the mural**

when I descended on Newport from the valleys on days out as a child. Now, not content with simply cutting workers' jobs and services, Newport council want to cut our history by bulldozing the mural in redevelopment plans. The Chartists demanded working class votes and MPs and wanted an end to the system that exploited them. Now, a cursory glance at parliament can tell us that the fight for working class political representation goes on. Saving the Chartist mural can help our generation and beyond take inspiration from their legacy of struggle in our fight against capitalism. Please support the campaign and sign the petition: [http://www.change.org/en-GB/organisations/save\\_our\\_mural](http://www.change.org/en-GB/organisations/save_our_mural)

**Scott Jones**

**Energy battle**

The limited proposal for Labour to freeze energy prices has put a cat among the pigeons. The Daily Mail went onto rant mode, predicting disaster. Interestingly whereas a strike by workers gets them foaming at the mouth, a strike by the fat cat power companies would have their support. But any government which wanted to confront the fat cats would need to be prepared for vicious retaliation. Any supplier who cut off supplies could, if the government had the guts, face imprisonment for economic sabotage and profiteering. Six months in Strangeways would do them more good than those unhealthy bonuses! At the bare minimum they would have to be taken into public ownership.

As for compensation, haven't you heard? - 'skivers' have to work for their benefits these days. The prospect of fat cats having to work for their compensation would be popular. While yesterday's men politicians like Portillo and Mandelson rushed to toady to the power companies, socialists will support a price freeze and damn the fat cats. At the same time the battle against Labour cuts, Labour evictions and Labour traitors will not be put on hold!

**Derek McMillan**

**Predicting problems - not**

I've just read on the internet that the US government has been hacking websites of big companies as well as spying on 'subversives'. Their explanation is it is done to combat terrorist financing and predict problems that could lead to financial crises or disrupt financial markets. Why didn't they predict the worldwide banking crash then?

**Clive Walder**

# TV review

## Locked up for being ill?

**Helen Pattison**

A recent BBC Panorama episode, 'Locked up for being ill?', looks at the growing police involvement in supporting people with mental health problems. It showed people with severe mental illnesses kept in cells for up to 22 hours while police officers made repeated phone calls to the mental health unit who didn't respond.

Police complain about the waste of their time, as many people they take in have to be watched so carefully. One police officer says he spent hours trying to calm a woman with mental health needs, with no idea if it helped as he hasn't had the appropriate training.

The first half of the programme was a huge attack on mental health services until the police commissioner says: "there are not enough beds for the patients that we present

to mental health units". Many adults with mental health problems in prisons are under-supported because of the stretched service.

Then the programme plays with the possibility that the services involved are stretched by cuts, causing further problems of "congestion" in the system. One man with mental health problems is ready to leave his bed on an adult acute ward but can't do so, as the service can't find him accommodation. Beds available in these services have dropped by 38% in the last five years.

The government is attacking the NHS, and other services the people portrayed by Panorama rely on. But

police and mental health service professionals in this programme blamed other services for the problems and tried to find a solution within current funding levels. None of them said that if more people need the support of mental health units, then more funding is needed for all services needed for recovery. Attacks to one service flood other services with problems. We must fight all the cuts to services. We need adequate funding for mental health services, housing for those able to leave, jobs and support for those not ready to return to work, and an end to attacks such as the bedroom tax which have led to people taking their own lives.

Attacks to one service flood other services with problems. We must fight all the cuts to services

# TV review

## Peaky Blinders

Set in Birmingham in 1919, new BBC drama Peaky Blinders gives a fictionalised account of the criminal outfit of that name in the early 20th century, giving an engaging snapshot of the political situation then.

Gang leader Thomas Shelby, played by Cillian Murphy, is joined by fellow Great War veteran Freddie Thorne, a member of the nascent Communist International. Agitating for a strike at the Birmingham Small Arms factory, he describes the horrors of the trenches before going on to say: "and what reward do they (the bosses) offer for your sacrifices? A cut in your wages!"

When a consignment of weapons goes missing from the factory, police inspector Campbell is drafted in from Belfast, having been involved in the British government's suppression of the IRA following the Easter Uprising - an important event in Birmingham and other cities with a large Irish population.

The series is slightly guilty of adding a Hollywood gloss to the squalid conditions before the introduction of free healthcare and when over-



**The Shelby's betting parlour HQ** photo BBC

crowding was the norm in working class areas.

An opportunity was missed for a more detailed picture of everyday life at the time, opting for fast-paced

action instead. But it proves an entertaining look at an eventful period of British history.

**Nick Hart, Birmingham Socialist Party**

# Theatre review

## A man of humble beginnings

**Tony Church**  
Leicester

Leicester Everybody's Reading festival is performing my play A Man of Humble Beginnings, about pioneering Leicester socialist, Amos Sherriff. Amos was born in a Leicester slum in 1856. Sent to work at six years old, he could not read or write until, at 22, the Salvation Army taught him to do so.

Amos became an officer in the 'Sallys.' But in 1894, he left the Salvationists to join the Independent Labour Party (ILP). In June 1905, he was one of three leaders of a march of 400 unemployed men from Leicester to London and back. Thousands of Londoners attended a Trafalgar Square rally to support the marchers.

As an ILP member, Amos helped get Ramsey Macdonald elected as

Leicester's first Labour MP in 1906 though Amos would probably not have been impressed with Macdonald's later betrayal of Labour.

Like Macdonald, however, Amos opposed World War One. It made him unpopular with some in the ILP, but as a town councillor he successfully proposed in 1917 that Leicester should petition to regain its city status; a partial reward for the sacrifices Leicester's people had made in the interests of a capitalist war.

Amos Sherriff's role in creating my city has been almost forgotten. The Tory mayor at that 1917 meeting received a knighthood but Amos, a humble artisan, has no lasting public recognition. My play is intended to start a campaign to change that.

Amos Sherriff was not a Marxist. Most likely as a Christian, he believed in socialist evolution and not

revolution. But he was a decent man and a conviction politician.

He spent much time trying to improve lives and conditions in the Leicester Union Workhouse. Given his lifelong commitment to the poor and dispossessed, I'd like to think he would be implacably opposed to the massive Labour majority on today's Leicester city council carrying out a cuts programme on behalf of the coalition government.

Amos Sherriff died on 8 May 1945 aged 89 in Leicester's Hillcrest Hospital. Ironically this unwelcoming establishment had not long before ceased to be that same workhouse that he tried so hard to improve.

**Upstairs at the Western**  
**70, Western Road, Leicester**  
**Thursday 3 October, 7pm.**  
**Tickets £5.50/£4.00 concessions**  
**<http://www.stagelefttheatre.co.uk/>**

# Greek government forced to take action against neo-fascists

Links between Golden Dawn and state apparatus revealed

Xekinima reporters

The right-wing New Democracy (ND) and ex-social democratic Pasok coalition government in Greece has finally decided to crack down on the neo-fascist Golden Dawn after the recent murder of left-wing rapper Pavlos Fyssas. A Golden Dawn member, George Roupakias, has been charged with his murder (he was arrested on the spot and admitted guilt).

The murder took place in full public view with a gang of about 30 Golden Dawn (GD) thugs attacking Pavlos in a central square in Keratsini, one of the working class suburbs of Piraeus. The top leadership of GD is now under arrest, including leader Nikos Michaloliakos and five other MPs, charged with running a criminal organisation.

Roupakias claimed to have acted on his own and that he was not a member but a supporter of GD. However, many photos of Roupakias together with top leaders, his presence at GD events, plus the fact that he was on payroll by GD, cleared up the picture.

Also, after the event, reported telephone conversations between GD cadres made it clear that he had acted according to plan and that

the top leadership of GD was all the time aware of what was going on.

The cold-blooded murder has shaken Greek society. At the same time as attacking immigrants and left wingers, GD acted as a Mafia, selling 'protection' to many shop-

Only days before the murder, top figures in New Democracy were speaking in favour of a common government between it and Golden Dawn!

keepers, indulging in other criminal activities, keeping arms and running paramilitary training for its members.

All these revelations vindicate the claims of the anti-fascist movement, who for years explained the real character of GD and its links with the police.

But these claims instead only met with hostility from the governing circles and the mass media. Now, following the murder a number of senior policemen, including the head of the secret services were removed from their positions, because of alleged links with GD.



Golden Dawn leader Nikos Michaloliakos placed under arrest following the murder of a left-wing rapper

In fact the hypocrisy of the ruling class, the government and the media is nauseating. Only days before the murder of Pavlos top figures in ND were speaking in favour of a common government between GD and ND!

Most of the mass media, controlled by bankers, ship owners and big constructors allowed GD to have a favourable platform.

It was apparent to anyone who wanted to know that GD was a neo-fascist organisation as well as a criminal gang, but the ruling class was turning a blind eye to them hoping to be able to 'contain' them, and use them in a controlled manner against the working class and social movements.

## Frankenstein monster

The murder of Pavlos indicated that the monster which the ruling class had nourished was getting out of control. At the same time as the murder, opinion polls indicated that the GD mayoral candidate in next May's local elections in Athens, was leading in the polls.

Pavlos Fyssas's death sparked massive anti-fascist demonstrations. On the day of his murder there

were protests in 35 Greek cities. This movement has continued with tens of demonstrations nearly every day, all over the country.

Wednesday 25 September saw the biggest anti-fascist demonstration ever in Athens, marching to the central offices of GD, with close to 20,000 participants. This was significant, given the fact that both the mass parties of the left, Syriza and KKE (Communist Party), had refused to take part in this demo.

The ruling class seems to have taken the initiative against the Nazis, and this perplexes a section of the left.

But the action against GD by the state is a tactical measure at this time, to rein in the far right whose outrageous actions threaten to provoke a massive anti-racist backlash which could meld together with the anti-austerity strikes and protests of the workers' movement, and threaten the survival of the government and even the system.

The truth of the matter is that the ruling class will not extinguish fascism. The conditions of mass desperation created by the capitalist crisis and by the policies of the ruling class remain favourable for the far right and fascism to re-emerge

– perhaps under a different name if the government outlaws GD.

Therefore the anti-fascist movement and the left should not have any illusions in how far the state will move against GD. The capitalist state can also use similar actions against the left and workers' movement.

The forces of the left which are determined to fight against fascism must take the opportunity of the exposure of the criminal character of GD to go on the offensive.

Xekinima members (the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Greece) have played a key role in establishing and bringing together anti-fascist committees in Athens and other cities.

These anti-fascist committees must create defence squads against fascist attacks.

Moreover, the committees must be politically armed to counter the fascists' ideology and explain that it is the system, not immigrants, that is responsible for mass unemployment, poverty and attacks on workers' living conditions. And that it is necessary to fight against the capitalist system, that creates the conditions for the re-emergence of fascism, and for an alternative socialist society.

## Activists demand full public inquiry into undercover police operations

Lois Austin, former chair Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE)

Many of us involved in the movement in the 1990s to drive back the far-right racist British National Party

(BNP) were angered but not surprised to find out the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch infiltrated our ranks.

Undercover officers had protesters under surveillance for many years. A great big spotlight has now been shone on this secret world due

to the revelations this year from police whistle-blower Peter Black, alias Peter Francis, who spied on Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) and Youth Against Racism in Europe.

His brief was to set up special branch files on key anti-racist activists and, disgustingly, to 'dig up dirt' on the family of murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence in order to discredit them and their struggle for justice.

The undercover unit known as the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) knew no bounds. Officers entered into sexual relationships with women activists and stole the names of dead children.

In response to these revelations YRE and the Socialist Party protested outside Scotland Yard demanding the disbanding of secret units which spy on protest groups. This includes those still carrying out undercover surveillance. All files on activists must be made public.

We want a genuinely independent, democratic inquiry with full involvement of all those who have been spied on such as the Lawrence family, YRE and blacklisted trade unionists.

A campaign has been coordinated

by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers and involving YRE, Socialist Party, lawyers representing those who have been spied on such as the Lawrence family, lawyers who themselves have been spied on, women abused by police officers who formed personal relationships with them, the trade union Blacklist Support Group and many others.

## Inquiry

Its aim is to establish a public inquiry which will look into the full activity of what went on and the involvement of those in charge of the Metropolitan Police at the time, including the role of politicians such as the Tory government Home Secretaries, Kenneth Clarke and Michael Howard. It is inconceivable that they did not know about the activities of the SDS.

We have taken the stance of refusing to cooperate with any of the current sham inquiries where the police are investigating themselves. Nothing short of a fully independent inquiry, looking at every aspect of the spying operation with the power to force the police to give evidence, will begin to get at the truth.

But to get this we have to cam-

paign for it, and even if an inquiry of some description is promised by the Home Secretary, we will have to fight to get it to take testimony from all those who have been spied on. It could become all too easy to say it was acceptable to spy on protesters and left wingers but not acceptable to spy on family campaigns.

Our campaign is a united campaign determined to bring all of this into the open. We have published a joint statement (see [www.haldane.org](http://www.haldane.org)).

There are a number of events coming up including a public meeting later in the year. Please support our activities and get involved.

## Haldane Society meeting

**Undercover Police Surveillance: A call for a public inquiry**

Tuesday 8 October 2013, 6.30-8pm

Speakers: **Imran Khan**, solicitor to Doreen Lawrence, and **Lois Austin**, former chair of YRE (spied on by the police)

At: University of Law, 14 Store Street, London WC1E 7DE.



YRE activists and trade unionists protest against state surveillance

# Tax dodging corporations profit from casualisation

## Only trade unions can defend workers' rights

Ronnie Job

The Swansea Amazon warehouse location, next to the former Linamar/Visteon/Ford site, is a graphic illustration of how casualised, low-paid work has replaced unionised, skilled manufacturing.

The local press has hailed Ama-

zon for announcing it will employ 1,500 extra workers in the run-up to Christmas.

However, an agency worker who was at Amazon last Christmas told me about their experience.

"At the end of the first day's warehouse tour, the guide pointed out 'your rep's office.' One new worker asked if they meant union rep, but was told it was the agency rep's office and they didn't have unions. Don't think the person asking the question lasted long!

"The first wage packet was a lot smaller than anybody expected, with compulsory deductions for a locker deposit (although I wasn't assigned a locker as there weren't enough), CRB check and drugs test.

"Despite supposedly being employed for 25 hours a week plus overtime, workers were frequently sent home, often not having earned enough to pay for their bus fare or petrol.

"Some days, agency workers were sent home while work was given to unpaid jobseekers on the workfare scheme."



Youth Fight For Jobs marching for full employment and workers' rights photo Paul Mattsson

Amazon pays next to no tax in the UK but is at liberty to take advantage of government schemes that provide free labour!

### Points mean P45s

"It is not easy to get to the site by public transport, especially around Christmas, but anybody turning up late would be assigned penalty points. These were accumulated and led to dismissals.

"Other 'offences' attracting points included 'errors', like not putting the right amount of brown paper in a

box or forgetting to put in the advertisements. All absences (all unpaid of course) were treated the same, even certificated sickness or attending a job interview.

"The site had a real gulag feel. Everybody was subject to security scans whenever they left the floor, and random scans while working, with a handheld scanner.

"CCTV cameras are everywhere and you're told that you can face a drug or alcohol test at any time, have your locker searched or your drinking water tested.

"Everybody was fearful when

scanning their security card to gain entry to the site; finding your card had been deactivated was a common way of discovering you had been dismissed. This happened to people on Christmas Eve. Others were dismissed and escorted off the floor part way through a shift."

Unionisation of sites like Amazon in Swansea is essential to halt the race to the bottom on workers' rights.

The determination of the BFAWU members at Hovis (see the Socialist issue 781) shows how militant trade unionism can beat casualisation.

### Leeds zero-hour protest

Supporters of Youth Fight for Jobs and Socialist Party members gathered outside Sports Direct in Leeds, in protest over the company's continued use of abhorrent zero-hour contracts.

The protest received a lot of support from shoppers, many agreeing that these contracts offered no job security, and were symbolic of the general lack of rights for workers in Britain.

**Rudi Abdallah, Leeds Socialist Students**

### 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 45 countries.**

**Our demands include:**

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, pay, 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 un-recycled 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!