



BAE takes the axe to shipyards

DEFEND EVERY JOB



Chris Pickett
Portsmouth Trades Council,
personal capacity

The shocking news that 1,775 jobs will go at BAE in Glasgow, Fife, Bristol and Portsmouth has angered thousands of workers. The end of shipbuilding in Portsmouth after 500 years has provoked enormous rage.

At very short notice, over 200 trade unionists and community activists rallied in solidarity with workers at the Portsmouth BAE shipbuilding yard on Saturday 9 November, getting excellent support from the public.

Portsmouth's BAE workers and their supporters have responded with the call for a united campaign with workers from Glasgow, Rosyth, and Filton.

A statement from BAE workers, issued by Portsmouth Trades Council said: "We should not follow the lead of local politicians who argue to cut jobs in Scotland to save jobs in Portsmouth. We should fight to save all shipbuilding jobs, wherever they are. BAE and the government can be put under pres-

sure to keep all the shipyard jobs, if there is a concerted campaign."

Messages of support and invitations have been sent to unions at all yards affected to join the demonstration in Portsmouth on Saturday 16 November to show that solidarity will win.

For every job lost in this industry, jobs will go in the supply chain and local communities. It will suck over £25 million in lost wages out of Portsmouth and pile on equal misery in Scotland and Bristol.

This is a highly skilled workforce, to lose these skills is the worst kind of industrial vandalism by this government. The potential could be used to harness these and continue civilian maritime production and to diversify.

Enormous profits have been piled up by BAE running taxpayer financed government contracts. While workers get P45s, top BAE executives get huge pay and bonuses.

If BAE is prepared to run down this industry, it is the bosses who should be sacked. BAE should be nationalised and production planned with the involvement of the unions and local communities.

To succeed, a determined cam-

paign needs to be built. Many workers will ask how this government of millionaires can be defeated. Last Saturday showed how much support BAE workers have. This could be mobilised behind united strike action at all yards to put huge pressure on the government.

Shipyard workers are not fighting alone. Recent strike action by teachers, university workers, probation officers and firefighters has had strong support. All workers could be brought together in a united campaign to save all jobs under threat in the public and private sector.

The same day these job cuts were announced, 500 jobs went down the road at the pharmaceutical company Novartis in Horsham. Events are crying out for the TUC to name the date to strike back against austerity, for a 24-hour general strike.

See page 2 for more on the strategy to save jobs

March on 16 November

Assemble from 12pm at Portsmouth Dockyard's Trafalgar Gate

- **Portsmouth, Govan, Scotstoun, Rosyth, Filton, unite to save all jobs and stop all closures!**

- **For immediate trade union preparation for industrial action**

- **Nationalise to save the jobs and skills!**

- **For a massive united demonstration outside BAE HQ and the MOD in London**

- **For the TUC to set the date for a 24-hour general strike**

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Nationalise to defend the shipyards

Fight for every job

Philip Stott

Socialist Party Scotland

Working class communities in Portsmouth, Glasgow and Fife have been dealt a devastating blow by the announcement that 1,775 jobs are to go in the shipbuilding industry.

BAE Systems bosses have axed more than 40% of their workforce. Jobs will also be lost at the company's office near Bristol.

For Portsmouth, it will mean the end of shipbuilding and the loss of 940 jobs. In Scotland, around 800 workers will go - most of them at the Govan and Scotstoun yards on the Clyde - but also some at the Rosyth dockyard in Fife.

There must be a campaign to defend all the jobs and all the yards.

Workers are again being told they have to pay the price for both government cuts and the refusal of BAE Systems to invest its profits in shipbuilding. Increasing dividends to shareholders, up by more than 4% last year, takes number one priority.

Profits

This is a company that made an overall operating profit of £1.64 billion in 2012. The BAE Systems chief executive pocketed a massive £2.2 million in 2012. Company chairman Dick Oliver had to make do with a mere £745,000. What a contrast to the way in which the workforce have been treated.

The trade unions at Portsmouth and on the Clyde have a particular responsibility to ensure a united campaign of opposition to fight the job cuts is launched. An urgent meeting of the stewards and convenors must take place and immediate plans should be made for joint protests at the both the MoD and at BAE Systems HQ.

A united struggle must be built by the trade unions. The demand that the shipbuilding industry be nationalised to defend the jobs and skills of the workers should form a central part of the campaign.

BAE has been happy to rely on profitable contracts from the UK



Part of Rosyth dockyard photo Dunfermline.info

government but has ignored the potential to invest and diversify production, including offshore vessels for the North Sea oil and gas industry and in the civilian maritime sector.

Through democratic nationalisation the highly skilled workforce could have their jobs secured. A plan for investment and diversification and creation of socially useful jobs could be drawn up with the full involvement of workers and the trade unions.

Discussion on organising a mass campaign of opposition to the job cuts and effective end of the Portsmouth yard is vital. Strike action, occupation of the affected shipyards and demonstrations should be prepared urgently.

Capitalist politicians, whose cuts and austerity agenda have contributed hugely to the job losses, have consciously sought to play off one

group of workers against another.

Within minutes of the announcement by the Tory defence secretary Philip Hammond that the Glasgow yards were recipients of the MoD contract for building new frigates, local Tory and Lib Dem politicians were claiming that Portsmouth was the victim of a political stitch-up.

Christine Dineage, Tory MP for Gosport, said: "The fact Scottish jobs have been protected at the expense of those on the south coast... is very upsetting".

The Lib Dem leader of Portsmouth council echoed this: "Shipbuilding jobs are being protected in Scotland and not in Portsmouth".

It seemed to be lost on him that rather than Scottish jobs being "protected", 800 workers on the Clyde had just been told that their jobs had gone, as well as almost 1,000 in Portsmouth.

The idea of Scottish workers be-

ing given preferential treatment was partly reflected by the immediate comments to the press of some of the Portsmouth workers. They, with some justification, believed they had been victims of a political arrangement to award the contract to shipyards in Scotland because of the independence referendum next year.

BBC political editor Nick Robinson described having been told by a government source: "We did not want to give Alex Salmond a gift a little less than a year ahead of the independence referendum". And that: "The government was acutely conscious of the politics of the Clyde".

This last comment exposes a fear that the government and the company may have faced the potential for an explosive struggle by workers in the Clyde shipyards, with the 1971/2 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation as a template.

They also fear that the SNP would

use the possible closure of the Govan yards to bolster the case for Scottish independence. There is a danger that unless a united campaign of opposition is built by the trade unions, nationalist divisions can emerge over this issue.

A trade union campaign to fight to save all the jobs at all the yards, linked to a demand for the nationalisation of the industry is essential to unite workers and cut across the potential for division.

Scottish capitalist politicians have also scandalously used the issue of the loss of almost 2,000 jobs to bolster support for their own position on the independence referendum.

The Con-Dems' Scottish Secretary Alistair Carmichael commented: "If Scotland were to vote yes then the rest of the UK would be looking for shipyards within their own jurisdiction and Portsmouth would be well placed".

Blackmail

This out-and-out blackmail was taken up by the Labour MP Iain Davidson: the MoD could "place the order with the provision that if Scotland separates it would revert back to the MoD where to place it".

It's clear that the narrative of "Project Fear", the name given to the Better Together 'No' campaign, will be that the orders for the ships will be withdrawn by a UK government if Scotland votes 'Yes' in September 2014.

The SNP deputy leader Nicola Sturgeon, rather than condemning BAE Systems and the Con-Dem government and proposing a joint campaign to fight the cuts, rubbed salt into the wounds of the Portsmouth workers by claiming: "The Clyde is the best place to build these ships because of the investment we've seen in those yards, because of the skill mix and because of the value for money".

It's clear that the pro-big business political elite can offer no way forward in this battle. The trade unions must ensure that the voice and interests of the workers' movement is heard loud and clear in the struggle to defend all the jobs, yards and communities.

Portsmouth trade unionists rally in solidarity with BAE workers

Ben Norman

Over 200 trade unionists and community activists rallied in solidarity at an emergency protest with workers at the Portsmouth BAE shipbuilding yard on 9 November.

"We're calling for nationalisation of the dockyard under democratic public ownership and for unity of all dockyard workers", said Andy Waterman, Portsmouth Socialist Party. "This rally today shows the huge support for this campaign and we want to take it right to the top, with a national demonstration against job cuts and against austerity".

Local capitalist politicians, including Liberal Democrat councillors and Portsmouth's Conservative MP have tried to direct anger away from themselves and BAE, by blaming Scottish workers and the debate over Scotland's independence referendum.

"I don't think industrial action or strikes are going to help us get to where we need to be. We need to send a message to the Scottish politicians", said Penny Mordaunt, the Conservative MP for Portsmouth North, who has ignored calls to resign from her position within the defence ministry.

However, Portsmouth's BAE

workers and their supporters have rejected this divisive position and have called for a united campaign with workers in Glasgow, Rosyth, and Filton.

A statement from BAE workers, issued by Portsmouth Trades Council said: "We should not follow the lead of local politicians who argue to cut jobs in Scotland to save jobs in Portsmouth."

"We should fight to save all shipbuilding jobs, wherever they are. BAE and the government can be put under pressure to keep all the shipyard jobs, if there is a concerted campaign".

Speaking on behalf of the RMT

union, TUSC steering committee member Sean Hoyle challenged local pro-big business politicians for their inaction. "We have heard Lib Dem politicians say they'll do all they can, but that is simply not enough."

"None of the big three parties represent us, nor will they do anything to save these workers. The solution can only come from the workers themselves and we will support them all the way".

The campaign will continue with a march on Saturday 16 November, assembling at the Dockyard's Trafalgar Gate at 12pm.



Part of the Pompey rally photo Ben Norman

Government set back over Independent Living Fund

Stuart Bracking

I was part of a successful legal challenge to the Tory-Lib Dem government decision to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) by April 2015. With four other users of the ILF, we brought the challenge to the Appeal Court in London.

The ILF has existed since 1988. Through a central government grant it provides significant financial support towards the care packages of about 18,000 disabled people with either a significant physical impairment or learning disability.

A unanimous ruling by three senior judges has quashed the decision made by disabled people's minister Esther McVey in December 2012. Her replacement Mike Penning will now have to reconsider the government's approach to this issue.

The Appeal Court concluded the Public Sector Equality Duty was breached because McVey did not properly consider the impact that closure would have on ILF users.

Last week the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced the government will not challenge this ruling in the Supreme Court.

Whatever decision Penning makes, he will have to demonstrate the government understands both the nature of its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the impact any decision now made will have.

But the Appeal Court rejected the challenge to the consultation process which preceded the final decision to close the fund. Therefore Penning and the DWP could move quickly to reaffirm the original decision to close the ILF.

For those ILF users and their families committed to opposing the closure of the fund, and the carers



The government's welfare cuts must be stopped photo Paul Mattsson

and disabled people's organisations who have publicly opposed closure, it is vital that the small window of opportunity now available is exploited to the full.

A clear demand is needed for the government to not only stop the closure of the fund, but re-open it to new applicants. It must have adequate funding to meet disabled people's full personal assistance requirements based on an individual assessment of need.

Both Penning and Labour's shadow disabled people's minister Kate Green will be attending a Just Fair Consortium event in Parliament on 26 November which will focus on independent living rights.

This will be an opportunity to demand that both Penning and Green commit their parties to support a long-term future for the fund and stop its current run-down in preparation for the implementation of the far-reaching

Care Bill when it becomes law.

Given that both parties are committed to austerity measures, it is vital that plans are laid now for a UK-wide campaign which encourages disability organisations and ILF users and their families to set-up local campaign groups that can use protests, lobbying and other campaigning tactics to oppose closure.

Linking up with PCS and other trade unions will be crucial.

Any campaign needs to recognise that online petitions, letter-writing and calls for equality or cumulative impact assessments alone will be blunt tools if the government reaffirms its support for the fund's closure.

Closure will mean some current ILF users having to oppose any move by their local council and Clinical Commissioning Group to move them into a nursing home from 2016.

NHS crumbling in Con-Dem Britain

Ross Saunders

Warning signs flash red as the most critical NHS services gallop towards disaster but Prime Minister David Cameron steams ahead, regardless.

Anyone with eyes to see realises that the crisis in the health service is about to reach a new level of intensity. NHS England has reported an alarming increase in Accident and Emergency (A&E) department waiting times. Shockingly there's been an 89% rise in patients left languishing on trolleys for between four and 12 hours before being treated over the last two years.

In Wales, over 2,000 people waited an incredible 24-hours or more before they were seen in A&E last year.

Monitor, the body which regulates the NHS in England, warned that even in the summer the NHS saw pressure on its services, previously only seen during winter months.

There is no denying that more people are seeking hospital treatment than in the past, with admissions up 47% over the last 15 years.

Big business politicians and their echoes in senior NHS management roles are scratching their heads, feigning bafflement, but the cause of this pressure is obvious, it's cuts and privatisation.

In both England and Wales nothing is sacred, there are no red lines protecting even the most essential services from the austerity axe.

The pressure on A&Es is a result of the brutal slashing of services in other parts of the NHS and in other public services. The closure of 53 24-hour walk-in centres has funnelled patients directly to A&E departments. Without a sustained campaign of opposition, the problem is set to get worse; many more could close when their contracts are up for renewal in 2014.

If you listened to the government and health bosses you would think the pressure was down to greedy poor people who just can't get enough of trips to hospital. Services are "too convenient" said one trust!

The other excuse for cuts is to "end duplication of services". But employing more than one doctor is the duplication of a service; so is having more than one nurse, more

than one hospital bed... This is just management-speak for reducing capacity, for cutting beds or staff or shutting facilities.

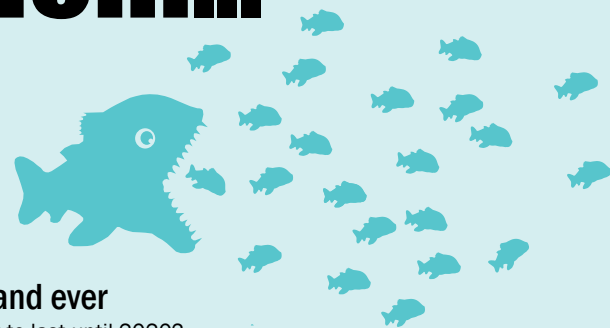
The intolerable working conditions for those left in understaffed workplaces is creating a downward spiral that is a big part of why fewer young doctors are choosing a career in emergency medicine. More than half of specialist registrar posts in A&E have been left vacant.

Another cause of the A&E staffing shortage is privatisation. Lucrative opportunities to make profits in other specialisms were opened up in our National Health Service by the last Labour government and the current government have pulled those cracks wider.

Ed Miliband's opposition to Cameron over the damage being done to the NHS in England is feeble, not least because in Wales the Labour-led government, which has responsibility for health, has brutally slashed funding so that the service is on the verge of collapse.

Many people in both England and Wales are paying the highest price for the absence of a party that will stand up and fight for services.

Them...



Forever and ever

Austerity set to last until 2020? Wrong! It's going to persist until 2030 according to rapacious capitalist bean counters, PwC. This forecast exceeds David Cameron's sanguine perspective of austerity continuing until 2020. This lasting austerity will, according to PwC, force families to be 'financially prudent' and visit charity shops and discount stores to survive – much like we have to do now!

I think as a Labour Party we need to apologise for", says Tom Copley, Labour's housing spokesman on the London Assembly.

A pitifully few 6,330 council houses were completed from 1998 to 2010, compared with 17,710 in 1990 alone, which was Margaret Thatcher's final year as prime minister. In 2004, during Tony Blair's stewardship, just 130 council homes were completed.

Austerity diet

Not surprisingly, a new report shows that rising food prices and stagnating wages have led people to reduce the amount of food they buy and to choose cheaper products. Food Expenditure and Nutritional Quality over the Great Recession by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that food prices on average increased by 33% between 2007 and 2013. The researchers also found that pensioners, single parents and families with young children experienced a worse than average decline in nutritional value – shifting from fresh fruit and vegetables to "calorie dense" processed food and thereby increasing their intake of saturated fat and sugar.

Mea culpa 2

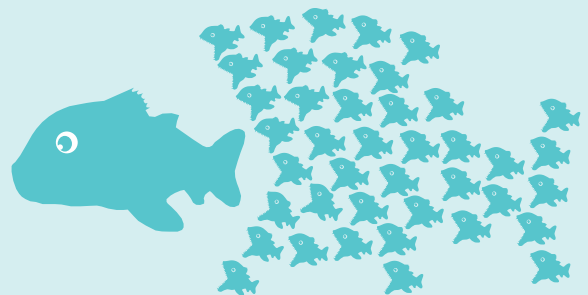
I suppose Tory MP Nadhim Zahawi could argue that he didn't become a millionaire without banking every penny after he claimed 31p on expenses for paper clips. To complete the stationary list he also claimed back 53p for a hole punch, 63p for ballpoint pens and 89p for a stapler. Mind you, when it comes to making outrageous expense claims at least Zahawi had the good grace to to apologise for taking £5,822 from public funds to pay an electricity bill to heat his stables and a mobile home next to them!

Unhealthy wealth

Christmas has come early for health secretary Jeremy Hunt who stands to pocket £17 million after selling his 49% stake in Hotcourses, an educational listings company, making him the richest cabinet member in the government.

The 'wrecker of the NHS' may have a twinge of embarrassment after complaining of a "culture of excessive pay and payoffs" in the health service.

...& Us



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

What we saw

Joe Higgins, Socialist Party TD, on the Great Dublin Lockout
www.socialistworld.net

Video of Joe Higgins, Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland) TD (MP), speaking in the Irish parliament on the 100th anniversary of the great Dublin Lockout, one of the key historical battles of the Irish workers' movement. Also of interest is the article in the Irish Independent - "[Joe] Higgins, not Siptu, is the inheritor of Jim Larkin" - by right-wing populist MP, Shane Ross.

Despite some lame political jibes at Joe's socialist ideas, it correctly points out the massive gulf between the revolutionary socialist founders of the Irish Labour movement, James Larkin and James Connolly, and the right-wing bureaucracy which currently dominates the Irish trade union movement.



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Probation officers plan more action

Chas Berry

Chair, Kent Branch, National Association of Probation Officers (Napo)

Despite a virtual news blackout nationally, the strike by probation workers in Napo on 5 and 6 November has brought the campaign against privatisation to prominence in every community.

The decision to stage the walk-out over two days proved to be a master stroke as the level of participation on picket lines and at rallies and demonstrations was unprecedented. This has lifted the confidence of probation workers and given us a sense of our collective strength as well as the huge support we have in the community, particularly among other trade unionists.

But with justice secretary Chris Grayling seeking to press ahead with the sell-off, how can we make best use of this momentum?

Napo has now served notice of our intention to take action short of a strike from 14 November. This is designed to interfere with privatisation plans without compromising public safety. For example, probation workers regularly work beyond



The confidence of probation workers has been lifted photo Paul Mattsson

their contracted hours to provide courts, prisons and the Parole Board with detailed assessments.

These assessments are often requested outside required notice

periods but are generally completed on time through the goodwill of staff, often at the expense of their own health. No longer! As one colleague remarked recently: "Grayling

doesn't value the work we do, so let's see what price he puts on us when we stop doing his work for free."

Further strike action may be necessary as we move closer to Grayling's deadline of 31 January for the 'splitting' of staff between the Community Rehabilitation Companies and what remains of the National Probation Service.

Clearly, the response of Unison and GMB representing large numbers of administrative and Community Payback staff, who have yet to ballot their members over these changes, will be significant in determining the timing and effectiveness of future strikes.

Through its independent strategy, however, Napo is showing that where it leads others will follow. This is evident from the numbers joining Napo and the pressure on Unison and GMB officials to join the fight.

The consciousness of probation workers has moved significantly during this dispute. The arrogance and disdain with which their professionalism is being ignored in the name of corporate greed is a salutary lesson about the role of the political elite in upholding capitalism. With a bold approach many will draw socialist conclusions.

In brief

Firefighters' strike

FBU members are striking for a fourth time over pensions between 10am and 2pm on 13 November in England and Wales. This follows the worsening of the government's proposals on firefighters' pensions. It plans to punish firefighters who are forced to retire at 55 rather than face dismissal by reducing their pensions by 47.1%.

Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack said: "After 35 years of service - and paying at least £4,000 a year - firefighters could now receive just over £9,000 a year or the sack simply because fitness declines as they get older." The FBU is also balloting its members over other forms of industrial action. This will close on 4 December.



On a picket line on 4 November

Save our fire services

Save Our Services in Surrey (SOSiS) have called a march and rally to save fire stations. Surrey county council intend to close both fire stations in Spelthorne and to replace them with just one. SOSiS leader and branch secretary of Surrey Unison Paul Couchman said: "The county council wants to cut our fire services by 50% - making Spelthorne the least fire-resourced borough in Surrey. There are 35 fire engines in Surrey to cover eleven boroughs. The council cabinet will make the decision on 17 December.

Demo: Saturday 7 December, assemble 11.30am, Forest Drive (by the side of Sunbury fire station). March through Ashford to Staines fire station.

RMT election

Socialist Party member John Reid is standing for election to the transport union RMT's council of executives. He is fighting on a programme of defending jobs, pay, conditions and pensions in the face of government attacks. John is currently the regional secretary of RMT. John is calling for ticket offices to be kept open, for a supervisor on every station, and a £12 an hour minimum wage for cleaners. He is also saying no to the use of agencies, bring all regular work back in-house.

The election runs until 2 December.

Stop press - strike

The unions representing workers in higher education - UCU, Unison and Unite - have just announced they will strike again on 3 December. They may be joined by the Scottish education union EIS. The dispute is over a 1% pay offer, workers having seen a 13% pay cut over recent years.

The battle against blacklisting continues

On 9 November, 60 activists demonstrated outside Alder Hey Hospital construction project in Liverpool in protest at the continued blacklisting of union activists and the denial of union facilities on the project.

The demonstration was called by the Blacklist Support Group (BSG) over the anti-union attitude being adopted by the main contractor Laing O'Rourke (LOR) and its wholly owned electrical subsidiary Crown House.

The company has refused to negotiate with construction unions over rates of pay or safety and has even denied union officials access onto site to speak to workers.

The protest came shortly after the announcement of the death of a construction worker on the Francis Crick Institute construction site near Kings Cross in central London.

Here Unite has been refused access to the site by Crown House.

LOR is one of the eight major contractors who are defendants in the High Court on 29 November for their role in the blacklisting conspiracy. It is one of the firms that last month announced a scheme to compensate blacklisted workers. The BSG walked out of the first negotiations, describing the proposals as a "publicity stunt".

There is a TUC Day of Action on

Blacklisting on 20 November. Steve Acheson, blacklisted electrician and chair of the BSG said: "LOR may pretend they have turned over a new leaf by their involvement in the compensation scheme but they show their true colours every day by their anti-union actions on building sites across the UK. LOR, Crown House and the other blacklisting firms have attempted to destroy our working lives and genuine trade unionism in the building industry."

Roy Bentham - blacklisted joiner from Liverpool and spokesperson for the BSG said: "Our message is simple. Full compensation which reflects the human rights violations and suffering of blacklisted workers. Employment for those workers on major contracts for which they've been previously excluded. And lastly a full independent inquiry into this whole tawdry scandal with no stones left unturned."

London protests on 20 November: 7am - Cheese Grater, Leadenhall Street, City of London (opposite Lloyds Building). 10am - Francis Crick Medical Research Centre, Kings Cross (behind the British Library). There are also events in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Manchester.

Tesco drivers fight on

Alistair Tice

One year after being unfairly sacked, 183 ex-Tesco drivers will march again in Doncaster on Saturday 16 November.

The demonstration is to expose how Stobart Group, the haulage firm that Tesco out-sourced the drivers' work to, tore up the Tupe (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment) regulations and made the drivers redundant within four months of transfer.

Tupe is supposed to protect workers' jobs and terms and conditions when they are transferred from one employer to another, but increasingly employers like "Scumbarts" are getting round them and the Con-Dem government wants to water down the regulations even further.

Last autumn, the drivers, all Unite members, waged an inspiring campaign involving 15 days of strike action, leafleting Tesco stores, and a mass picket and blockade (including a tank!) of the Doncaster Tesco distribution centre that lasted three days and two nights.

While not winning their jobs back, it was this militant action that forced the bosses to double the redundancy pay. But the workers have not just left it at that. Unite is currently pursuing a legal challenge against Stobart over the unfair dismissal of the drivers and for a protective award



The workers' tank photo A.Tice

for lack of proper consultation during the Tupe process. The hearing is scheduled for February 2014.

Trevor Cheetham, the Unite senior shop steward during last year's strike said: "If we don't win this, then Tupe might as well stand for "Tory Union-busting, Persecution of Employees!"

Saturday's demonstration will start at 11am from Doncaster Rovers car park which is near the distribution centre, march through Doncaster town centre and back for a rally. Other workers recently privatised, such as prison officers at Doncaster prisons and Royal Mail have been invited to support.

Vote for Martin Powell-Davies

As national strike action against Education secretary Gove's attacks is postponed again, now, more than ever, NUT members need to vote for clear, consistent leadership. That's why NUT members should vote Powell-Davies 1 in the NUT vice-president election which is going on at the moment.

Martin's blog, electmartin1.blogspot.com explains the latest situation in the teachers' battle to defend jobs, pensions and working conditions: "Teachers were told that their unions suspended that planned day of national strike action because, in the words of the NUT's latest Teacher magazine,

'our successful and determined action has wrung from Education Secretary Michael Gove an offer of talks.' However, no genuine talks were being proposed by Gove - then or now.

The NUT/NASUWT Press Release confirms 'that plans remain in place for a national strike in England and Wales no later than 13 February 2014 in the event of insufficient progress through negotiation.' That's welcome - however, that doesn't go far enough. A date for a national strike needs to be confirmed as soon as possible - along with a plan for further escalating action after that."



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Benefit sanction figures expose Tory lies

An advice centre worker

On 6 November, the DWP issued figures for Job-seeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) claimants sanctioned under new rules brought in from October last year, and last June. The statistics show the claim that sanctions get people into work is a lie.

For JSA, comparing November 2012 and June 2013, there was an 11% rise in sanctions. 580,000 sanctions were delivered between October 2012 and June 2013, a 6% rise over the same time the previous year before the draconian new rules were introduced.

So far, 223,000 people have got the lowest sanction, 167,000 the intermediate and 48,000 the highest.

For ESA, 9,000 people were given 11,000 sanctions between October 2012, 11,130 ESA sanctions were issued. It is clear that the system is designed, not to get people off benefits and into work, but off benefits and into the depths of poverty.

Sanctions take place for many reasons – not attending a work-based interview, missing a signing-on date, not applying for “enough” jobs – and can be for a short period or for up to three years.

The agency I work for is situated in one of the most deprived inner-city wards in the country; a few yards down the road is the lo-

cal job centre. Every day, we see the reality of what sanctions mean. Like the disabled woman sent to an Atos interview: when she arrived, she found she could not climb the stairs to the interview, went home, phoned them – and was sanctioned.

Or the young lad sent to a job interview by the DWP the same day as he should sign on, told he could sign on the next day – and sanctioned when he turned up for being a day late.

The situation is getting worse. With orders and pressure coming from above, Atos is declaring more people fit for work and the DWP sanctioning more people for the most spurious of reasons.

Appeals

In 2011-12, 738,000 people went through work capability assessments. The Public Accounts Committee found 38% of their decisions were overturned on appeal.

The agency I work for, Citizens Advice, reported an 83% rise in people seeking assistance with appeals last year. ESA appeals rose 70%. 76% of those who appealed won their cases and were found eligible to receive benefits.

Small wonder that the government has acted to stop appeals. This time last year, my agency was able to represent claimants at tribunal, with the advice being funded through Legal Aid.

Now, welfare benefits have been removed from the scope of Legal



It is clear the system is not designed to get people into work, but push them further into poverty

Aid; instead of five advisers able to help and represent at tribunal, we have no representation at all, and one adviser coming in part time, while the demand for our services grows every day.

That is, of course, if claimants make it to appeal. The government's own statistics show that, in 2010/11,

10,600 disabled or sick people died within six weeks of losing their benefits after being found fit for work or sanctioned.

People on benefits face a future of despair and poverty, driven by the government's furious rush to put as much money into the pockets of the rich as they can before Labour are

re-elected.

They needn't worry though. Labour's shadow welfare minister, Rachel Reeves, has pledged to be tougher than the Tories on benefits.

Marx once wrote that capitalism came into existence dripping blood from every pore – a truth that continues today.

Abolish the bedroom tax

As we go to press, a Labour motion calling for the bedroom tax to be abolished at once is being debated in parliament.

The bedroom tax penalises housing benefit claimants in social housing for having 'spare' rooms. It demands that two children under-16 of the same sex have to share a room. Two children under-ten of different sexes also have to share.

Many people hit by the bedroom tax have moved to more expensive private housing as a result. Few one-bedroom social homes are available.

However, if all Labour councils refused to implement the tax, with the national Labour Party promising to reimburse councils if it forms the next government, the tax would be defeated already.

Instead, as these reports show, Labour councils are among the most viscous in prosecuting for rent arrears. We need no-cuts councillors. See page 11 and www.tusc.org.uk

Sheffield's fake court summons

Sheffield's Labour-led city council called their first tenants to court for rent arrears due to the Bedroom Tax. Summonses were issued for possession (ie eviction) hearings to be held on 8 November.

Or so it seemed. In fact the council just wanted it to look that way.

Socialist Party member Tim had received a letter on court headed notepaper with a hearing on that date at 12.15pm. Expecting that the council would have summonsed numerous tenants on the same day several of us turned up to support the tenants and protest. But when we asked court staff about the times of the hearings we were told that there weren't any. No possession hearings listed that day.

Tim had lost his letter so we initially thought he'd got the date wrong. Two of us ac-

companied him to see the council to find the correct date of the possession hearing. But they replied, 'Today. 12.15pm. Turn up at that time and there will be a council official to greet you and take you into court.

The staff at the court might not have got it listed.' This seemed odd; the court should know what is listed for that day.

Back at the court the mystery was solved. Reception had a list of people the council were to see that day. It

wasn't a court hearing. Just a discussion to get an agreement to pay.

After Tim's own situation had been discussed the council officer was asked: "Don't you think holding these meetings here's rather intimidating?"

Her reply was that tenants who don't normally engage with the council do often turn up when it's held in

court. In other words, it is intended to be intimidating!

Sharon Milsom

Leeds anti-eviction army

Over the last few weeks, Leeds anti-bedroom tax campaign, Hands Off Our Homes (HOOH), has helped tenants win two reprieves from possession orders being sought by the supposedly 'compassionate' Labour-led Leeds city council.

We have distributed leaflets and held public meetings explaining the need to fight this attack tooth and nail, and showing ways people can avoid being forced out of their homes, including applying for the inadequate Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) as well as challenging the council's decision.

We also supported people facing court because they are unable to pay the council tax benefit shortfall.



Some of the bailiff busters in Leicester photo Leicester SP

Many of them face this as a double whammy with the bedroom tax.

HOOH has submitted a report to UN special rapporteur Raquel Rolnik based on case studies from people met during the campaign.

The report highlights how 50% of affected council tenants in Leeds are now in rent arrears due to the bedroom tax and how 75% of those affected in Leeds have one or more disabilities. So much for the council protecting the vulnerable!

Iain Dalton, Leeds Hands Off Our Homes activist

Leicester bailiff busters

On 5 November, protesters descended upon Braunstone estate in Leicester to demonstrate to the La-

bour council that they would stand shoulder-to-shoulder to oppose the despised bedroom tax.

The defiant protest, a joint initiative of Unite Community and the Leicestershire Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation, showed how people will mobilise in defence of their communities if the council continues down the eviction pathway.

By speaking to people door-to-door across the estate a phone-tree has been created and is being extended week-by-week. This network of people willing to put their bodies between their community and bailiffs will then be mobilised at short-notice to peacefully resist any attempts at eviction by blockading threatened homes.

Over 1,000 signatures of Leicester residents have been collected, calling on the council to implement a non-eviction policy. The petition will be handed to the council in the coming weeks.

Michael Barker

Housing associations have said they'll demolish three-bedroom homes as the bedroom tax has made them unaffordable for tenants

375,000 children have been hit by the bedroom tax

Tory welfare minister and bedroom tax pioneer Iain Duncan Smith said he won't attend the Commons debate on the tax

The number of new homes available has fallen to its lowest point in a decade

Over 50,000 council tenants are at risk of eviction due to the bedroom tax

SRI LANKA: spotlight on a blood-stained regime

With the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) taking place from 10 to 17 November all eyes are on Sri Lanka. In 2009 the Socialist was almost a lone voice reporting on the government's atrocities against the Tamil population in the North of the country.

Here Senan, a leading Tamil activist and writer, analyses the post-war situation and the perspective for struggle.

“We conquered the country – now it's time to conquer the world.” That's one of the astonishing propaganda slogans the Sri Lankan government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa has selected as it prepares to host Chogm.

‘Conquest’ is one way of describing the regime-authored genocidal slaughter that claimed the lives of a UN estimate of 70,000 Tamil-speaking people at least in 2009, summary executions, and the widespread trampling of democratic rights that has followed in the aftermath. Callum Macrae's No Fire Zone film has devastatingly documented these war crimes and crimes against humanity. This was the bloody endgame of the three-decade civil war.

As the Chogm website declares, the country's official name is the ‘Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka’. But this regime, with power concentrated in the hands of the Rajapaksa dynasty, can be characterised as increasingly dictatorial with only a thin veneer of democracy.

Yes, elections took place in the North for the first time in 25 years – but every type of dirty trick and bribery was used in the failed attempt to get votes for the government parties. The regime also grabs every chance to whip up the nationalism it relies on to maintain its support – and Chogm represents a carnival of opportunity.

Clampdown

All protests and public meetings are prohibited. The universities have been shut down in fear of possible student protests. Chogm mania means nothing is moving or going forward in the capital Colombo – not just the traffic but also the economy.

The world economic crisis is beginning to be felt in South Asia. With growth in India and China not expected to cross 5% next year, huge tensions are developing inside these countries and in the region. Having relied on Chinese and Indian support to prosecute the bloody massacre in 2009, Sri Lanka's dependency continues as the economy slows.

Post-war growth was paralleled with massive borrowing. According to one report, Sri Lanka borrowed at least \$15 billion since 1997, mostly from China. China also invested at least \$6 billion in Sri Lanka's infrastructure. Commonwealth leaders will be driving on the new Katunayake airport highway when they enter the country – it cost \$298 million – borrowed from China.

The railway to the Tamil-dominated North was built by India, which is also investing heavily in telecoms. Over 300 families who

lived in central Colombo are being evicted to make way for Tata which is expected to build a big shopping complex.

The IMF, which bailed out Sri Lanka in 2009 with a massive \$2.6 billion loan, predicted 6.5% growth this year but has now reduced that to around 6%. The banks are beginning to stop lending and overdraft facilities for small businesses have been cancelled, with a number closing down.

This is taking place at the same time as the government is expected to start paying interest on its debt. Another major drag on the economy is the massive military budget. This year, in the so-called peace, the defence budget has been upped to \$1.95 billion – the highest ever at 12% of the total budget allocation.

Against this background millions of rupees are being spent on the Chogm festivities. President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family want to use this opportunity to rally support among the masses and hide their war crimes.

But the Canadian prime minister's refusal to participate, now joined by the Indian prime minister, has cast a shadow on Chogm.

Election fears

However, these actions are not mere human rights ‘concerns’. The Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has shaken the bloodied hands of Mahinda many times in cosy meetings in Delhi. His reluctance to attend Chogm is based on something new.

An estimated 72 million Tamils live in the Tamil Nadu state (TN) in India. There and in countries where there is a significant Tamil Sri Lankan diaspora, major protests have taken place. The frequency of the protests and the level of participation have not been seen in TN in recent history. Against a background of the frustrated aspirations of millions of young people, TN's Dravidian ruling party and opposition party compete with each other to slam the Rajapaksa regime harder. The 2014 general election is in the minds of all these right-wing Dravidian parties now. Congress, India's ruling party, is weakened and relies heavily on the regional parties to secure a victory. Hence Singh's hesitation.

In Britain almost all the Tamil campaign groups have organised protests against Chogm. Massive anger is developing against the Tories. This is the reason why David Cameron has been forced to change his tune and now promises a ‘tough’ talk with the Sri Lankan regime on war crimes.

Of course, the satisfaction of British and western economic interests in Sri Lanka are Cameron's primary concern. But Chogm business participation is heavily dominated by China and India.

Despite much-flaunted anti-imperialist rhetoric, the Rajapaksa family do not resist western investment. They do, however, wish to control every aspect of investment, which creates complications for western investors. Most of the Chinese investments are done through new companies opened up by the Rajapaksa family. Without taking the family's side, it will be difficult to do business in Sri Lanka.

This regime has proved its capacity to be brutal. Some argue a ‘strong’ government is needed to carry through developments in

the interests of big business, specifically the planned privatisation of Sri Lanka's hard-won and much-cherished public services.

The family certainly has a full hold on state affairs. From defence to the judiciary, every key component is within Rajapaksa control. At present the regime also enjoys significant support in the south. This is largely due to infrastructure developments – particularly the new roads which have created enormous relief for the masses. However, family rule is becoming increasingly unpopular.

Cracks appear

But though the regime appears strong, its weakness is beginning to be exposed. Even within the ruling SLFP party there is mounting discontent against one-family rule. But more importantly the demand for at least 6% of the budget to be allocated for education is gaining strength among the working class. The campaign to defend free education is growing among young people. This is one of the key areas where the government is expected to face significant resistance. But the regime has shown it will try to suppress any protest brutally.

In the south, in the town of Weliveriya on 1 August the people demanded clean water and, as one writer put it, they “got bullets instead”. Protesters against the water pollution



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that has left every inhabitant with kidney problems were mowed down by the army. Six were killed and hundreds injured.

The brutal methods that were used in the north can also be used in the south. The tens of thousands who are affected by the water pollution are willing to take on the government despite its brutality. The declining support for the Rajapaksa family is also eroding the nationalist base that this regime enjoyed.

The regime is forced to go to ever greater extremes. It is learning from the dark periods in Sri Lanka's history when vicious pro-capitalist governments whipped up chauvinism and racism to divide the masses and undermine support for ideas of struggle and socialism.

The memory of the Black July pogroms 30 years ago is evoked by the use of right-wing racist organisations such as Bodu Bala Sena or Jhika Hela Urumaya to try to whip up Sinhala nationalism to maintain middle class support for the regime. This makes it urgent that today's opposition also learns the les-

sons of Sri Lanka's incredible history of class struggle.

The growth in nationalist feeling in the North is fanned by the opportunist Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leaders. The polarisation between the north and south is widening. The so-called rehabilitation has not improved the lives of war victims. Tens of thousands still live in sheds. In addition the land grab by the government and military is enormously unpopular.

TNA's historic victory in the recent council election was made possible due to the enormous hatred building up against the state and the occupying military. The TNA victory in the North shows that this regime can be defeated. But a new political voice for the workers and poor masses will have to be built.

Struggle needed

It has been a custom for the current government to buy off any popular opposition leaders. Key members of the main pro-capitalist opposition UNP have been brought by the Rajapaksa family to decorate their election rallies.

In fact the UNP is in total disarray. Its right wing argues for a much more chauvinistic and nationalist stand to win back the masses. One UNP leader even suggested that candidates change their names to Rajapaksa to increase their chances of winning the election.

Although Colombo council is controlled by the UNP – actual control is in the hands of defence secretary Gotabaya, Mahinda's brother. He is running the ‘beautification’ project, among many other areas of government. This attempt to paper over Sri Lanka's bloody history reveals one of the major contradictions – and sources of future conflict. Much of the building work is being done by the military for free instead of by trained construction workers.

Earlier this year Sri Lanka reached back into its strong and long tradition of class struggle, especially the heroic general strike of 1953, with a partial general strike. This brought into stark relief the political vacuum that exists and the need to build a mass left opposition, involving the trade unions. The United Socialist Party, the Sri Lankan section of the Committee for a Workers' International plays a prominent role in opposing the current regime.

The USP argues that it is vital to build a mass movement to challenge this regime. Given its underlying weakness, if a strong mass opposition can be organised then the regime will quickly crack from the top. This will of course open up a number of possibilities, including the working class asserting its will on events.

The Rajapaksa family is making plans for its long-term control of the state. Mahinda's son Namal is being prepared as the next in line for the throne. The Cabinet, which now holds a world record for its size, is stuffed with Namal's people. But the major crisis – economic and political – that awaits them will challenge their existence.

PROTEST CHOGM

15 November 4-7pm, Downing Street, tamilsolidarity.org

A still from No Fire Zone



Watch
No Fire
Zone - see
nofirezone.org



Cameron's priorities – votes not rights

Senan confronts the PM!

Finding myself face-to-face with Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street, or at least her large painted likeness, while I waited to interview David Cameron, reminded me of the on-going abhorrence of her legacy.

In April Australian Foreign minister Bob Carr revealed what he called Thatcher's ‘unabashedly racist’ comments – she warned him against allowing Indian migrants to ‘take over’.

The BBC reports that in 2010 the Tories won only 16% of ‘the ethnic minority vote’ and concludes that this is because they are seen as racist. David Cameron cannot escape the reputation and unpopularity of his ‘Nasty Party’.

As well as the anger at the Stephen Lawrence murder case and other high profile issues, polls show that two-thirds of voters correctly think ‘the Conservative Party looks after the interests of the rich, not ordinary people’.

Therefore, since the 2010 general election which no party won, ethnic minority votes are becoming seen as a significant factor. The Tories know they need access to what the establishment parties arrogantly consider ethnic minority ‘vote banks’ for the 2015 election – even to guarantee a dignified defeat!

Cameron, however, is already largely defeated in the battle for the hearts of Tamils in Britain.

His decision to take part in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in Sri Lanka angered almost all sections of the Tamil population.

Tamilnet, a leading Tamil news website, supported the call for ‘no Tamil votes and no Tamil money to the Tory party’. Tamil Solidarity has also promoted this demand.

Faced with the total decimation of Tamils' support in the future, the Prime Minister's Office took extraordinary steps in the hope of softening the anger by luring sections of the Tamil media onto their side.

On 7 November Cameron wrote an article for the Tamil Guardian arguing that ‘The right thing to do is to engage... if we are not at the table we have no way of encouraging the Commonwealth to take a strong stand on issues that we care about deeply in our country.’

Interview

On the same day Cameron gave me a brief but exclusive interview for Tamil station Deepam TV.

First, I asked him what has he got to say to the outraged Tamils regarding his decision to visit Sri Lanka. He simply repeated that it is important to go to Sri Lanka to fix the ‘shared future’.

Cameron then admitted that he was appalled by the evidence unearthed by the latest Channel 4 No Fire Zone docu-

mentary by Callum Macrae.

However, Cameron admitted that he was appalled by the evidence unearthed by the latest Channel 4 No Fire Zone documentary by Callum Macrae. Cameron said to me on camera that he had watched this film. But two days later the PM's office tweeted ‘PM: Been watching @NoFireZoneMovie. Chilling documentary on Sri Lanka. Serious questions to put to @PresRajapaksa next week’. Was the PM having a second look? Not sure.

But this devastating film, like Callum's previous documentaries, leaves no doubt that the current Sri Lankan regime is responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the final phase of the civil war in 2009. Cameron weakly pledged to bring the world's attention to these issues.

Change of heart?

In a meeting held with some Tamil activists on the same day he was even forced to say he would ‘consider’ calling for an international investigation into war crimes in Sri Lanka. This represents a departure from previous talk.

When the Foreign and Commonwealth Office replied to Tamil Solidarity supporters in July all they said was: ‘We urge the Sri Lankan Government to implement the [Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission] recommendations contained in the resolution and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.’

As Tamil Solidarity pointed out ‘LLRC makes the mildest and frailest recommendations, which was itself commissioned by the regime, and yet the government refuses to implement it.’

The Sri Lankan government has so far paid not the slightest heed to any criticism. Cameron's professed faith in the power of the British media is touching, but on Saturday 9 November the Sri Lankan regime answered it by putting a 222-page denunciation of Channel 4 in every Chogm press pack.

In its subsequent editorial the Tamil Guardian disagreed with the PM. In general the efforts of the Tories to tempt the Tamils came to naught.

After Cameron departed, under the gaze of Thatcher in that study room I remembered Hugo Chavez's legendary speech at the UN in 2006: ‘The devil came here... and it smells of sulphur still.’

This is an edited version of an article that was first published by the Colombo Telegraph. See: tamilsolidarity.org for a video of Cameron as part of Senan's interview with Callum Macrae for Deepam TV

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	October	November	December	2013	Deadline	6 January	2014
Eastern	1,200	980							
West Midlands	2,100	1,534							
Wales	2,300	1,669							
East Midlands	1,600	1,149							
South West	1,400	996							
London	6,100	3,708							
Yorkshire	2,900	1,646							
North West	1,200	605							
Northern	600	242							
South East	750	217							
Southern	1,200	334							
England & Wales	3,650	2,111							
TOTAL	25,000	15,196							

Successes for socialists in US election campaigns

Bryan Koulouris
Socialist Alternative

Continued from back page

Rooted in the Great Recession and the shallow economic recovery, there is a tremendous distrust of the political establishment, which fuelled both Ty's and Kshama's Socialist Alternative election campaigns. The government shutdown also stoked up a popular rage that allowed the socialist campaigns to strike a real chord with ordinary people.

During the shutdown, the approval rating for Congress slumped to a historic low of 5%. In a Gallup poll, a record-high 60% said that a new party was needed in the US, and a record low of only 26% said the two main parties were doing an adequate job.

Many people in the US often feel discouraged and demoralised by the rigged pro-corporate electoral system. However, these campaigns demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that independent candidates and ordinary working class people can challenge the establishment and win without relying on a dime of corporate money! The campaign for Ty Moore raised more money than his main corporate-backed opponent, and for Kshama Sawant raised \$110,000 compared to her opponent's \$238,000.

Socialist Alternative's (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) campaigns showed clearly that it is possible for working class and young people to organise together and fight to change the world.

We now want to build on this momentum, and are appealing to people to donate and get involved with Socialist Alternative to help us build future campaigns of the 99% like the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and union rights and the struggle to tax the super-rich to pay for a green jobs programme and mass transit.

A party for the 99%

These election results, along with the Arab spring, the 2011 Wisconsin labour uprising, and the Occupy movement, have made possible what seemed impossible. They are ushering in a whole new process. Not only are these electoral campaigns leading to the growth of a new vibrant socialist movement in the United States, but they will also serve as a model that will contribute to the eventual rise of a new party that will fight the richest 1% - a mass party of working people.

Many people on the left argue that socialist ideas cannot gain mass



photo Socialist Alternative

support in the US; these campaigns show that they're dead wrong. Pew Research Center Polls show over and over that a majority of young people and people of colour now prefer socialism to capitalism.

Campaigns

Kshama and Ty's opponents barely bothered to resort to "red-baiting" against socialist ideas. Instead, incumbent Richard Conlin in Seattle used thinly-veiled anti-immigrant and sexist rhetoric against Kshama while Alondra Cano in Minneapolis shied away from negative campaigning, preferring to rely on her support in the real estate industry and the political establishment.

A new socialist movement needs to be built by socialists being the most effective fighters for the needs of working class people. Socialist Alternative has stood out for our ability to connect with politicised workers.

At the same time, we honestly explain that reforms in our society can only be fully sustained if power is taken out of the hands of big business and a new socialist system based on democratic public ownership of the top 500 corporations is established.

Ty Moore's campaign in Ward 9 of Minneapolis was built alongside important high-profile housing justice campaigns led by Occupy Homes Minnesota. Ty and Socialist Alternative helped co-found this organisation which has successfully defended many homeowners from being evicted by big banks and the police. The centre of Occupy Homes' 'Foreclosure and Eviction-Free Zone' was in Ward 9 - a diverse,

working class community.

Likewise, in Seattle, Kshama's campaign helped put the 'Fight for 15' - strikes and protests of low-wage workers for a \$15 an hour minimum wage - at the centre of political debate. Labour organisations placed an initiative on the ballot to raise the minimum wage to \$15 in the suburb of SeaTac.

Socialist Alternative energetically built this movement while aiding victimised striking workers and countering arguments against raising the minimum wage. This contributed to the ballot initiative's historic success.

Eventually, both SeaTac mayoral

The incredible election results of Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant are shining examples of the way forward

candidates, who hadn't mentioned the minimum wage at the beginning of their campaigns, came out vaguely in support of \$15 an hour. Kshama's success at shifting the political debate prompted the Seattle Times, the largest newspaper in Seattle, to say before the election that "the winner of Seattle's election is already the socialist Kshama Sawant."

These independent working class electoral campaigns have important lessons for the labour movement, which is facing a serious leadership crisis. Democratic politicians are often the ones proposing cuts, privatisation and other attacks on unions, too. In this situation, the labour movement needs to regain its fighting traditions and run more of its own working class candidates.

Instead, labour leaders often back Democrats either out of fear of the Republicans, habit, or the fact that many live lives of luxury that have more in common with politicians than their own members.

Support

However, our campaigns demonstrate that workers are increasingly fed up with politics, and labour support can be gained by credible independent campaigns with concrete demands. Ty obtained the active

support of SEIU, one of the strongest trade unions in the city. Kshama won endorsements from six union locals, and a majority of the King County Labor Council voted in favour of endorsing her (narrowly missing the super-majority necessary for an endorsement).

In the coming months and years, union members will face continual attacks on their rights and living conditions. In the course of these fights, protests, pickets, strikes and direct action will be needed. Workers will have to struggle to win democratic control of their unions and elect leaders who are willing to resist the corporate onslaught.

These battles will show the need for workers to have their own independent political representation, and these recent election campaigns show that unions can run very successful independent candidates, which should be a step towards forming a new party of the 99%.

Many people who supported our candidates are breaking from the Democratic Party, but aren't ready yet to do so fully. Socialist Alternative will continue to argue that the Democrats are fundamentally a party of big business, and that working class people shouldn't give any support to them.

Moving forward

As a concrete step towards a new party, we should form coalitions throughout the country with the potential to come together on a national level to run 100 independent working class candidates in the 2014 mid-term elections.

US capitalism is in a deep economic and social crisis. The political establishment is discredited, and their system of government appears broken. Deep anger is growing against inequality, racism, sexism and homophobia. Environmental destruction is worsening. The situation is crying out for an alternative.

We need to actively build the socialist movement along with broader coalitions of the 99% to challenge the agenda of big business. The incredible election results of Ty Moore and Kshama Sawant are shining examples of the way forward.

Check online at
socialistalternative.org or
votesawant.org or on Twitter
@VoteSawant for updates as more
votes are counted

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net

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



Tunisia: Mass struggle constrained by Popular Front and UGTT leaderships

Interview with Hidouri Abdesslem, member of the regional UGTT office for secondary education, Sidi Bouzid

CWI in Tunisia



Greece: Two members of neo-fascist Golden Dawn shot dead

Who gains from terrorism?

Statement by Xekinima (CWI Greece)



Brazil: First gathering of Women In Struggle movement

An important step to renew working class feminism

Jane Barros, LSR (CWI in Brazil)



Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine
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Claims that Miliband is moving left are assessed by Peter Taaffe

● **US shutdown**

New cuts loom

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Boring away at services

At Birmingham city council's 5 November meeting, Labour leader Albert Bore said that non-statutory services such as community libraries, youth centres and park keeping will be carried out by 'volunteers' with their buildings handed over to community groups.



photo Southampton SP

Labour also proposes commercialisation of services. Bore said the Hillingdon library with a Starbucks franchise and the Luton library which gets commission on all books sold through Amazon are examples to follow. Public services would join with the companies whose tax dodging drives cuts in those services!

Bore says "community groups can often deliver services more meaningfully than the council and at a lower cost." Of course costs will be lower; the volunteers won't be paid!

Birmingham is trying to make local structures carry the can for cuts in funding and services.

Labour shamefully surrenders services delivered by paid and properly trained staff on the altar of austerity. Could the voluntary sector take on more than a small fraction of current services? A city with no non-statutory services is a distinct possibility unless we fight back.

Clive Walder

What we need...

I went along to the Memorial in Salford, for Remembrance Sunday with mixed emotions. I go because my Granddad fought in World War Two and I always walked with him before he died and because I genuinely am grateful to those people who risked - and often gave - everything for something that mattered more than themselves.

It is nice to see lots of other people there for the same reason. What I can't stand though is to see Tories and BNP supporters stood there among all those good people. It's because of warmongers and racists like them that we need to remember.

'Never again' must mean sweeping those hypocritical wretches away. I believe that is the best way we can genuinely honour those who died. Not just on Remembrance Sunday, but every day.

Steve North, Salford

...to remember

When I was young my dad, who was a pacifist, took me to the grave near Ypres in Belgium of his grandad who died in WW1. My great-grandad, Private J Moore of the 1st/9th Durham Light Infantry died on 6 June 1916.

My dad got details of where he was buried from the War Commission. Visiting the cemetery had a huge impact on me,

it was extremely sad seeing the graves of row after row of young men killed in warfare. Hundreds of similar graveyards are dotted around Ypres.

My great-gran was left struggling to bring up three little girls. Although she lived into her 80s she never got over his death. My gran told me that once all her daughters were "married off" she virtually became a recluse. As a child I saw her every week, but she rarely spoke, and my memory of her is sitting in her chair by the fire.

I often think of him and the sacrifice he and his young family made - but will not be wearing a red poppy which has been adopted by the establishment to glorify war.

Elaine Brunskill, Gateshead

Insults to posties

I shouted at my own television when the ad for the newly privatised Royal Mail was broadcast last week. Beautifully shot, in warm hues, it showed us how lovely the Royal Mail posties are, what a significant part of the community and society their service and staff are. But we remember what the Tory press's screeching, outraged headlines said about postal workers before privatisation.

There was "Royal Mail won't deliver to 162 home estate because ONE postman was bitten by a dog at one address" (Daily Express) and "Royal Mail has postmen banned from estate over health and safety fears creating six mile journey to collect letters...This time uneven paving stones are the excuse" (Daily Mail) and "Royal Mail is threatening to suspend deliveries to a family home because posties are running scared of a pussycat. (Daily Express). The media rags' scathing attacks on a strong union aided capitalism's assault on our postal service. I didn't think it possible to expose capitalism for what it is in 30 seconds but Royal Mail shareholders have done it.

Sally Griffiths

Spymasters' outrage

Britain's spy chiefs say al-Qa'ida terrorists are "rubbing their hands with glee" following public revelations by ex-US security operative Edward Snowden of US and British intelligence agencies' secretive mass electronic surveillance programmes.

But exactly how publication of this information compromised intelligence operatives, or how terrorist groups benefited, is not made clear.

Indeed, in a contradictory statement, GCHQ boss Sir Iain Lobban says that since Snowden's revelations GCHQ has monitored terrorist groups discussing how to avoid communication systems they considered vulnerable. But surely, if terrorists are now avoiding detection, they clearly aren't making a very good job of it if GCHQ can still monitor their discussions!

The spy chiefs' outraged statements that Snowden's revelations are 'gifting terrorists' is a pathetic excuse. It aims to distract from the US and British spooks' huge embarrassment in their routine eavesdropping on private citizens and on supposed political allies in other countries, on an industrial scale.

What really concerns intelligence agency chiefs is that exposure of their undemocratic practices of spying on innocent people will lead to calls for public controls over the nefarious activities of the 'deep state'.

Simon Carter

Russell Brand - reasons to be cheerful

Nancy Taaffe

Prospective TUSC candidate for 2014 council elections



Sometimes celebrities and popular figures reflect a mood in society at a particular moment without being fully conscious themselves of what they are expressing. They can be like weather vanes, responding unconsciously to events rather than answering questions and putting alternatives.

So it was when Russell Brand countered every sneering put-down by the pompous Jeremy Paxman in the now famous Newsnight interview calling for revolutionary change and an "egalitarian socialist society".

The Brand/Newsnight saga should give us in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) reasons to be cheerful. Millions of people, particularly young people, watched the clip on YouTube and expressed approval. The sentiments expressed are precisely those we have struggled to get exposure for over five years of recession.

He described the deadlock in society and the bankruptcy of current political debate. But unlike TUSC he was given airtime to describe the political blockage at the top and the need to break the consensus.



Dishing it out to Paxo photo BBC

The establishment and a number of celebrities lined up to condemn Russell Brand for confessing that he didn't vote. Comedian Robert Webb responded to Brand's move by re-joining the Labour Party. However Brand did not believe "not voting" was the answer. He condemned voting for Labour as a waste of time, much as left journalist Owen Jones ridicules voting for anything other than Labour as a waste of time.

Russell Brand's call for a clear and decisive break with all those that betrayed the working class and perpetuated the status quo has more boldness in it than all the lines written by people like Owen Jones. More importantly it chimes with people

when it is given an airing.

The Italian working class last year voted in anti-politician comedian, Beppe Grillo as a reaction to the corrupt, greedy politicians who have presided over mass unemployment, economic destruction and political corruption. Russell Brand is on many levels ahead of Beppe Grillo as at least he mentioned the word "socialist".

TUSC should appeal to young people to act on Russell Brand's words and take their place in the lists being prepared to stand in 2014. TUSC aims to stand widely in these elections and we need thousands of people to download the forms on the website and register an interest in representing themselves in 2014.

Film showing - Riot from Wrong

Hackney and Islington Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) held a very successful showing of the film 'Riot from Wrong' and presented some of its candidates for the 2014 council elections. Over a dozen prospective TUSC candidates were presented to the audience of 100 at the Rio cinema.

They are all pledged to a policy of no cuts to council jobs, services pay and conditions and total opposition to privatisation of services and jobs.

See TUSC feature page 11



Police in Tottenham photo Paul Mattsson

Play review

Sandpits Avenue/League of St George

James Ivens

"You kiss a lot of frogs in fringe theatre," said one audience member. "But this one is definitely a prince." London's latest 'new writing' house, the Hope Theatre, has just opened in Islington. And audiences could hardly hope for finer inaugural offerings than Sandpits Avenue and League of St George.

Nestled above the Hope and Anchor, the venue is London's newest pub theatre, launched by the oldest — the King's Head, just down the road. The new venue was previously key to the punk scene. Madness recorded a video there, and The Stranglers an entire live album.

But more impressive still is its commitment to arts workers. The King's Head and the Hope are two of the few fringe theatres to have in-house agreements with entertain-

ers' union Equity. Every performer and stage manager at the Hope receives a low, but union-agreed wage. This might not seem much, but is a huge step forward for many young workers in the industry.

The evening opens with Nathalie Wain's heartfelt, pulsating drama Sandpits Avenue. Five working class youngsters in England's South West have their lives and ambitions crushed by the effects of austerity.

Two join the army to escape boredom and unemployment. Only one returns. But he, his fiancée and their friends find their relationships torn apart by what happened in between.

Exciting and hypnotic, the ensemble puts performance poetry alongside physical theatre, and nu-folk next to beatboxing, with impressive élan — and real, raw honesty.

After the interval is an explosive live rendition of Cock Sparrer's punk anthem "England Belongs to

Me". League of St George by Georgia Bliss is an exhilarating, raucous romp set in 70s and 80s working class Dagenham.

The titular league is a National Front-like street fighting firm. Action surrounds young member Adam, who is gay. Loud, rude, and very funny, League of St George is part punk set, with brilliantly observed dialogue, and joyful improvisation. The cast handles softly compelling love scenes, and the serious conflicts Adam's double life creates, with equal aplomb.

Both these outstanding new shows are the work of artists trained at the groundbreaking (and communist-founded) East 15 Acting School. These angry and talented young performers tell the stories of people too often kept silent - us. Go and listen. You won't be disappointed.

Sandpits Avenue/League of St George. 19.30 most evenings until 30 November. The Hope Theatre, 207 Upper Street, London N1 1RL. Box Office: 0207 478 0160. www.thehopetheatre.com. Tickets £14 (£12 concessions)



Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition: We need councillors who refuse to implement cuts



Councils have experienced one of the biggest government 'departmental cuts' with 27% slashed by 2014-15 compared to 2009-10. It is not true however that councils have 'no option' but to pass on the Con-Dems' cuts.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has agreed a policy platform, outlined below, to contest local council elections in 2014. Even one councillor in each local authority taking a stand, if they used their position in the council chamber to appeal to those outside, could give confidence to trade unionists and community campaigners to fight.

All TUSC councillors will:

- Oppose all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions – we reject the claim that 'some cuts' are necessary to our services
- Support all workers' struggles against the cuts, privatisation and the government's policy of making ordinary people pay for the crisis caused by the bankers and the bosses
- Reject increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts
- Defend national collective bargaining arrangements for council workers
- Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services
- Oppose racism and fascism and



TUSC campaigns for all workers to get a Living Wage photo Paul Mattsson

- stand up for equality for all
- Use all the legal powers available to councils, including powers to refer local NHS decisions, initiate referenda and organise public commissions and consultations, to oppose both cuts and privatisation
- Campaign for the introduction of a Living Wage above the minimum

wage, including for all council and contractor employees

- Refuse to implement cuts. Reserves and prudential borrowing powers can be used initially. Set a budget that meets the needs of the local community. Build a mass movement which demands that the government makes up

Southampton rebel councillors table anti-austerity motion

On 11 November, Labour-controlled Southampton city council announced more savage cuts to jobs and services. This is on top of £16 million last year, with millions more to come over the next two years at least.

Councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas refused to vote for cuts last year, and were rewarded with expulsion from the Labour Party. Yet, because of the campaign they led to save Oaklands Swimming Pool, the council U-turned and announced it will fund repairs needed to re-open the pool.

The campaign, involving council trade unions, community groups, pool users, supporters in Coxford and throughout the city, shows that if you stand up and fight, then you can win!

In the face of the latest cuts, Keith and Don have tabled a motion for full council on Wednesday 20 November.

Their resolution calls on the council to reject "the government's argument for cutting local authority spending. It is the bankers and the super-rich, who created the world financial crisis, who should be made to pay, not ordinary people and council workers in Southampton."

"This council demands from the government the funding needed to maintain services. As a first step to mobilising support for the council's stand, public and private-sector trades unions, community, tenants, youth and pensioners groups from across the city will be invited to a pre-budget conference to discuss the real budget needs of the city."

Keith and Don invite all those who agree to join them outside the 20 November council meeting at 1pm.

Sue Atkins, Southampton Itchen Socialist Party

the shortfall

- Support action against climate change. Sustainability before profit.
- We won't pay for their crisis!

If you agree – stand for TUSC!

To see TUSC's full policy platform and find out more about becoming a candidate, go to www.tusc.org.uk

Labour council cuts show the need to build TUSC

Hostels

Newham's Labour-run council has routinely showed contempt for the poorest and most vulnerable in the east London borough.

It has imposed the hated bedroom tax, withdrawn council tax benefit support, axed thousands of jobs including teaching assistants and teachers, cutting most of its language translation services, scrapped much of its free English language teaching, demolished the Atherton leisure centre, and cut much more besides.

Newham council's latest attack is to effectively evict 29 young sin-

gle mothers from the UK's largest hostel for homeless young people. The Focus E15 project, which helps homeless young people into work and education by providing one-bedroom accommodation, is evicting these 29 vulnerable people because the council has cut a £41,000 supporting people fund at the hostel.

£41,000 is a miniscule amount

Labour-led Rhondda Cynon Taf council is cutting £56 million in over four years which would take away nursery places for three year olds, youth centres, meals on wheels at weekends, half of libraries and more. 100 parents protested outside the council against the nursery cuts on 30 October.

compared to the Labour mayor's £81,000 annual salary (plus expenses), or the financial losses the council made on its reckless decision to relocate administrative services into a single docklands site known as Building 1000 – leaving former administrative buildings empty and unsold.

Despite Newham being Britain's most deprived borough, the council's much criticised move to Building 1000 in 2010 cost over £110 million (including £18.7 million on refurbishing) and is now relocating services back to its old offices!

Simon Carter

Care homes

At September's full Leicester city council meeting, the Labour dominated council voted unanimously to shut down four of Leicester's eight elderly person's homes. 2,400 petition signatures opposed the council's latest attack on Leicester's most vulnerable residents.

According to the council the cuts were justified as:

- Fewer people were choosing to be housed in council-run homes
- The homes are not fully occupied
- It is cheaper to house people in private sector homes

However, as a Leicester resident told councillors: "It is not the number of people choosing council-run homes that is falling. The council is effectively managing referrals to prevent further permanent admis-



5,800 households were all given summons for Camberwell Green Magistrates Court for council tax arrears for 18 October. 100 people protested outside calling for Labour-led Southwark council to withdraw all summons that are due to benefit cuts photo A Dillon

Living wage blocked in Warrington

In the latest anti-democratic twist by Warrington council's Labour leadership, a serious proposal for paying a living wage to council staff was blocked before it could go to a full council meeting.

Rebel anti-cuts councillor Kevin Bennett, suspended from the Labour group for opposing cuts to services, had prepared costed proposals. Half of the estimated £400,000 increase to pay low-paid staff a living wage could be covered by the savings made in a recent workforce restructuring (involving cuts which Kevin spoke out against in the local press at the time). The other half could be covered by not giving top council bosses the whacking pay rises which that restructure resulted in! Kevin explains: "I tabled a perfectly legitimate question, asking for the council to reconsider introducing the Living Wage, a scheme which would see our lowest paid workers get an

increase in their pay packets...

"[However] a member of the council leadership had approached the council solicitor and secretly arranged for my question to be struck off the order paper."

Labour responded in the local press by saying that it's down to the mayor to decide what's discussed at council meetings, and that the Labour group could quash such questions anyway.

Kevin walked out of the council meeting in protest. "I am disgusted at this latest turn of events and am calling for a full investigation. It's now absolutely clear to me that there is a concerted attempt by this council leadership to gag the voices of people in Fairfield and Howley, who I represent."

Messages of support and solidarity to: kevinbennett396@btinternet.com

Hugh Caffrey

- Reduced library opening hours with the introduction of internet access fees
- School meal costs to rise
- All youth club activities to move to a planned £6 million city centre Youth Zone with volunteers having to run the rest
- Food waste collections under review
- Voluntary group grants cut by £1.6 million
- 2% council tax increase in April

These cuts come on top of 1,000 job losses recently announced.

Yet again a Labour councillor - finance chief Andrew Johnson - has declared: "we have no choice". But TUSC candidates say you do – stand up against the government or stand aside!

US election campaigns: SOCIALISTS MAKE HISTORY

The US is seen as the home of capitalism, the world's richest and most powerful nation. But it is also home to millions of working class people who are struggling to get by, let alone live the American Dream. In 2011 Occupy camps mushroomed across the continent, giving expression to the growing discontent as working class people, young people and black and ethnic minorities revolted against being made to pay for the crisis caused by the bankers in Wall Street.

United States capitalism is in a deep economic and social crisis. The political establishment is discredited, and, especially after the recent government shutdown, its system of government appears broken. The situation is crying out for an alternative.

But the resistance is growing. Occupy Homes grew out of Occupy in Minneapolis and has scored important victories in defeating attempted home evictions.

Fast-food workers have begun to organise and inspire with their '\$15 an hour and a union' campaign. It is increasingly understood that both the Republicans

and the Democrats stand for the super-rich 1%.

Against this background, two Socialist Alternative candidates sent historic shock waves through the United States left and beyond on 5 November. Both candidates, Kshama Sawant in Seattle and Ty Moore in Minneapolis, mounted the strongest election campaigns by open socialists in a major US city in many decades.

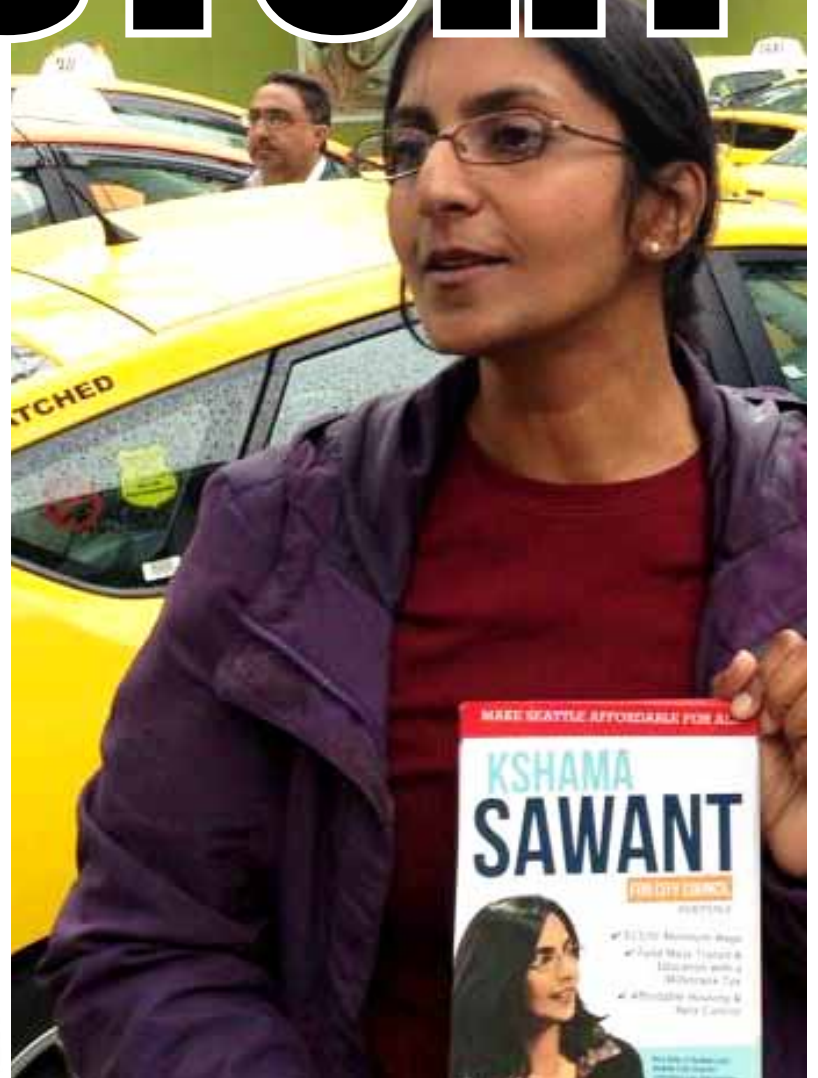
Ty, an Occupy Homes activist, got 43% of the vote as an open socialist for City Council in Ward 9 of Minneapolis. Well-known campaigner Kshama can still win a seat in Seattle's Council. As we go to press she has 49.49% of the votes so far – 1,237 behind her opponent with an estimated 30,000 votes still to be counted. As the count progresses the votes increasingly favour Kshama.

Regardless of the final count, the votes for these firebrand socialist candidates illustrate clearly the anger at the corporate-controlled establishment.

See socialistalternative.org for updates – Socialist Alternative are the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the US
Continued on page 5

Kshama's campaign has received enormous support from volunteers and donors (see page 5 for more). It has also had very good press coverage in Seattle. Even when it looked like 16-year incumbent Richard Conlin had won after the first batch of votes were counted The Stranger, a weekly Seattle paper, wrote:

"Sawant may not win a cushy leather seat at the city council dais this time around, but there's no question that she won everything else: the spirit award, a dedicated base of Seattle progressives who are committed to helping her run again (and again, and again, if need be), and most importantly, the public debate. She framed the discussions that dominated both her own race and the mayoral race (such as raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour), forcing incumbent council members to at least feign allegiance to working class voters instead of just the business bigwigs who routinely fund their re-election campaigns. Conlin [Kshama's opponent] may have out-fundraised Sawant two-to-one and had 16 years of name recognition from his tenure on the council, but voters are now quite aware that he's also had few memorable legislative victories—and they'll expect Conlin and his colleagues to prove their progressive bona fides before the next election. Not bad for an outspent outsider who turned Socialism from a pox to a pistol."



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, 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!