



# EVICT THE CON-DEMS!

**Andrew Duncan**  
Exeter Socialist Party

**T**ory welfare-slashing minister Iain Duncan Smith should resign. It's been discovered that the millionaire architect of the hated 'bedroom tax', who lives rent free in a Buckinghamshire mansion, has illegally imposed the tax on social housing tenants not liable to pay it.

Exeter city council officers identified a loophole in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regulations and wrote during December to 31 of its tenants to tell them that they were exempt. Some of these people were due to be evicted or have already been forced into smaller homes.

Another council has identified 250 tenants who may be exempt. Nationally, it's estimated that over 40,000 council and housing association tenants who have had their weekly housing benefit (HB) slashed will have to be refunded! Yet the DWP (which is trying to close the loophole) is still trying to play this story down, saying that 'fewer than 5,000 people' are affected.

One person is too many! The bedroom tax should be immediately scrapped and with it all of the Con-Dems' vicious austerity measures.

## Loophole

Those tenants living in the same home and in continuous receipt of housing benefit since before 1996 (with no more than a gap of four weeks) are in fact exempt from a reduction in their benefit, as new legislation did not take HB regulations before this date into account.

Can IDS actually do anything without making a mess of it? Not if the huge government overspend and major delays on rolling out his equally hated Universal Credit are

## Scrap the Bedroom Tax NOW

Not only has the bedroom tax wrecked people's lives but it led Stephanie Bottrill to tragically and horrifically take her own life in May 2013. It has now been revealed that Stephanie, who suffered from a long-term illness, should have been exempted from a reduction in her housing benefit. Iain Duncan Smith has blood on his hands!

anything to go by!

Up to 660,000 people are affected by the bedroom tax. It seems that everyone may be exempt because councils need to show that they considered the issue of whether tenants had been receiving HB continuously since before 1996 - and councils will not have done that.

To make matters worse for them, most councils have not kept case data for the full 17 years, having changed in that period from paper to computer records.

Campaigners are advising people to appeal against their bedroom tax, since they may have to be given 'the benefit of the doubt'.

Labour leader Ed Miliband says an incoming Labour government will axe the bedroom tax. Why then

are Labour-run councils continuing to persecute low income tenants in rent arrears from the tax with legal action and evictions? We demand that these councillors immediately scrap the tax and rehouse all those illegally evicted. Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition council candidates in the May elections are pledging to do that.

This loophole is big enough to drive a bulldozer through the hated Con-Dem policy. Alongside continuing our public protests let's see if we can encourage, support and deliver a mass wave of appeals to councils against this unjust and cruel tax.



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, and the Socialist Party.

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

TUSC conference - see page 8



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what we think

# Tube workers have power to beat Johnson

The RMT London tube workers have voted by 77% in favour of action against the brutal attack on jobs and terms and conditions by London Underground, TfL management and Tory Mayor Boris Johnson hoping to have his 'miners moment'.

The Socialist Party gives its full support to the RMT and its members and welcomes the decision of TSSA to also ballot its members, posing the prospect of joint strike action, starting with two 48-hour strikes in the first two weeks of February. Members of drivers' union Aslef should now be demanding that their union follows suit.

The London tube unions need to thoroughly and democratically plan each stage of their action to ensure a victory is won. The BBC reported that over 30 days of strike action between 2005 and 2011 each cost an estimated £48 million. Given the huge disruption a sustained tube strike could cause in London, these workers have enormous potential power and should plan to use it to its full capacity.

Last August, Tory GLA members showed their cards when they produced a report 'Struck Out: reforming London Underground's strike laws' which advocated banning strikes on the Tube, to be replaced by 'binding pendulum arbitration'.

This full frontal assault on tube workers is a serious challenge to the unions, especially the RMT which has justifiably gained a reputation as a militant union. It has delivered for its members in terms of job protection and pay.

But it appears that management have prepared for this dispute and certainly they and Cameron and Johnson have industrial and political motivations to be seen to 'deal' with the RMT in their strongest area, just as the Tories have tried to go after Unite following the setback at Grangemouth.

However, a key lesson of Grangemouth is to recognise that not all disputes are the same and those of such a fundamental nature as this one need to be especially well prepared for. The three weeks until the first strike on 4 February provide vital time to prepare the ground in the stations and depots and to explain to members why they need to mobilise for these strikes and to be ready to extend the action if necessary.

Socialist Party members in the RMT have raised the need for the union to approach all other unions for discussions about building solidarity in what is likely to be the most high impact dispute in London for decades. We also support any attempt to broaden out the front against the employers and the government but the main basis for this must be linking up with the organised trade union movement, the most

powerful force against the bosses.

The recent half-day walkout by barristers and solicitors over the attack on legal aid, shows, as did the mass strike rallies on 30 November 2011, that fighting unions can attract around them wider forces, particularly in this period when a mainstream working class political alternative is lacking.

The RMT has launched a political campaign to supplement the action - 'Hands Off London Transport' (Holt). But the dispute has to be clearly led by the tube unions themselves, and Holt's main focus has to be to help in building support among other workers. Union and workers' representatives should be given priority on the platform at the Holt public rally on 16 January in London to put forward an industrial strategy. We are calling on members of all unions to attend, to speak from the floor and bring their union banners.

We support the initial moves of the RMT to approach other unions, particularly those such as the FBU and NUT who are currently in dispute about the possibilities of coordinating action. This can go even further to involve all unions and particularly Unite who represent over 20,000 bus workers who will be expected to transport the hundreds of thousands and more extra passengers on strike days. Just the announcement that such discussions were go-

This full frontal assault on tube workers is a serious challenge to the unions, especially the RMT which has a militant reputation

ing ahead would send a shiver of fear up the spine of TfL bosses with the prospect of their two main groups of workers joining together.

TfL is well aware of the power that the bus workers showed in 2012 when they won their Olympic bonus after a huge strike, including mass picket lines. As the Socialist said, there was nothing inevitable about the defeat at Grangemouth. If a decisive lead had been given earlier, it wasn't ruled out that support for more militant methods such as occupation could have won support, building mass pressure around the idea of the plant being nationalised.

Nor was the defeat of the miners preordained, as the Cabinet papers have proved. Thatcher feared defeat. Given their enormous industrial strength, with preparation and a carefully worked out strategy, workers on London Underground can win this dispute.

**See pages 6 and 7 for more**

## Seattle: '15 Now' minimum wage campaign launched

On 12 January, 450 people in Seattle attended the rally to launch '15 Now', an organisation set up to carry forward the campaign to secure a \$15 an hour minimum wage in the Washington state city and across the US.

Seattle Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant, who was elected in November with \$15 an hour being one of her main demands, pledged at the rally to give \$15,000 a year from her councillor pay to the campaign.

Many people at the meeting said what it was like trying to live on the current minimum wage of \$9.32.

Socialist Party Ireland TD (MP) Joe Higgins received some of the loudest applause at the rally when he called for democratic public ownership and socialist change.

The campaign already had an impact before the rally. Seattle's mayor has issued an executive order to make \$15 the minimum wage for the 600 city council employees.

Kshama has called for this measure to also immediately apply to

the thousands of city contractor workers.

But, as Kshama said: "Most importantly, the message to take away from today's announcement is how impactful grassroots movements can be, and how rapidly change can happen when working people rise up and make themselves heard."

"Workers, low-wage workers in particular, can play the decisive role in winning a \$15/hour minimum wage for all of Seattle. This needs to be done by building an independent mass movement."

The rally has been covered by the Kiro 7 TV channel (see [bcove.me/rz6qkx36](http://bcove.me/rz6qkx36)), Kiro radio, King 5 TV, KUOW radio, the Seattle Times, [seattlepi.com](http://seattlepi.com) and also on [mynorthwest.com](http://mynorthwest.com). The full rally can be seen at [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net).

Left-wing documentary maker Michael Moore has also featured Kshama's inauguration speech on his website.

More action is being planned for Martin Luther King Day on 20 January.



During Kshama's election campaign



Kshama

### From [seattlepi.com](http://seattlepi.com):

The star performer — finally taking the stage after two hours of speech making — was newly elected Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant. Her message: No compromise.

"They've already started talking about phasing it (the \$15 wage) in over many, many years," Sawant told the crowd, which numbered 450 people at the start of the rally.

"Nooooo!!!!!!!" came a chorus of responses.

"We don't want any phasing in," declared Sawant. She denounced both major political parties as tools of big business, and urged the audience to draw the "correct political lessons" of last year's election. The \$15 wage victory in SeaTac [another city in Washington state], and her win in Seattle, were products of "worker organizing."



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● **Profit-driven climate change**  
Manny Thain investigates

● **Tony Benn's last diaries**  
Peter Taaffe reviews

● **Middle East quagmire**  
Judy Beishon writes



# Austerity: 'We're not being feather-bedded'

## Pensioners are not economic 'joy riders'

Val Pearce

I am not often driven to put pen to paper but the following headline, "Someone needs to fight the selfish, short-sighted old", on a recent Guardian article by ex-MP, ex-prisoner Chris Huhne did nothing for my blood pressure.

The article went on to say "the cost of pandering to pensioners means we are penalising our young in relation to education, healthcare and housing" and "Cameron was forced to protect pensions. This left far worse cuts to be inflicted on the rest of the welfare budget."

This continual attack on us older people demands a response. Here goes. The state pension is £110.15 a week - and that is only if you have paid your full quota of national insurance contributions (which is why the majority of women at present do not receive the full pension).

If you add the winter fuel allowance this amounts to less than £6,000 a year.

### Hard hit

To be told austerity cuts have passed us by is incomprehensible. We are hit hard by the criminal increases we have seen over the last few years in fuel costs alongside rising food prices, rent increases and if you are lucky to have savings, the complete devaluation of them.

The provisional figures published in November 2013 showed there were 31,000 'excess deaths' between December 2012 and March 2013 of older people from cold related illnesses, an increase of 29%, which is equal to 260 deaths a day. So much for austerity passing us by.

It is time for us to realise just what our contribution is to the British economy. There are eleven million pensioners in Britain. 4.5 million pay income tax at the standard rate; 6.4 million have incomes below £10,500 per annum and are not re-



Retired people are not a 'drain on resources' photo Paul Mattsson

quired to pay tax.

The revenue collected by the state from older people, either directly through a range of taxes or through costs that older people bear that would otherwise be paid by the state, adds up to a staggering £175.8 billion every year, compared to total expenditure on older people through pensions, welfare payments and healthcare of £136.2 billion.

The overall, annual net contribution by older people to the economy is therefore almost £40 billion and is estimated to rise to almost £75 billion by 2030.

Most importantly, this is more than enough to pay for the £8 billion worth of age-related benefits that are now being questioned.

Even if benefits were taken away from the majority of pensioners, the amount of money saved would be questionable given that the introduction of a means-tested system would involve setting up a costly bureaucracy to administer the payments (especially if people's assets were to be assessed).

The chance that losing a bus pass or a winter fuel allowance could inevitably lead to some older people needing extra support from social services and the NHS.

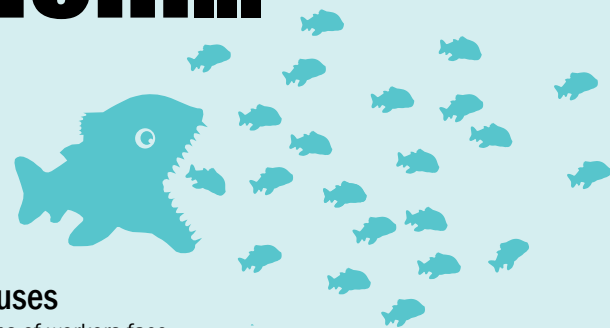
Dot Gibson, National Pensions Convention general secretary, said: "This idea that the country's economy is struggling because an army of millionaire pensioners are joy riding with their free bus passes is absolute nonsense.

"The economic crisis is being used as an excuse to undermine the welfare state and roll back some of our hard earned gains - many of which are necessary because the UK has one of the worse state pensions in Europe."

Our state pension is not a benefit or a hand-out. It is an entitlement; in fact it's a paltry return on a working lifetime's compulsory savings taken out of each pay packet.

We make a huge contribution and we should demand that this is recognised not only by what we contribute once we have retired but also what we contributed during our working lives.

# Them...



### City bonuses

While millions of workers face another year of pay freezes City fat cats continue to fill their boots with billions of pounds in bonuses. Finance chiefs in the Square Mile will scoop £10 billion out of a total bonus pay-out of £19 billion. One high flyer who's quids in is the former head of investment banking at HSBC, Michael Spencer, who added an £8 million bonus to his mega-salary. Mind you, he does have to meet the costs of staffing his West London home with a butler, maids and a gardener.

### Academies, it's personal

Media reports have identified groups running publicly funded academy schools as having paid millions to private companies with personal connections to their directors and trustees.

Academies - introduced by Labour - are a major plank of the Con-Dems' education policy. Outspoken education minister Michael Gove has remained uncharacteristically tight-lipped over this latest damning revelation. Academies are outside local authority control and receive increased funding at the expense of the remaining local authority schools. They don't have to follow the national curriculum nor teachers' national pay and working conditions agreements.

### House wreckers

Last month Tory-run Hammersmith and Fulham council in west London sent out 'Christmas cards' to 17,000 of its tenants with the insulting

message: "Don't overindulge this Christmas. Pay your rent!"

This latter day Scrooge, unlike Charles Dickens' character, has not seen the error of its ways but instead continues to attack its increasingly hard-up working class residents.

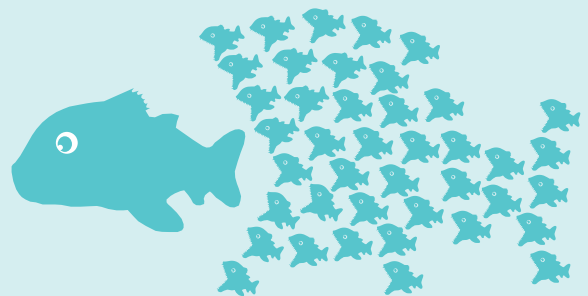
The council's latest reactionary scheme is the sale of 209 much-needed council houses and then using the cash receipts to enable a property developer to demolish more council houses and replace them with private properties unaffordable for most people. House prices in the borough have more than doubled in the last decade.

The council's action, disingenuously termed 'regeneration', is simply part of the Tories' vile anti-working class agenda.

### Booze lobby

After kowtowing to the tobacco industry by scrapping plain packaging for cigarettes, the government has now ditched its alcohol minimum pricing policy after numerous 'consultations' with industry lobbyists. According to the British Medical Journal, government ministers and officials frequently met representatives from large drinks firms and leading supermarkets - even after the formal consultation on minimum pricing had closed. Last year even a Tory MP, Sarah Wollaston, said the extent of this lobbying was "pervasive and disturbing". However, the Tories 'anti-lobbying bill' while subjecting trade unions to more state interference, to the benefit of employers, creates enough loopholes to effectively exclude an estimated 80% of corporate parliamentary lobbying activity.

# ...& Us



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



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# Gove wages war on history teachers

### A history teacher

Education secretary Michael Gove sees the centenary of World War One as a chance to push his call for a school curriculum promoting the glories of the British Empire, and to bash teachers again.

Gove says 'leftie' history teachers use a 'Blackadder' interpretation of WW1 to 'denigrate virtues such as patriotism, honour and courage' and to show war as a 'series of catastrophic mistakes perpetrated by an out-of-touch elite'.

But you do not have to be a Marxist to see the Western Front story as the senseless slaughter of young working class men in a conflict fought for reasons that had little to do with their lives but for the interests of competing empires and

their rulers.

Gove sees WW1 as a 'just war' to defend democracy. Richard Evans, Professor of History at Cambridge has pointed out that the Kaiser's regime had universal male suffrage in Germany at the start of the war, while a third of the men in the British trenches had not yet won the right to vote.

The current government wants school history to promote its own reactionary values in a thinly disguised version of 'our island story'.

They think the WW1 centenary will be a chance to do this, but there are just too many 'inconvenient truths': The arms race and the imperial ambitions that made the war possible in the first place; the callous slaughter of ordinary soldiers in a war of attrition; the racist treatment of black and Asian troops from

the British Empire; and the return in peacetime to a home that was anything but 'fit for heroes'.

History teachers do use Blackadder clips in their lessons, to look at diverse interpretations of the war (a key historical skill identified in the national curriculum).

But we also get students to look at Wilfred Owen's poems, at eyewitness accounts such as Harry Patch's, and at 'revisionist' historians such as John Terraine who have defended the much-derided British generals.

Most history teachers encourage students to use evidence and historical skills to make critical judgements about the past. It is no surprise that they often come to question the powers that be and the status quo. It doesn't take 'leftie teachers' to do this - sometimes history just speaks for itself.

What we saw

As seen on Facebook

Where does all that housing benefit go?



- The family on benefits
- Their landlord



# Teachers need a strategy to win

**Martin Powell-Davies**

Lewisham National Union of Teachers (NUT) and a member of the NUT national executive

With the attacks on pay and pensions already largely in place, and attacks on conditions soon to be added, the NUT urgently needs to agree a workable strategy to put to beleaguered teachers.

With no news of any 'significant progress' in our dispute with education secretary Gove, and that's no real surprise, an emergency NUT executive meeting has been called for 16 January to discuss strategy. But what should that strategy be?

It has to be one that is seen by NUT members as having a prospect of successfully forcing back Gove's attacks. We should also be pursuing coordination of action with other trade unions in dispute - which needs to be addressed seriously by discussion of common action dates between unions.

These are the proposals that I have been discussing with NUT reps in Lewisham and that I hope we can consider at Thursday's NEC:

Naming a date for a one-day national strike before 13 February - as



**NUT members on strike in Leicester** photo Leicester SP

was promised. However, the validity of anything that looks like just another protest strike will clearly be questioned by teachers. This has to be seen as part of an ongoing/escalating campaign.

So this strike isn't seen as a one-off, then there should be a commitment to a further strike (even if the exact date might be left to be

subject to coordination with other unions) in March (before Easter, annual conference and the exam-season).

To emphasise that this is an escalation, then we should consider the March strike being a two-day strike. The preparation for this should include collections for hardship funds.

Alongside national strike action, which best hits the headlines, what about using the first strike day's rallies to launch a national non-strike action strategy that demonstrates a clear escalation of action.

The strategy must also be seen as action that is directly relieving the intolerable everyday pressures on teachers.

Rather than continuing to leave action to an individual school choice between the various instructions, can we have action which involves the majority of schools in a focused national campaign?

This would need to be combined with a sharper publicity campaign exposing Gove's agenda and appealing for public support.

We need sharp national materials that teachers could use to leaflet on school gates and every Association [NUT branch] could use for a public meeting and street stalls.

What about then building for a national Saturday demonstration to defend education in the summer term - followed by further strike action after the exam period?

**For more on this, and a response to Labour's support for the Tory proposals to 'license' teachers, see Martin's blog: [electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk/](http://electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk/)**

# The underbelly of prison privatisation

**Brian Caton**

Barnsley Socialist Party and former POA general secretary

Private prisons and particularly Oakwood - run by G4S - have once again been in the news. The social media sites have been alive with comment from those who work in prisons, those who have served prison sentences and the perceived wise people (including myself) who have now retired from one of the aforementioned groups.

There is some common ground among all comments. Oakwood has been an absolute disaster. It's a very dangerous place to be.

The Chief Inspector of Prisons has delivered a scathing attack on how it has been run, while at the same time the Minister for Prisons says he sees it as a model for future prisons. This contradiction involving two key figures makes worthy an examination of the philosophy of prison privatisation.

I am opposed to prison privatisation. I am opposed to all privatisation of public services. But as a socialist, there is nothing difficult to understand in those statements.

There are those who have argued that the so-called 'competition ethos' has driven up standards and has caused change which has been to the betterment of all. I agree that there have been changes that have been hugely to the assistance of some people - those who are profit-making.

## 'Competition'

The chief architect of this 'decency' agenda was the former Director General and Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Martin Narey. Martin, recently knighted and now adviser on children to Michael Gove, made sure the competition ethos worked by handing out contracts for new prisons to privateers while taking a couple of poorly resourced private prisons back into the public sector, spending public money improving them, only to offer them back to the same private



**Lobbying parliament** photo Bob Severn

companies a few years later.

Many issues have been attributed to causing prison riots, but overcrowding and poor care of prisoners are major contributory factors. The current 'race to the bottom' under the competition/privatisation culture is creating overcrowding and

poor care of prisoners. And it will get tragically worse.

So, what of those who hold the system up as a great achievement? Well they are not being hurt in riots. They are not prisoners being failed by a system that, with the planned privatisation of the probation service, will release them from prison without the necessary help and support and into a society of cuts and job losses.

Oakwood should be brought back into public ownership, but if the government has its way the damage caused by privatisation in the prison service will live on and get worse.

Reducing wages across all public services has been aided by privatisation.

The losses to the prison service of staff with huge levels of experience will not be rectified by poorly trained, badly paid recruits.

Unless and until an incoming government accepts the need to end this foolish capitalist adventure, there will be riots, there will be injuries, there will be further crime and, tragically, there will be deaths.

## Unison:

## National anti-cuts battle needed

**A Wolverhampton Unison member**

"Will they even empty the bins?" - so read the headline in our local paper reporting on the cash crisis in Labour-led Wolverhampton council. A crisis brought on by government demands for further cuts of £25 million on top of £98 million already planned.

Our Unison branch has argued that the role of Labour councillors should be to defend the working class and local services.

They should be prepared to take any action which protects those services and set a needs-led budget.

This is a view for which we have been criticised by Unison full-time officials. The union policy is to advise branches not to make such calls.

This is not only an issue for Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands alone councils face a total of £11 billion worth of cuts.

The time has come for Unison to recognise that we face nothing less than the wholesale destruction of local public services and that the fight to defend them cannot be left to individual branches or more recruitment drives.

Wolverhampton is one of 49 councils who recently set up a petition calling for the government to stop the attacks.

Imagine if those 49 councils all refused to make further cuts. If they don't, we need to elect workers representatives who will. And we need nationally coordinated industrial action from all public sector unions.

## Support Glasgow care workers fighting attacks

Unison members in Glasgow city council's residential homes for older people were on strike from 13 January for 48 hours to resist cuts in pay, unacceptable changes to job roles and a move to 12 and a half hour shifts.

Among a range of attacks, the council want to cut up to 7% of the wages of 182 workers, out of a workforce of just over 500, through introducing the new shift pattern. 122 full-time workers face a loss of £1,495 a year and 60 part-timers a loss of £794 a year.

The council have tried to bully workers into agreeing to the wage cuts and changes individually and

it has been unwilling to reach an agreement with Unison.

Brian Smith, Unison's Glasgow branch secretary, said: "We have not taken action lightly but have no alternative.

"The lowest paid staff are being asked to take on new tasks like dispensing medicines - and at the same time they are being forced to work longer shifts and to accept massive pay cuts."

The residential care workers' strike deserves the full support of all trade unionists.

**Send messages of support to Glasgow City Unison enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk**

## In brief

### NSSN affiliate

The Probation Officers union Napo has become the eighth national union to affiliate to the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN). Forthcoming NSSN conferences include Southern region on 18 January and the national conference on 5 July.

**For more see: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)**

### Southampton walkout

A dispute over a colleague's wrongful suspension resulted in 90 postal workers walking out at Royal Mail's Southampton delivery office on 9 January.

The action taken by the defiant posties followed months of bullying and harassment by management concerning working hours and shift lengths, but the impromptu strike ensured that the suspension was reviewed and the matter further investigated.

With a ballot due on the deal reached between Royal Mail and the CWU this incident is a reminder to workers of what may face us in the future following the company's privatisation and the essential need to maintain our ability and right to strike.

**A Southampton postal worker**

### Cleaners' strike

Cleaners working at the Royal Opera House in London are due to strike during the Bafta film award ceremony to be held there. The workers are fighting for the London living wage of £8.80 an hour. They earn £7 an hour at the moment and have just had their tea break abolished.

The strike will be from 10pm on 16 February, the night of the awards. The workers are employed by contractors Mitie and are members of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain.

### Yorks ambulance

Unite is balloting its 450 members at the Yorkshire Ambulance Service for strike action over the imposition of longer shift patterns. There has been no consultation with the union over the proposals which the trust want to impose in February.

The new shifts could mean staff working ten hours before having a meal break. The union is fighting for a protected 30 minute meal break after six hours work. The trust has been making cuts in the service - now up to £46 million over five years. And it de-recognised the union last February. The trust is also using Emergency Care Assistants - workers with six weeks of training, while paramedics have to undergo a two-year degree course.

The union suspects that the cuts and changes are to prepare the service for privatisation - private ambulances are already having to be used at peak times. The ballot closes on 24 January.

### Website

For more workplace and trade union reports see the Socialist Party's website: [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)





# Huge anger at inquest verdict on police killing of Mark Duggan

**Paula Mitchell**  
London Socialist Party

A thousand people gathered outside Tottenham police station on 11 January in protest at deaths in custody and in remembrance of Mark Duggan, shot dead by police in 2011.

Mark Duggan was not holding a gun and was not threatening the police, yet he was shot twice and killed. There is no explanation for why a gun was found 20 feet away behind a fence.

There was no forensic evidence on the gun. The taxi driver was dragged from the car by police, pinned to the ground, and told: “Do not move your head. Do not move. Do not look there. If you move, I will shoot you”.

The police lied that Mark Duggan shot police first, and further provoked anger by refusing to meet with the family. The police were shown to have lied in court. And yet the inquest has decided that this was a lawful killing.

The verdict has rocked his family and caused anger across communities. How can it be lawful to shoot dead an unarmed man? Workers and young people across Tottenham have expressed to the press and to Socialist Party members their anger at the verdict - though many admit to not being surprised that the justice system has once again failed a young black man.

Some of the media has accused Mark Duggan of being a gangster planning a killing although no evidence of this was given at the inquest. But whatever Mark Duggan

was or wasn't is not the point - justice can never be delivered by extra-judicial killing.

Hatred of the police and distrust of the justice system will only increase as a result of this outcome. Proposing that firearms officers wear video cameras will not assuage this, as police seem to hope. Broadwater Farm community worker Clasford Sterling makes the point in the Guardian: “It's fine until the police have a problem, and suddenly you find that camera ain't working. It all comes back to the integrity of the police, and we've already been told that they can't do anything wrong”.

### Deaths in custody

333 people have died in police custody between 1998 and 2009. Black people are 28 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people and are also disproportionately more likely to be tasered or injured on arrest or in police custody. Mark Duggan is not the only person shot dead by the police: other notorious cases include Azelle Rodney who was shot dead in 2005, and Jean Charles de Menezes, the innocent Brazilian who was gunned down at Stockwell underground station in 2005.

Mark Duggan's killing was the spark that led to riots in the summer of 2011. Hatred of the police was one of the factors behind the riots but they were also driven by seething anger at poverty, massive youth unemployment, brutal cuts to youth services, and the removal of EMA student payments.



At the vigil on 11 January photo Paul Mattsson

Since 2011 nothing has improved in Tottenham. The promised money agreed by Tory London mayor Boris Johnson and local government minister Eric Pickles to regenerate the riot areas has not materialised. In fact cuts to benefits, pay, jobs and services have deepened. 41% of children in Tottenham live in poverty. Despite a campaign of young people in the borough led by Youth Fight for Jobs, the youth clubs that were shut down just before the riots

have not been re-opened.

The only measure Boris Johnson seems to be seriously considering is the purchase of water cannon. This is undoubtedly intended to continue the mass intimidation of young people to try to prevent them from expressing their discontent - but is also a warning to anyone who plans to resist the austerity measures and repression meted out by Johnson and the Con-Dems.

The conditions that led to the riots

have only deepened. In the absence of an alternative, a mass organised fightback against austerity, it is likely that such blind explosions of rage will happen again.

Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party will be campaigning on the streets of Tottenham and other areas again to offer a way of organising and campaigning; and an alternative to this brutal system of cuts, poverty, racism and police brutality.

## Standing up for Tottenham

### A Tottenham resident

I arrived at the vigil and the first thing I noticed was a big police presence. To me, as a member of the local community, they were more of an inflammatory than a calming presence. Lots of people from Tottenham turned up.

There were a lot of familiar faces and a wide range of ages and parts of the community - white, black, Turkish, Pakistani and many more. It felt comforting to see such a large turnout and the sense of the community pulling together. The police presence proved unnecessary.

People were angry, but the overall feel was one of compassion for Mark

Duggan's family who were very distraught. Many speakers got up and spoke of the loss of loved ones at the hands of the police. This raised shouts of “murderers” from the crowd, and it was people of all ages making the accusation. My community is very distrustful of police due to the heavy-handed tactics they employ here.

There were shouts of support when speakers asked, where is our local MP, David Lammy? As one speaker put it: “in the past Bernie Grant (the former left-wing Labour MP) was with us at every stage”. In the press Lammy said that he refused to share a platform with anarchists. But this was a gathering of local people, community groups,

trade unionists and church groups.

There is a gap in representation of working class people locally. We need councillors and MPs prepared to speak out against police violence and harassment, and to demand resources for the community.

The youth services closed by the Labour council before the 2011 disturbances should be re-opened for example. Many of us are planning to stand locally against cuts as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Also campaigners from Youth Fight for Jobs and the Day-mer Turkish and Kurdish youth organisation discussed plans to campaign against high youth unemployment in the area and against the closure of youth services.



The long list of deaths in custody photo Paul Mattsson

## An issue for all socialists

**Chris Jackson**  
Nottingham

When I heard about the verdict on the death of Mark Duggan I felt frustrated and disappointed. It came shortly after revelations that the police and the media had worked alongside the Thatcher government 30 years ago to defeat the miners' strike and destroy the NUM and other unions.

We always knew that the Thatcher government was prepared to use the power of the state, including the judiciary and the police force, to undermine the miners, individually and collectively, in order to weaken the working class.

Here, immediately after the shooting, the Metropolitan Police issued a press release claiming that Mark Duggan was part of a gang of violent drug dealers, and that he had emerged from the taxi shooting

at police officers.

It was several weeks before the Met corrected this version of events, by which time the damage had been done - the image of Mark Duggan as a violent criminal was in the media and in people's minds.

Even on the day after the verdict, one tabloid newspaper claimed that Mark Duggan “deserved” to be shot at by the police.

As with the Hillsborough disaster, it appears that the police officers who had been present at Mark Duggan's shooting met together a few days later to confer and write their statements about the incident.

Some people still don't believe that the police would mobilise against the miners which shows that if you're not part of the struggle the forces of propaganda will win.

As socialists we need to be involved in the struggles of minorities against racism.

### We say:

- No to mass unemployment. For huge public investment in a massive programme of socially useful job creation
- No to all cuts in public services including the fire services. Reverse all privatisation
- Re-open all closed youth facilities and services. No more cuts
- Invest in young people's future. Restore the EMA and increase it. No to university, Esol and college fees. For good publicly funded education and training as a right for all young people
- No to police harassment and racism. End discriminatory stop and search and section 60. No increase in repressive police powers

- An independent trade union-led inquiry into the death of Mark Duggan. Scrap the IPCC. We need police accountability through democratic control by local people and trade unions
- Nationalise the banks and big corporations under democratic workers' control and management with compensation only on the basis of proven need
- Build a united, democratic and organised working class movement
- For a socialist world free from the horrendous profit motive which results in poverty, racism, war and the suffering of millions

**These demands formed part of the programme we put forward in response to the riots in August 2011**



# RMT v Johnson: Union prepares to defend London Underground

## Boris thinks he'll have his 'miners moment'

Two 48-hour strikes by RMT union members, starting on 4 and 11 February, will oppose Transport for London (TfL) and London Tory Mayor Boris Johnson's plans to close all London Underground (LU) ticket offices and cut 950 staff.

These cuts are part of TfL plans to slash £9.8 billion by 2021, including £4.2 billion from London Underground.

RMT members voted by 77% for strike action on a 40% turnout. John Reid, RMT London Transport regional council secretary, told the Socialist: "We've had a ballot that overwhelmingly has given a yes vote for action to defend our jobs and conditions. Our sister union TSSA is balloting and hopefully we'll be taking action with them."

"Almost 1,000 job cuts on the London Underground, with four million passenger journeys a day, predicted to rise to around five million in the next decade, will cause severe effects for passenger safety and for service to customers as well."

Station supervisors, trained to deal with train service and station incidents, will be removed from many stations and will work as 'roving supervisors' covering several stations at once. This will slow down service recovery after disruption.

There will be fewer staff available to help passengers with particular requirements including the visually or mobility impaired.

LU claim that staff will be more visible, yet there will be less staff on duty. Instead of getting help at brightly-lit ticket offices, you will have to look for a member of staff among crowds in the ticket hall.

### All RMT members balloted

All RMT LU members were balloted. Gary, a Piccadilly Line driver, told the Socialist: "Initially the job cuts aren't affecting train operators, but we rely on the station staff for a number of issues. We have assisted dispatch - they come to our assistance in the event of accidents or 'one unders'. Signal failures they deal with, and so it has safety implications for train operators."

"The announced cuts so far are something like 6% of what the predicted cuts are until 2021. So any train operator that thinks they're not going to be affected by this in the long term is living in cloud cuckoo land. It's the thin end of the wedge."

LU is already testing equipment for automatic trains with no driver, relying on technology to identify obstructions on the track.

Drivers prevent many serious accidents when they spot something out of

the ordinary, help evacuate trains stuck in tunnels and can help passengers in any emergency. No technology can replace this.

LU workers hope train drivers' union Aslef will also ballot. Gary said: "In our depot the mood is quite positive about the action. We're a 90% RMT depot. Other depots have a majority of Aslef and as of yet Aslef hasn't come on board but no doubt they're looking at the safety implications of the job cuts and the effect that that's going to have on their members."

### 24-hour running

LU announced plans for 24-hour running at the same time as billions of pounds of cuts.

The RMT is happy to discuss 24-hour running - subject to the provision of enough staff to run the night service. But closing ticket offices will not help run the tube at night.

There will be no increase in the number of self-service ticket machines available, just longer queues.

John said: "With ticket offices not open, if the machinery breaks down in the station, where will passengers go to get a ticket? LU says well they can go to the local newsagent. But ticket offices open at 5.30am. Most newsagents don't open until 7.30am or 8am. "We're not against automation. We're not against the improvements that technology offers. Surveys show that passengers want fully staffed stations and a driver on the front of the train. And they want the sort of service that they pay good money to receive."

"We're protesting against fare rises because you've already got a segregated system where the poorest might take two or three bus journeys to get into work and you have to be on a reasonable salary to travel by Underground."

Other cuts being considered include reductions in maintenance schedules and inspections of track and trains, 500 engineering job losses, and attacks on pensions for engineering grades and TfL staff.

The fight to save LU jobs, ticket offices and conditions at work is no ordinary dispute.

Gary said: "Johnson thinks this can be his 'miners moment'. And if he gets away with this attack on the RMT then the floodgates are going to open to attacks on any trade unions in London and nationally."

"It's absolutely vital that we take strike action in defence of every single job. There's no doubt about it - this is a political attack by Johnson and it has to be met with political and industrial action."



"Not only are 1,000 posts on the line but staff remaining are going to be forced through the humiliating and degrading experience of re-applying for their own jobs - the same staff who have been hailed as heroes when the tube has faced emergency situations. Before the Tories start shouting the odds, they should take note of the fact that the turnout in this ballot was higher than the last mayoral and GLA elections and the vote in favour massively outstrips anything that those same politicians can even dream of in terms of a popular mandate."

**Bob Crow, RMT general secretary**

"Londoners need to stand shoulder to shoulder with the RMT. These cuts are an attack on a vital transport service for all who live and work in London and an attack on an important section of our trade union movement. Let's join together with a coordinated campaign of strike action to defeat cuts and defend jobs, conditions and services"

**Martin Powell-Davies, NUT national executive member for Inner London**



RMT members, with the support of other trade unionists, protest at Euston Station against the proposed cuts photos Paul Mattsson

## Every trade unionist needs to help build this dispute

### A London Underground station supervisor

Many station supervisors face the threat of a £10,000 pay cut with just three years' protection of earnings. Every ticket seller and station control room assistant faces a cut of £5,000-£6,000. During a period of earnings protection, the members affected would not receive any pay rises.

In addition station staff will have their agreements on rostering and job descriptions torn up. Many details of LU's plans are still unclear but the company has stated its intention to get rid of rostered positions, where shifts and rest days are set in a permanent pattern and staff know months in advance what duties they will be doing.

Instead, all staff would be covering up to 12 stations and would have to fit into whatever duties LU has to cover at short

notice. Many specific roles will be downgraded and performed by staff in lower-paid grades than at present.

With 953 jobs to be cut, many stations will operate with less staff. Many station assistants and supervisors will be working on their own, even during the rush hour. Staff will not be able to respond to passengers needing help. The likelihood of conflicts and verbal abuse towards staff will rise.

RMT, working alongside other unions, has to defeat these plans. This is not just another dispute that can be settled by one or more 24-hour strikes. The stakes are much bigger than this. RMT has named two 48-hour strikes over two weeks

We need every member, not just reps, to help convince their workmates to support the action and to picket on the day. Branches need to organise special meetings and we have to plan down to every detail.

The TSSA union, representing a mi-

nority of station staff, have now started a ballot and have indicated that they will strike alongside RMT.

This is very welcome. Unfortunately the train drivers' union, Aslef, is not balloting. However, there are some indications that relations between RMT and Aslef are better than during previous recent disputes and RMT drivers will be talking with their Aslef counterparts and asking them not to cross RMT picket lines.

### Continuous process

This campaign will have to be a continuous process of re-enforcing support among members and escalating our strike action when necessary. A public campaign has also been launched to oppose LU's plans. All RMT members should try to support this campaign by attending meetings and promoting it in our communities.

It is important that the campaign clearly supports the strike action and builds among other trade unions.

We need public opinion on our side so that when we strike, Johnson and TfL realise they will take the blame if the dispute continues. Public opinion is important but cannot alone win this dispute.

The RMT is already talking with other unions in dispute including teachers and fire-fighters. Coordinated strikes with other unions will increase the political pressure on Johnson, TfL and the government to back down. Every trade unionist in London should seek to pass resolutions of support for our strike action and our aims.

"This should not be the RMT v Johnson it should be the TUC v Johnson and every trade union member should be out on strike to stop the continuing attacks on workers' rights, pay and conditions. We need to stand together as a movement and support our brothers and sisters in the RMT in their fight to protect their members"

**Joe Simpson, POA assistant general secretary**

## There is an alternative

### Restore the subsidy

- The New Economics Foundation calculated that the total taxpayers' subsidy to Britain's four biggest banks is running at £37 billion a year. The cuts now proposed by TfL amount to less than £0.5 billion a year. A tiny proportion of the bank subsidy could completely remove the need for TfL cuts.
- A study by the Tax Justice network for the PCS union showed that £120 billion in tax revenue is not collected every year by the government. The idea that the government cannot afford to maintain current spending on the tube system is entirely false.
- London Underground receives a small government subsidy by international comparison. In 2012 LU covered 91% of its operating budget with fare revenue. That compares with just 56% for the New York Subway (2009) and only 40% for the Paris Metro (2007). This means that public subsidies are covering a much higher share of costs in Paris and New York. The same is true of every major urban rail system in Europe or North America. Only much smaller and more modern systems in Japan, China, Singapore and Hong Kong cover more of their budget in fares than LU.

### Open the books

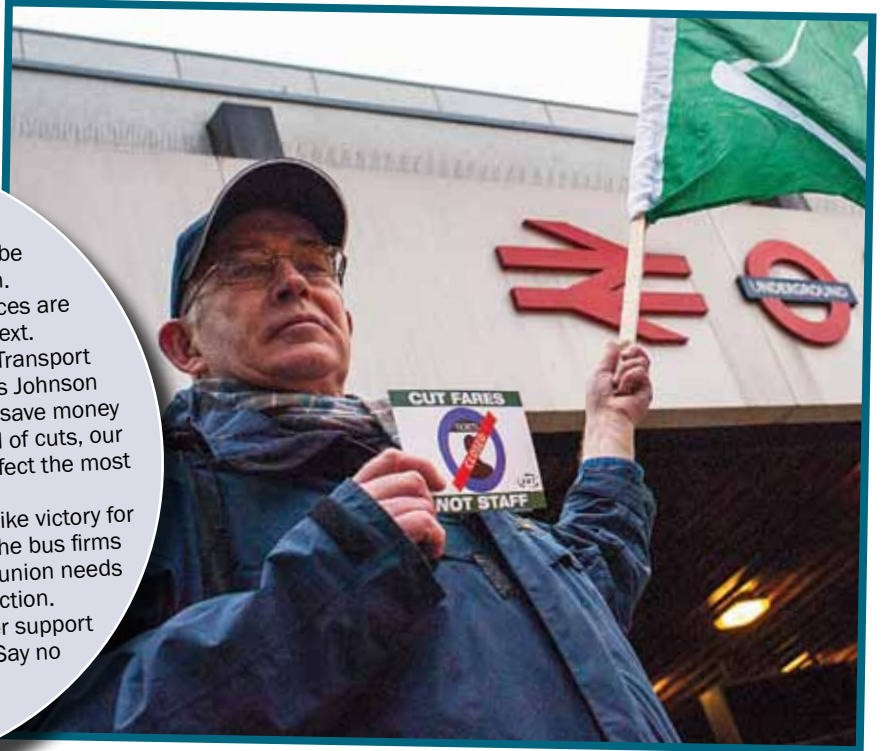
- If LU still wants to review its spending after the government subsidy is restored then the RMT will help. We have demanded that LU opens the books. Let workers and passengers see where the government grant and fare revenues are spent.
- LU employs over 100 managers on more than £100,000 a year. The TfL commissioner got £650,000 last year while the LU managing director took £450,000. Imposing a £100,000 maximum salary could save £15 million a year and achieve

- over 30% of LU's target savings.
- All outsourcing should stop, including in cleaning and maintenance. LU took on massive debts a result of the mistaken privatisation of the tube's infrastructure. Known as PPP (public-private partnership), this disastrous scheme wasted between £2 billion and £3 billion. Many of the firms involved still have lucrative contracts to provide services to LU.
- While LU aims to save £220 million by cutting jobs, pay and conditions on its stations, they happily wasted £500 million on consultants, who all said PPP would work.

### A cheap, efficient service

- The London Mayor and TfL should listen to passengers and staff, not consultants and bankers who want to siphon off the public subsidy of LU for themselves. London Underground charges double the fare per kilometre travelled than the next most expensive by international comparison (Tokyo) and more than double the fare charged in New York.
- RMT will work with passengers and political/community groups for a future where public transport is run as a public service and not a business opportunity for the rich and powerful.
- LU claims its vision is "a world-class Underground for a world-class city". We believe that a world-class railway should be able to provide ticket offices and well-staffed stations. We believe that charging twice the fare of the nearest rival is nowhere near world-class. RMT is happy to work with LU to make this slogan a reality. The starting point should be to secure world-class funding from government - not massive cuts.

**Adapted from the RMT London Transport region briefing paper, The Future of London Underground, December 2013**



"All London trade unionists - and particularly bus workers - should be giving RMT tube staff as much support as we can. If London Underground jobs and services are slashed, they'll be coming for us next. Although London buses are privatised, Transport for London (TfL) and London Mayor Boris Johnson are indirectly our bosses too. If they try to save money by reducing bus services in the next round of cuts, our jobs will be on the line. Service cuts will affect the most vulnerable users first. Eighteen months ago, the bus workers' strike victory for a £500 Olympic bonus showed TfL and the bus firms are already wary of our power. Unite the union needs to prepare members for further action. More immediately, branches can offer support and solidarity with tube workers. Say no to Johnson's cuts!"

**A London bus driver**



# Building the Socialist Party

## Help make the Socialist even more effective in 2014

**Sarah Wrack**  
Paper sales campaigner

In 2013 the Con-Dem government and their mouthpieces in the right-wing press stepped up their war against working class people. They called us lazy scroungers and they spewed bile about striking teachers, firefighters and countless other groups of workers.

When Thatcher died the praise for her was deafening and attacks on working class people who refused to mourn her were scathing. When Mandela died every effort was made to claim the legacy of the anti-apartheid movement for those who were its enemies.

The need for a paper that counters the lies and gives a voice to working

class people has never been greater. Without the Socialist, who in Britain would have known about the 90,000 votes for socialist Kshama Sawant in Seattle? How would workers in dispute have told the real stories of what has pushed them to take action? Where could they get a fighting strategy for taking the anti-austerity movement forward?

And with no end in sight to cuts to jobs and services, this year will be no different. That's why our sellers and writers will be using the next few months to make the Socialist even more up to the job. We want even more articles - reports from every protest and strike, letters expressing your anger at everything the government is doing, comments explaining what life is like in Con-Dem Britain.

And we have to make sure the So-

cialist's message gets out as widely as possible. Socialist Party branches should think of what extra activity they could organise each week to do this in the best way - what workplaces don't currently have a regular sale of the Socialist?

How many people do each of our members know, at work, college or on their estate, who might take out a subscription or buy a copy regularly?

The Socialist is a key tool for all Socialist Party members, branches and supporters to be able to organise the struggle and put forward a socialist alternative to austerity. Get involved in the Socialist's campaign to help make it even more effective.

**Contact sarahwrack@socialistparty.org.uk to discuss the campaign and with reports of plans or successful activities in your area**



### Fylde fighting back

The newly formed Fylde Coast branch of the Socialist Party is starting to make an impact. Ray Smith stood in the recent Rossall Ward byelection for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and polled 28% of the vote. Ray has led a high-profile campaign to keep Fleetwood hospital open and oppose spending cuts.

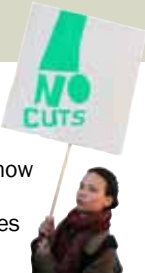
Fylde branch members supported the PCS union on the picket line fighting the privatisation of shared services. Meetings are held monthly in Fleetwood and Ray can be contacted on 07407465179.

Jane Hersey photo Dave Beale

**Has your branch got news for the Socialist?**

Readers of the Socialist may have spotted a rather large typo in last week's paper. The editors apologise for this. We have tried to explain that we were only taking the outrageous advice of one of the energy companies on how to reduce bills - less tea...

Let's continue the fight to nationalise the energy companies in 2014!



## Women's meeting - a source of inspiration and affirmation

To most, Saturday 11 January was just like any other frosty afternoon. However, in the upstairs of a pub somewhere in London a group of women met together to talk about Marxist economics. Unusual?

It was the Socialist Party's national women's meeting. For one weekend we travelled from far and wide to discuss the challenges facing women under capitalism and the current climate of austerity.

As socialists we understand the class basis for the oppression of women. It's no surprise then that the idea of working class women discussing politics and economics is unusual when a general lack of education, confidence and support stands in the way of our involvement in these fields.

But don't forget - we are 50% of the population, and being doubly disadvantaged, we have a higher stake in the fight for a more equita-

ble society. Women therefore have more reason to be involved, not less!

As it is, two thirds of public sector workers are women. With the vast majority of unionised workplaces being public sector, women currently make up 54.7% of trade union membership. While the cuts rain down, women are consequently being disproportionately affected with 253,600 women in local government losing their jobs since 2010.

We are suffering cuts to benefits as jobs are lost, to childcare services as family incomes are stretched and losing women's refuges as violence against women is rising. Women's equality is apparently yet another 'luxury' that austerity cannot afford.

On the university campuses and among young women we have also seen a huge swell of reaction over the past year against 'lad culture' and sexism in the music industry. Campaigns have included over 200

protesting against a tequila bar's 'Freshers Violation' night in Leeds.

All this goes to show the increasingly combative mood of women. This year's national women's meeting was a source of inspiration and affirmation. It showed the capability and commitment of our female members, as well as the wider successes of the women's movement in the face of stacked odds.

Our task now is to make sure this discussion doesn't remain in the upstairs room of a London pub, but is taken out into our movement by all our members. Women face battles against sexism and discrimination every day - we must ensure women are able to play a leading role in the fight for a socialist future.

**Tessa Warrington**

**Make sure your branch gets a report back of the discussions at the meeting**



### West Midlands prepares

Over 60 people attended the West Midlands Socialist Party conference. General secretary Peter Taaffe kicked off the day, touching on important developments in South Africa, in the US, with great election results for socialists in Seattle, and more.

Dave Nellist spoke of the need to arrange meetings with local campaigners, unions and any others likely to want to stand under the TUSC banner.

Regional secretary Dave Griffiths reported important work done by the Socialist Party across the region in 2013 and the need to build the party.

An inspirational meeting set the region up for a busy year. Reflecting the enthusiasm for continuing the struggle, over £900 was raised for the fighting fund.

**Lenny Shail**

National congress will take place from 8 to 10 March. Every branch should plan discussions on the congress documents and set aside time to elect the delegates. Congress is the main decision-making body of the Socialist Party.

## Members' unstinting efforts smash 2013's finance targets

**Ken Douglas**  
National treasurer

Another successful year for the fighting fund in 2013 was complete when £27,375 was raised in the final quarter - smashing the target and raising £101,802 for the year as a whole. The fighting fund underpins the campaigning work of the Socialist Party. We rely on the support of ordinary working class people - from the paper sales and donations in the streets and town centres throughout England and Wales.

Socialist Party members have been unstinting in their efforts, holding social events and fundraisers in the festive period. A Nottingham quiz night raised £58, a 'mid-winter' film night raised £57 in Newcastle and a quiz night in Leicester raised £24.

Heading into 2014 we have to continue our campaigning and fundraising. The relentless attacks from the millionaire Con-Dems continue - Osborne has pledged still more cuts on top of those already outlined in his autumn statement. With Ed Balls and New Labour promising to match Osborne's budget, the only political

alternative to austerity will be that posed by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which will be standing a record number of candidates in the local elections.

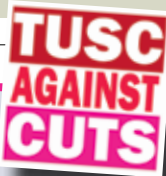
Our members will be out campaigning for TUSC, standing as candidates and arguing for the trade unions to coordinate strike action against the cuts in the course of building for a one-day general strike against austerity.

On 8-10 March delegates from every Socialist Party branch will be meeting at the Socialist Party Congress 2014 to discuss the political situation in Britain and the way forward for the party. We will be asking our members and supporters to donate to the finance appeal at this congress but also to commit themselves to a personal target of raising at least £2 a week for the fighting fund as well.

In this way we can make sure that we can build on last year's total and raise even more in 2014. Can you help by regularly raising money yourself for the fighting fund, or by making a regular or one-off donation?

**Go to www.socialistparty.org.uk/ donate or telephone 02089888777**

## "I'll be voting for the trade unionists"



Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters in Lewisham held a weekend of election campaigning on 11-12 January. Chris Flood is seeking re-election to the seat that he held on Lewisham council until 2010.

The weekend started with a car cavalcade which noisily announced our intention to stand widely at this year's elections. Cars went through the borough decked out in TUSC posters stating our opposition to the cuts. Loudspeakers and loudhailers said that TUSC was the only option if you wanted anti-cuts councillors elected.

On Sunday we held our first mass canvass of Telegraph Hill ward where Chris and another Socialist Party member Ian Page were previously councillors. Around 20 TUSC supporters came from around London to participate. Before we got onto the streets we saw signs of support for our election campaign. A woman sitting in the café near where we were preparing for the canvass

said: "I'll be voting for the trade unionists, I heard them going round in cars yesterday saying they were against cuts."

We received a very friendly response from people on the doorstep. Many constituents remembered the work that our councillors had done in the ward. Lewisham TUSC has started 2014 with a bang!

**Paul Callanan**

**COUNCILLORS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE... BUT ONLY IF THEY ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT**

Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London, W1T 6AQ  
Nearest tube Warren Street, Saturday 1 February, 11am to 4.30pm. Conference registration fee: £10 waged /£2 low/unwaged

Come to the TUSC 2014 Local Elections conference

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# Ariel Sharon: a brutal architect of monstrous crimes

**Shahar Benhorin**

Socialist Struggle Movement (CWI Israel/Palestine)

The butcher of Sabra and Shatila has died. Ariel Sharon, once known as the “Father of Israeli settlements”, died after eight years in a semi-coma, following a stroke while still prime minister in January 2006.

Many former and present capitalist leaders around the world have expressed sympathies, grief and even admiration for this former Israeli general and politician. Along with many in the mainstream media outside the Arab world, they’re attempting to whitewash, rewrite history and rebrand the record of a war criminal as a brave combatant for peace.

“He was a warrior for the ages and a partner in seeking security for the Holy Land and a better, peaceful Middle East”, said George W Bush. British Prime Minister David Cameron stated that “as prime minister he took brave and controversial decisions in pursuit of peace, before he was so tragically incapacitated”.

A heavy Thatcherite, Sharon’s governments pursued aggressive neoliberal measures, repressed workers’ strikes and were directly responsible for a sharp rise in poverty in Israeli society. One third of children still live under the poverty line.

Sharon’s life story encompasses quite a few of the Israeli regime’s most horrendous crimes against the Palestinian people. He took part in the 1948 Israeli-Arab war as a platoon commander, participating in the subduing of the armed resistance in Lod and Ramla. Hundreds of residents were killed and tens of thousands were uprooted as part of the ethnic cleansing that became known as the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe).

Over 60 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank’s Qibya village massacre of 1953, when Sharon led the infamous 101 Israel Defence Forces (IDF) unit to inflict “maximum life damage” against the residents.

As a Major-General (Aluf) on the eve of the 1967 war of occupation, Sharon became impatient with the delay in the government’s decision to launch the war, so he proposed consideration of a military coup in order to do so without governmental consent.

After the war, as the head of the Southern Command, he led brutal onslaughts against the residents of Gaza. Later, as one of the founders of the ruling right-wing Likud party, he became one of the most prominent advocates of the Israeli settlements colonial project in the new occupied territories.

## Massacres

But probably one of the most well-known massacres linked to Sharon was Sabra and Shatila in Beirut, Lebanon in 1982. Hundreds, if not more, of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Shi’ite residents were slaughtered for a day and a half by the fanatic Christian Phalanges.

The area was under Israeli occupation and IDF forces authorised the entrance of the Phalanges, lighting the area with flares and preventing begging residents from escaping. Reports from the scene of mass murder reached Sharon, then security minister, and he allowed the Phalanges to finish their



photo Paul Mattsson

death frenzy.

Sharon was the mastermind of that war of occupation, aimed at crushing Palestinian militias and exploiting the Lebanese civil war in order to install a puppet Christian regime and enforce a “peace agreement” with Israel. He even deceived the government about the scale of the invasion.

The Sabra and Shatila massacre had ignited the largest anti-war movement in Israel’s history. Hundreds of thousands protested for the investigation of those responsible, for the withdrawal of IDF forces from Lebanon and for the resignation of Sharon and Prime Minister Menahem Begin. Soldiers at the front converted a children’s song into a protest song against being used as cannon-fodder for Sharon’s imperialist plans: “Airplane come down to us, Fly us off to Lebanon, We will fight for Sharon, And return in a coffin”.

## Provocation

In December 1987, in the very first days of the First Intifada, a mass uprising against the occupation, Sharon held a provocative housewarming party at his newly bought second house, in the heart of the Muslim Quarter of occupied East Jerusalem.

Thirteen years later, his provocative climb to the Temple Mount became the trigger to the Second Intifada, the rebellion against the deceit of the Oslo “peace process”.

On the back of a nurtured reactionary nationalist wave in Israeli society, he was propelled to the position of prime minister in 2001. He was entrusted by the Israeli ruling elite with waging two wars – a bloody military campaign against the Palestinians and a class war against the Israeli working class. And he fought those wars mercilessly.

Attempting different tactics, he eventually moved, after a series of horrible suicide-bombings in Israeli cities in 2002, to escalate the war against the Palestinians, with the complete re-occupation of all population centres under the Palestinian Authority. About 500 Palestinians, and 29 Israeli soldiers, were killed in that “Operation Defensive Shield”.

Shortly afterwards, Sharon’s government used the suicide-bombings as a pretext to construct the gigantic Separation Barrier of concrete wall and fences which stretches over hundreds of kilometres today inside the West Bank.

Towards the end of the Second Intifada, the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat fell ill and died in 2004, most probably as a result of assassination by the Israeli secret services under Sharon’s government, as recent evidence implies. At that time, Sharon’s “Disengagement Plan” was in full-swing. That move was far from a “pursuit for peace”.

Behind the plan to dismantle settlements and military bases in the Gaza Strip was a combination of the Israeli regime’s demographic worries (that Palestinian population growth under Israeli rule would lead the Israeli-Jewish population to become a minority) and its understanding that the Palestinians

He was entrusted by the Israeli ruling elite with waging two wars – a bloody military campaign against the Palestinians and a class war against the Israeli working class. And he fought those wars mercilessly

would inevitably re-take the route of struggle against the occupation again and again.

Sharon expressed these fears of the ruling elite when he stated regarding the occupation in 2003 that: “We need to be freed from controlling 3.5 million Palestinians who are reproducing”.

The settlers’ movement, and its ideology of “Greater Israel”, suffered a blow with the 2005 “unilateral” pull-out from Gaza. At the peak of the war in 2002, Sharon had declared that he would not evacuate settlements and that “the fate of Netzarim (former Israeli settlement in the heart of the Gaza Strip) is as the fate of Tel-Aviv”.

But it was a strategic compromise move intended to refortify the Israeli occupation and other settlements, and prepared the ground for a step-up of brutal measures against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which was turned into a giant open-air prison. This was graphically demon-

strated with the siege policies and horrific rounds of massacres, in the Gaza War of 2008-09, and the 2012 “Operation Pillar of Cloud”.

Eight years after he fell into his semi-coma, many representatives of the Israeli ruling class seem to be trying to summon Sharon’s spirit. During his time as prime minister, a few corruption investigations were held against him, but the Israeli mainstream media worked consciously to protect him from public criticism.

## Rebranded

Sharon has been rebranded and marketed as a strong leader of the nation, a sort of parliamentary Bonapartist, striving for peace. His later split from the Likud and the setting up of the Kadima party was relied upon by a large camp of the Israeli ruling class to allow them to lead a similar plan in the West Bank. The post-Sharon Kadima won the 2006 election with such a promise, and led two new wars on Lebanon and Gaza. Fearing a Hamas-controlled West Bank, they abandoned the “unilateral” strategy.

The invoking of Sharon is used by some in the Israeli establishment and internationally to put pressure on the Netanyahu government to take “tough decisions” in the negotiations farce with the Palestinian Authority.

In the post-Arab Spring Middle East, with their demographic worries unresolved, and on the background of mounting anger among Palestinians as well as widening international isolation of Israel, the ruling class of Israel is highly frustrated with its present government. But a corrupt butcher like Sharon wouldn’t have solved their problems.

The continued onslaughts against the Palestinians will sooner or later be answered again with a massive struggle by the Palestinians. With receding support for Israeli settlements, a new generation of Israeli workers and youth, striving for social justice and peace, will have to move to fight against the occupation, oppression, discrimination and expropriation of the Palestinians. These struggles, along with the building of strong socialist forces in Israel and the occupied territories, would wreck the venomous legacy left by Sharon.

**For more CWI news and analysis from Israel/Palestine see [www.socialistworld.net/view/15](http://www.socialistworld.net/view/15)**

## The Committee for a Workers’ International

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

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

**[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**

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



## Hong Kong: How can the democracy struggle go forward?

Between 20,000 and 30,000 march on New Year’s Day, but frustration and divisions are rising within the pro-democracy struggle

*Dikang, Socialist Action (CWI Hong Kong)*



## Portugal: No end to crisis in sight

On the way to a second bailout

*Goncalo Romeiro, Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Portugal)*



## Kazakhstan: Second anniversary of Zhanaozen marked by hearing in European Parliament

*European business connives at suppression of democratic rights*

*Rob Jones, CWI, Moscow*



## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

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

**Defender of the NHS?**

Andy Burnham has been praised for 'attacking NHS privatisation'. Is this the same Andy Burnham MP who wrote an open letter to the TUC when in government extolling the 'virtues' of letting the private sector invade our health service?

Having taken the line of least resistance when in power, he now reinvents himself as a 'Defender of the NHS' when in opposition. Burnham is not even acting to protect the NHS right now. He doesn't call for added investment or for the entire NHS to be re-nationalised as it should be. Instead he pushes the concept of further integration between health and social services which will mean more restructures, more cuts, more confusion for the public and, more worryingly, that the NHS will embrace the social services trend of charging for everything. Frontline NHS workers are disenfranchised from the struggle by the deceitful great and good. Even seasoned campaigners claim the fight for the NHS is 'not a party political' issue. The NHS doesn't just require investment but it needs real efforts made to stop existing funds leaking into the pockets of private profiteers as front-line services are cut to the bone. The only party making the correct demands for the NHS in the present period is TUSC.

**A London nurse via Facebook**

**War criminal**

Ariel Sharon has finally done the decent thing and stopped wasting life support. He is currently being described as a "divisive" figure who "courted controversy". But he's not. Simon Cowell is a divisive figure who courts controversy. Ariel Sharon was a war criminal.

**James Ivens**

**Cutting award**

So Cameron has given his hairdresser an MBE. Still as Nero - that other great leader of a Big Society - appointed his horse to a similarly sensible position as a consul, honouring one's barber can't be a step too far for our PM. Clearly Cameron is getting a little bit carried away with the importance of cuts - even giving out awards for cutting! Ian Stewart, Mayor of Salford, your knighthood for Services to the Wants of Tories could be on its way.

**Sally Griffiths, Eccles**

**Gove-ups**

Kings Science Academy in Bradford is backed by Conservative vice-chairman Alan Lewis and was visited and

praised by David Cameron in 2012. But Kings Academy is at the centre of allegations of "serious failings" in its financial management.

It is one of three high-profile free schools at the centre of a controversy, with the Discovery New School in West Sussex being ordered to shut due to poor standards and the future of the Al Madinah Free School in Derby is in doubt following two scathing Ofsted inspections. Somebody is making a complete Gove-up of the education system. Who could it possibly be?

**Derek McMillan**

**Great, good and forgetful**

I couldn't bear to watch Nelson Mandela's funeral on TV as the Great and the Good said what a great man Mandela was and how terrible apartheid was. Socialists have a long memory. I remember visiting factories in Bradford in the 1980s to help build direct links with the new South African independent unions which were led by black workers. We did what we could to help with collections and support. The black workers of South Africa did the rest. And this was in the teeth of opposition from the establishment and many in the trade unions.

As long as the precious metals and raw materials came out of the ground, Britain's rich were happy with apartheid. For them Mandela and the ANC were just terrorists. It was strikes by South African black workers that altered their view. The Communist Party had influence in Britain at that time. They argued that we had to donate to the South African Congress of Trade Unions, who were exiles and dominated by the CP. We however organised and donated to the underground independent black unions from which sprang Cosatu. So I couldn't watch the funeral proceedings. But I'm sure the truth wasn't told.

**Pete Watson**

**Nativity story**

In a 2014 version of the Nativity story, a baby boy was born on New Year's Day in unusual circumstances. A woman in late pregnancy endured heavy physical demands - not travelling on a donkey to pay tax in Bethlehem, but working a night shift at Sports Direct's warehouse in Shirebrook, Derbyshire. Probably she was on a zero-hour contract - like all but 300 of the 5,000 workers there. Going into labour, the mother left the factory floor for the toilets where the baby was born shortly before midnight. The Bible says Mary left Bethlehem quickly when warned that Herod had ordered all baby boys in Bethlehem to be killed. The Sports Direct mother left the toilet quickly... to return to work on the factory floor, where, unbelievably, she was later arrested.

Fortunately there is still NHS treatment for mother and baby, although that too could soon change under government's plans. No one suggests that billionaire Sports Direct owner Mike Ashley would threaten babies born on his premises. But the mother must have feared she would lose her job. Women on zero-hour contracts don't get maternity leave.

Workers can't wait for angels to deliver us from this modern-day slavery. Trade union organisation, collective militant action and fighting for a socialist world would make ending this exploitation a reality.

**Jon Dale**

# Film review

## 12 years a slave

**Eljeer Hawkins**  
Harlem, New York

"There may be humane masters, as there certainly are inhuman ones - there may be slaves well-clothed, well-fed, and happy, as there surely are those half-clad, half-starved and miserable; nevertheless, the institution that tolerates such wrong and inhumanity as I have witnessed, is a cruel, unjust, and barbarous one."

This is how Solomon Northup described slavery in his book, *12 Years a Slave*, his autobiography. And in Steve McQueen's film, based on the story of Solomon's captivity, that barbarism is clear.

Solomon, a free black man living a Victorian lifestyle in Saratoga, New York with his wife and children, was a well-known fiddle player and carpenter by trade. Chiwetel Ejiofor plays Solomon brilliantly. We see him drugged, and awakening to find himself shackled and bound and then shipped to Louisiana for a slave auction. The odyssey of Solomon Northup lasts from 1841 to his rescue in 1853.

McQueen provides a clear and graphic examination of slavery, including the use of biblical justification for slavery, and the power of the human spirit. But this is a mainstream Hollywood film produced by Brad Pitt. McQueen is a highly skilled storyteller and artist. Various shots of the natural scenery of the south and extended up-close profiles draw the audience into the film's subject: despair and an individual's struggle.

The film has been criticised for containing an orgy of violence. It has six scenes depicting whippings and rape which help to tell this story in its full breadth. McQueen sticks close to Solomon's biography.

**Limitations**

There is a towering performance from Lupita Nyong'o as Patsy, the unfortunate desire of 'slave-breaker' Edwin Epps, sinisterly portrayed by Michael Fassbender. Epps' wife, seeing her husband's infatuation with Patsy, does everything to destroy Patsy. But the film is largely limited to the story of Solomon, limiting its investigation of women's stories.

McQueen told the Voice magazine that "We [black people] have



**Lupita Nyong'o as Patsy**

to recognise our past in the same way that other ethnic groups like the Jewish community has". "They believe in the saying 'never forget' when it comes to the Holocaust and I think we should be the same when it comes to slavery. It's important." He explains that "The high numbers of black people in prison, mental health issues within our community, drug abuse, and single parent families - these are the repercussions of slavery and we have to acknowledge that."

Capitalism and white supremacy have produced unspeakable horrors that must be studied and acknowledged for working people, poor, and people of colour, particularly African-Americans, to then engage in a struggle to eradicate this system of violence, lies and racism. Steve McQueen's *12 years a Slave* begins the process.

But the film's contribution is limited. He has based it on one man's story rather than showing the incredible history of slave revolt which could inspire today's generation of young black people to resist racism and oppression.

Films that give a greater fullness to both slavery and the rebellion by slaves include the 1993 independent classic by Haile Gerima, *Sankofa*. Julie Dash's majestic 1991 cinematic triumph, *Daughters of the Dust* shows more fully the diversity of African-American women. CLR James' *Black Jacobins* is a must-read too.

The release of *12 Years a Slave* and Solomon Northup's autobiography does, however, begin a key discussion that must take place to understand the roots of American capitalism and its shaping of race and class in the western hemisphere.

## Obituary: Jimmy Parry 1934-2013

Some 200 people attended the funeral of Jimmy Parry on 10 January, 2014. Jimmy, brother of Bob Parry MP, was born in the Scotland Road area of Liverpool. From his teens he was a committed socialist.

He was a Liverpool councillor for 20 years and a loyal member of the 1983-87 socialist council. He was totally committed to defending the working people who elected him in the Central ward where he lived all his life. He was Labour Party ward secretary and signed me up in 1963.

In my eulogy I highlighted that he was a comrade of considerable courage and determination. In addition to his uncompromising opposition to Thatcher and everything she stood for, that contempt carried over to the present day

Labour councillors who refuse to make a stand against cuts.

His mettle was underlined when he bearded Kinnock in his den. I was hauled in front of Kinnock's Labour NEC to be subject to expulsion. Both Jimmy and Eddie Loyden agreed to be my 'seconds' in that encounter.

We attended and were confronted by the Star Chamber with Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer, Eric Clark of the mineworkers' union, Jo Richardson, Joan Maynard and LPYS rep Francis Curran giving us full support. Kinnock led the rest, the future lords and knights of the realm, ready to carry out the predetermined sentence of expulsion.

Jimmy was asked if he would like to say a few words. His reply was like a hand grenade being pitched

into the comfort of the NEC. He charged Kinnock with 'disgraceful' conduct in attacking committed socialists and he declared to Kinnock's profound discomfort that he 'would go down in history as the greatest traitor since Ramsey McDonald'. The right wing was stunned by Jimmy's invective. History has proved Jimmy correct.

The expulsion was duly carried by the right-wing majority, but Jimmy's spirited intervention made its mark.

Jimmy Parry was a wonderful example of a councillor who saw his duty as voting to defend workers, at no matter the cost. He will be sadly missed. We send our condolences to Terry and the rest of his extended family.

**Tony Mulhearn**



# Organising fast food workers

James Ivens

Officials from bakers' union BFAWU recently held a 'fast food forum' with campaigners from groups including Youth Fight for Jobs. Labour left MP John McDonnell also spoke from the platform. Targets decided at the meeting, which took place in parliament, included Costa, McDonald's and Burger King.

The move comes after successful strike action against zero-hour contracts at bread maker Hovis and organising work at snack retailer Greggs. The meeting discussed tactics and agreed a day of action at Oxford Street shops to launch a union recruitment campaign. Youth Fight for Jobs supports this and has called a further day of action on zero-hour contracts.

A young worker at Costa Coffee related his workplace experiences. Break rooms at the café chain carry posters with uplifting messages. "Smile or be fired." A union would quickly wipe that smile off the boss's face.

The fast food workforce is drawn

from two main sources. Many are students so the campaign aims to approach student unions.

Most others are migrant workers. Chris Ford from general union IWGB explained that his union had disproved the idea these workers are 'unorganisable' with several recent industrial victories.

## Sick of your boss?

Helen Pattison, speaking for Youth Fight for Jobs, reported on the Sick of Your Boss underemployment campaign. Activists have had good results from entering high street shops and distributing material to staff while working.

Various speakers mentioned the Fast Food Forward campaign in the US. In particular the historic election victory of Kshama Sawant (member of Socialist Alternative – co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) in Seattle was praised. A Socialist Party member explained that political representation like this can be a huge boost for campaigns. Ordinary workers in Britain should stand like Kshama did, and the



**Fast food workers have taken strike action across the US**

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition exists to allow them to do this.

The closing focus of discussion was the need to provide long-term support for struggle, not just publicity stunts. Youth Fight for Jobs

is planning to organise further meetings around the country with BFAWU branches and activists.

• Wednesday 22 January: next fast food forum planning meeting

• Saturday 15 February: day of action at Oxford Street shops

• Saturday 29 March: Youth Fight for Jobs day of action against zero-hour contracts

See [youthfightforjobs.com](http://youthfightforjobs.com)

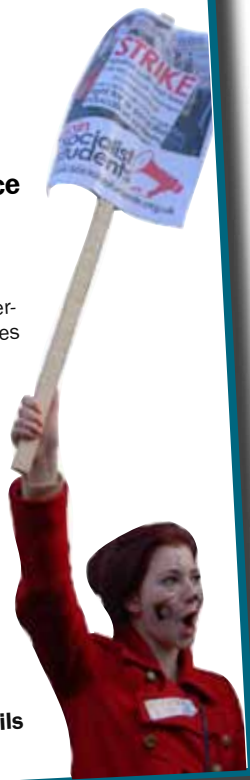
## Socialist Students national conference

**Rally for Revolution**  
**Saturday 1 February**  
**6pm-8pm**

**Socialist Students national conference**  
**Sunday 2 February**  
**10am-5pm**

Come along to the Socialist Students national conference. We'll be discussing and debating the big issues affecting students - student loan privatisation, #CopsOffCampus, cuts and housing, the thirst for socialism and Marxism among students and young people, the battle for ideas on university campuses, Russell Brand's call for revolution, and how we can build a fighting and democratic NUS!

The event is open to all members of Socialist Students on any school, college, or university campus.  
The whole weekend will be held in the Epicentre - 41 West Street, Leytonstone, London, E11 4LJ  
If you would like to attend, send your details to [socialiststudents@gmail.com](mailto:socialiststudents@gmail.com)



## School students protest against 'gormless Gove'

Education minister Michael Gove recently tried to justify the role of the British military command in the World War One slaughter, accusing "left wing academics" of using Blackadder to distort the teaching of the horrific event. So on reflection he may regret his decision to visit a school whose former pupil played the part of one of the characters, Captain Darling.

Current Stroud school students, angry at gormless Gove's education policies, chased him for over an hour round Marling, a Gloucestershire grammar school that recently benefitted from a £3.7 million refurbishment.

"Education shouldn't be elitist, it should be for everyone, that's why I'm protesting" said Janneke Bax-Pratt.

### Gove out!

Hundreds of students were waiting for one of the most despised members of the Coalition cabinet. He was left cowering in a classroom with a few officials and the local Tory MP, while students circled the building chanting "Gove out!"

A handful of teachers tried to hold back students from getting too close to Gove, but were brushed aside by a wave of young people determined to make their anger heard.

Other teachers clapped or smiled as Gove was hounded. Several agreed with Socialist Party members who suggested building support among students for their next industrial action against attacks on



**Students protest outside while Gove meets the local MP** photo Chris Moore

pay and conditions.

Janneke spoke for many when she said: "Gove is pathetic and cowardly, he should have the guts to come out and speak to ordinary students. I'd like to know if he's making visits to any comprehensives in the area."

Will, a sixth former at Marling School added: "why doesn't Gove take a cut out of his own salary instead of cutting education and our future?"

The Coalition government is continuing the dismantling of comprehensive education and replacing it with a tiered, elitist system. Education will be increasingly about teaching students to regurgitate

facts for exams.

Free schools and academies are ways of taking schools out of local authority control and for the private sector to further get its claws into education. Teachers face attacks through divisive performance related pay and a squeeze on pensions, while workloads and stress increase.

Further strike action this year by teachers could get wide support from students and could be part of coordinated industrial action, building to a 24-hour general strike.

**Chris Moore**  
**Gloucestershire Socialist Party**

## University bosses' snouts in the trough

### Warwick

The vice-chancellor of Warwick University, aptly named Nigel Thrift, has been awarded a pay rise of a whopping £16,000! This is an increase of 5% which makes his yearly salary £332,000. Just last year he upped his salary by £42,000.

This comes at a time when university staff have taken strike action against their proposed 1% pay rise. With inflation at 3% this is a real terms decrease. It's the same story again and again - those at the top looking after themselves while everyone else is forced to suffer.

When news broke last year of Thrift's pay rise Socialist Students campaigned across campus and made the call for an inquiry into his pay, led and organised by the universities trade unions and student representatives.

**Warwick Socialist Students**

### Leeds

The vice-chancellor (VC) of Leeds University has received a £36,000 pay rise - meaning he now earns £318,000!

Nationwide VCs are receiving on average an 8.1% salary increase. Striking higher education staff, on the other hand, have been offered a mere 1%.

The £1 billion surplus in the higher education sector, along with the VC pay rises reveal the truth behind the claim that universities 'can't afford' to pay their staff a living wage.

Enough is enough! We demand a living wage for higher education workers and for workers in all sectors, an end to zero-hour contracts, workplace bullying and the casualisation of work.

**Mary Finch**  
**Leeds Socialist Students**

## More attacks on further education funding

The government has withdrawn funding for students on level three and four further education courses.

I work in an adult education college and in my department there are a number of level three courses. These courses used to have government funding that learners were not aware of. For example, for a level three course that costs a student £1,000, the college would get £2,000 funding from the government. For the academic year 2013-14 and beyond, this has been replaced with a loan (ie personal debt for the student).

To make matters worse, it is not possible to get another loan for the same level course in the future.

As a result of the sudden withdrawal of funding, our potential students have been put off by what looks like a tripling of our fees. Our department has been ruined and tutors will be made redundant from courses next year. My job is not under threat in this way, but I may be demoted and it would be wise for me to look into moving elsewhere (I have a family to support) as I do not know what will happen next year.

Most of the courses with this sort of funding enable people to have a career change or to get off benefits, or reduce their dependence on benefits. Even if work does not result from the course, it is a social good to educate and get people out of the house and into a place where they will have opportunities.

I haven't seen anything about this in the news. I have thought about writing to my local Labour MP about it. The only problem is that this is exactly the kind of thing that Labour would introduce!

**A further education worker**



# NO TO FRACKING!

## Cameron offers 'bribes' to allow profit-hungry energy companies to wreck the environment

Matt Kilsby

On 12 January, more than 500 activists, trade unionists and environmental campaigners joined a march and demonstration against fracking on Barton Moss in Salford. The march was called in solidarity with anti-fracking campaigners who have been camping at the site – where IGas is carrying out “exploratory drilling” – for several months.

While IGas has stated that they only plan to carry out “exploratory drilling”, the company has estimated that there could be up to 170 trillion cubic feet of gas in the areas of northern England that it has a licence to explore.

If shale gas and methane are found in Barton Moss, then it is likely that fracking and drilling will begin in other sites in Salford and Greater Manchester.

And with the government's recent announcements and David Cameron's declaration that “we are going all out for shale” the fight to stop fracking in the UK is well and truly on.

### 'Bribes'

In a push to make it easier for companies to expand drilling and fracking operations across the country, the government intends to allow councils to keep 100% of business rates raised from fracking sites.

Cameron has also said that revenues from fracking could be paid in cash directly to home owners living nearby.

In his autumn statement George Osborne announced the halving of taxes levied on companies carrying out exploratory drilling.

These policy announcements are



On 12 January anti-fracking demo in Salford photo M Kilsby

nothing more than the prostitution of the environment and the bribery of councils that are struggling to cope with the government's spending cuts.

Councils and local planning authorities should be protecting the environment and the interests of local residents. Such bribes would create a shocking conflict of interests and effectively mean the buying and selling of planning permission for fracking and drilling operations.

Speaking from the platform at the rally Steve North, branch secretary of Salford city Unison, linked the struggle against fracking with the struggle against council cuts and austerity. Last week Salford's Labour council announced dev-

astating cuts of £23 million which will mean 300 workers being made redundant.

At the next demonstration against these cuts, we need to see trade unionists, workers and the people of Salford united and protesting alongside environmental campaigners and activists. We want Salford's Labour council to tell IGas to “frack off” and refuse to implement Tory cuts that will devastate the city.

One protester from Salford told the Socialist: “I am here to safeguard the environment for my children. We do not want fracking in Salford or anywhere else. This protest camp has not been forced on Salford by outsiders; we fully support the protesters.”

Members from the Socialist Party in Salford joined the protest and a number of people filled out cards to find out more about us and what campaigns we are active in across the city.

We also produced a leaflet and poster – urging IGas to “Frack Off” – which proved very popular.

### Salford Socialist Party public meeting

'No to fracking in Salford'  
Wednesday 5 February, 7pm

St Michael's Community Centre,  
Peel Green, Eccles, M30 7LP  
info: 07999 951869

### What the Socialist Party says:

- No to fracking. The Labour council must refuse any further planning permission.
- For a mass movement of opposition, involving local trade unionists, residents' community campaigns, to close the site at Barton.
- Take the profit motive out of energy production and distribution. For public ownership and democratic control of the 'Big Six' energy companies and a socialist plan for energy production, distribution and pricing.

### What we stand for

**The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society. As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in 45 countries.**

#### Our demands include:

##### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, pay, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'Free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

##### WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade

unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

##### ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

##### RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

##### NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

● Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

##### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!