Tory Health Minister Jeremy Hunt has declared war on NHS workers. He has imposed a 1% non-consolidated pay rise for 2014-15 and 2015-16 and no yearly incremental rises for the 600,000 staff who are not at the top of their pay band.

The announcement was greeted with anger but hardly surprise by NHS workers who have grown to expect the worst from the Con-Dem government. The main question I have been asked is: “what are we going to do about it?”

Workers in Mid Yorkshire Health Trust demonstrated their determination to fight back last year when they took nine days of strike action. After being threatened with pay cuts and compulsory redundancies, the admin and clerical staff won an improved pay and job protection deal through this action.

Public sector unions Unite and GMB responded to the latest pay news by saying they will ballot for strike action. Even the no strike RCN has murmured that it may lift its strike ban, arguing that nurses have lost over £2,000 in real terms since 2009.

Members of the biggest NHS union, who were looking for a fighting response from our leaders, were left disappointed. Head of Health Christine McAnea merely said: “we will be talking to our members about how we respond.”

But four years of below-inflation pay rises have resulted in a 10% pay cut in real terms. The squeeze on pay is compounded by the third year of increased pension contributions which will gobble up 3% of the payrise. Added to the 3% “efficiency savings”, ie cuts, in NHS budgets and staffing, this means that NHS staff are working harder every year for less money.

At the Union national conference in 2012, general secretary Dave Prentis proclaimed to rousing support that the union will “smash the pay freeze”. Two years later we are still waiting for action and our wages are falling further behind the cost of living.

Unison has got to take a lead and announce a strike ballot of its 500,000 members in the NHS alongside our local government and higher education members who are also in dispute with their employers over the pay freeze.

Unison’s health SGE meets on 2 April. The SGE must make a stand and recommend strike action to the union’s health conference which starts on 14 April. The conference should become the launching pad for the strike ballot which could smash the pay freeze.

See page 4 for more on the strategy.
Tony Benn: steadfast in speaking out for socialism

Peter Taaffe
Socialist Party general secretary

In one week, the labour movement has suffered two big blows with the deaths of trade union left leader Bob Crow and now of Tony Benn.

Tony Benn had recently been in ill health but, because of his association and lifelong work for the left within the labour movement, his death seemed a blow of a blow.

Tony Benn’s political evolution contradicted the dictum of the cynics, which holds it is only to be expected to be radical and on the left when you are young, but inevitably, as you get older, you shift towards the right. He defied this stereotype.

Benn emerged on the centre-right in Harold Wilson’s Labour government of 1964-70, when he supported Barbara Castle’s anti-union legislation ‘In Place of Strife’. This was defeated by an uprising of Labour Party rank-and-file members and the colossal pressure of the trade unions. He shifted towards the left within the labour movement, his ill health but, because of his association with the hesitant Labour Party members and so-called Barbara Castle supporters, he worked together with his speeches and articles in favour of Labour adopting a socialist approach on the National Executive Committee, with the Young Socialists (LPYS), led by Militant (predecessor of the Socialists) with his speeches and articles in favour of Labour adopting a socialist approach. He shifted towards the left under the impact of the 1971 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation, which he championed, as well as other workers’ battles at that time, such as the miners’ strikes of 1972 and 1974.

When Tony Benn emerged as the major figure of the Labour left, supporting the ideas of nationalisation and workers’ control of industry. He gave firm support to the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS), led by Militant and Tony Benn; he had given them unswerving support in their hour of struggle. Benn gave sterling support to their general elections, in which Tony Benn gave sterling support to their campaigns. Neither did it prevent the victory of the socialist Labour councillors between 1983 and 1987, nor the outbreak of the mighty miners’ strike, with Tony Benn backing these causes to the hilt.

However, following the defeat of the miners, the Labour councilors and the print workers at Wapping, the Kinnock ‘counter-revolution’ against the democratic rights of Labour Party members and socialist policies began in earnest.

This inevitably led to the political isolation of the Labour left and of Tony Benn because it was part of a worldwide process, the roots of which lie in the collapse of Stalinism and, with it, the planned economy. This allowed the capitalists to conduct a ferocious ideological campaign against all the ideas upon which the Labour movement was built: socialism, trade unionism and solidarity.

Isolation

It is to his great credit that Tony Benn steadfastly held on to his socialist and left opposition and for that he was held in great esteem. But his isolation and, therefore, loss of political influence, particularly among the younger generation, was increased because he clung to the Labour Party, which was no longer a political vehicle for working class people. In his recently published diaries, Tony stated that a Tory election candidate revealed to him that when Norman Tebbit asked Thatcher what she regarded as her greatest achievement, she replied ‘New Labour’. He comments in his diaries, ‘That says it all really.’ Yet, unfortunately he did not draw the necessary conclusions from this, that it was therefore necessary to take an entirely different road to the dead end represented by New Labour.

Tony Benn reflected the huge radicalisation that was taking place in Britain but also pushed it forward with his speeches and articles in favour of Labour adopting a socialist programme

Of Four, who subsequently split from the Labour Party and formed the Social Democratic Party. Then aim was to split the anti-Tory and Labour vote in the 1983 general election, which they succeeded in doing. This helped to maintain Thatcher in power and prepared the way for the emergence of a determined right-wing offensive within the Labour Party.

However, this did not stop the election of three Militant supporters as Labour MPs in the 1983 and 1987 general elections, in which Tony Benn gave sterling support to their campaigns. Neither did it prevent the victory of the socialist Labour councillors between 1983 and 1987, nor the outbreak of the mighty miners’ strike, with Tony Benn backing these causes to the hilt.

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Tony Benn came very close, however, at times, to breaking from New Labour. For instance, when he was approached by representatives of Bob Crow, to support ‘No to EU’ in the European elections of 2009, he was initially favourable. But, unfortunately, pressure was exerted by his family, particularly by Hilary Benn, who warned him that he could be expelled from New Labour, which in turn would mean a possible breach with his family. This undoubtedly represented to him too much of a hurdle in a vulnerable period.

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I spoke with Tony Benn, alongside Tony Mulhearn and Len McCluskey, last year at one of the last meetings he addressed. It took place in Liverpool to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the heroic struggles of the socialist council and the working class of that city in the 1980s.

This meeting witnessed the deep affection and veneration for Tony Benn; he had given them unswerving support in their hour of struggle and need, as he had done for the struggles of working people everywhere. We should use the example of his life to reaffirm once more our unswerving opposition to the capitalist system and for a new socialist world.

For more analysis of the ideas of Tony Benn see The Labour of Tony Benn (Socialism Today article) at www.socialismtoday.org/174/benn
Osborne’s more cuts budget

Steve Score

The ‘debate’ in the run up to Tory Chancellor Osborne’s Budget statement missed the point. It should have been about whether the government’s austerity was really necessary, how to deal with the capital crisis, how to solve the problem of poverty and continued inequality, and all the other pressing issues faced by the vast majority.

But it wasn’t. When Osborne argued for more cuts, he was rejected. Labour shadow chancellor Ed Balls agreed. When Osborne argued that a recovery was underway, Balls pointed out that most people weren’t feeling the benefit, while Osborne put forward any alternatives that could solve the collapse in people’s living standards.

The Tories claim a stable recovery is underway. But the predicted growth levels are far from showing stability. The economy is still below the level of production before the crisis in 2008, and the long-term prospects are not good.

Few concessions

This was the penultimate Budget before the next general election but as an electioneering budget it offered very little. The pressure from inside the Tory party was to help those on £42,000 a year by raising the 40% tax rate threshold. They are likely to increase the personal tax allowance instead, but for most workers it will be a tiny amount of benefit, if any, against a deluge of cuts to real living standards.

The government says it has cut taxes for ‘hardworking families’, yet it has raised VAT to 20% - which impacts much more on low-income families.

There’s a proposal on childcare, an allowance to cover up to 20% of childcare costs, up to £2,000. This is upping the amount announced in last year’s Budget. However, it would still leave up to £8,000 to be paid by parents.

The government talks of building a new “Garden City” in Kent and will continue to encourage house building. But for the vast majority of those desperately needing housing it is no solution. Most people cannot afford to buy houses and there is an inadequate amount of affordable, safe social housing.

The key issue is the Con-Dem’s commitment to cuts. At least half of those announced by the government since they came to power have not yet been felt. But the strain on services such as the NHS, local government and education has reached breaking point. Now Osborne wants another £12 billion of welfare cuts.

The latest plan is to introduce a welfare ‘budget cap’. This would require a government to either hold a vote in parliament to increase the welfare ‘envelope’ if spending nears the limit, or introduce more cuts to benefits.

The welfare budget is rising because more people are forced out of full-time work and into poverty incomes.

The creation of proper jobs and decent pay would reduce overall welfare spending. But since a government based on capitalism in crisis doesn’t do that, it is those on benefits and low-paid workers who suffer. The stark reality of capitalism is that, to preserve the interests of the richest, the poorest must be crushed.

The budget also shows the differences between the three main parties are minor. We need a socialist alternative to these pro-big-business budgets!

Oxfam report: A tale of capitalist inequality

Earlier this year the Oxfam charity pointed out that a mere 85 billionaires worldwide own the equivalent wealth of 3.5 billion people - half the world’s population.

Now Oxfam has reported similar levels of inequality in Britain with five super-rich families owning more wealth than the poorest 20% of the population.

In its report Human And Nature Dynamic (Handy) model, applied mathematician Sada Moshari assesses the threat to civilisation by “the economic stratification of society into ‘Elites’ and ‘Masses’”, ie capitalism.

According to Moshari, “even using an optimised depletion rate and starting with a very small number of Elites, the Elites eventually consume too much, resulting in a famine among the Masses that eventually causes the collapse of society”.

But readers shouldn’t despair. “Collapse can be avoided and population can reach equilibrium if the per capita rate of depletion of nature is reduced to a sustainable level, and if resources are distributed in a reasonably equitable fashion.”

I believe that’s called socialism!

�� chest

Outrageously warmonger Tony Blair has received £200,000 in public funds since 2011. This “allowance” helps ex-MPs “to meet the cost of continuing to fulfil public duties”. Given his legacy includes a situation where half of all children under five in Afghanistan are suffering irreversible harm from malnutrition, disgust at this real scrounger will be deep and widely felt. The only public funds Blair should access are the ones used to run state prisons, for crimes against humanity.

Rising spads

For a fourth successive year, millions of public sector workers face a zero or a below-inflation pay increase. However, some civil servants have been treated favourably by government ministers.

Special advisers or ‘spads’ who, presumably, dreamt up the government’s austerity measures and other reactionary policies, have seen their pay levels go stratospheric. Welfare cutter Iain Duncan Smith has given his spad a 36% rise while Cameron’s spad, Ed Llewellyn, got a 12% increase from £125,000 to £140,000. More than double the salary of a backbench MP. The list of outrageous salary increases to ministerial spads goes on.

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Appropriately, spad is also a railway acronym meaning Signal Passed At Danger.

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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

TREM...
Doncaster care workers determined to win

In September 2013 Doncaster’s Labour council sold the tender for the town’s learning disability support living to the cheapest bidder, Care UK. Care UK is owned by private equity firm Bridgepoint Capital. The chair of which is former Marks and Spencer chief executive Sir Stuart Rose.

Rose has recently been appointed as an adviser to the NHS; a further illustration of the links between the Tory’s prioritisation agenda and their friends in big business.

In December 2013 Care UK ef-

fectively threw the TUPE transfer agreements out of the window with the declaration that new terms and conditions were to be introduced. These included the scrapping of enhanced pay for working unsocial hours, which would lead to a pay cut of, on average, £500 a month.

Unison members overwhelm-

ingly rejected this proposal and balloted for strike action. The first strike was held between 27 Febru-

ary and 5 March. On its conclusion the staff voted for this, second week of action.

The strikers have received wide-

spread support locally. The demon-

stration held outside of the coun-

cil’s Mansion House on 1 March was greeted enthusiastically by the public. There is a recognition here that Care UK staff are fighting not just for their terms and conditions but against privatisation of the NHS and against the suffering that this will cause.
Unite to end racism and cuts

Marvin Hay
Walworth Forest prospective TUSC candidate

On Saturday 22 March, as part of the UN’s International Anti-Racism Day, the TUSC has coordinated marches in London, Cardiff and Glasgow. We will be flying the ban- hers of the Trade Unionist and So- cialist Coalition (TUSC) and the Socialist Party and call on others to join the protests.

It is indisputable that the plight of working class youth of every race is a result of austerity. But the cuts are having a disproportional impact on certain sections of the working class. Union and TUC research in recent years has shown that since the Coalition came to power young black and brown men have experienced the sharpest rise in unemployment.

Unemployment

In September the Department for Work and Pensions reported that while the unemployment rate for white people aged 16-24 was 19%, for young black people it was more than double that, at 45%. For young Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers it’s even worse at 46%. This is happening black and Asian people who are being affect- ed. In 17 London councils (arguably the most diverse) black workers are being disproportionately hit by job losses, by up to 80%.

All this goes to demonstrate how much the austerity measures are worsening the already unequal situation faced by black and Asian workers in Britain, with a similar effect in austerity-hit countries around the world.

The Immigration Bill (now in the House of Lords) is part of the Tories’ drive to make Britain, as described by home secretary Theresa May, “a hostile place for illegal immigrants”. It has been described as one of the most racist pieces of legislation passed in the UK.

Against the backdrop of a government that is determined to weaken any movement to resist the austerity attacks and must be opposed.

That’s why, only a united mass workers’ party with a socialist pro- gramme can represent the struggle to genuinely combat racism, which is what the Socialist Party and TUSC will be arguing for on the demon- strations on 22 March.

Fight for real jobs for young people

Join the day of action on 29 March

Helen Pattison
London Youth Fight for Jobs

As budget day approached, main- stream politicians and media were scrambling around to look good or mud-sling on the issue of youth un- employment, with the tabloids and the Murdoch-owned papers leading the way.

London Youth Fight for Jobs, has teamed up with others, in- cluding the Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union, to begin building something similar here by setting up Fast Food Rights.

The campaign has been targeting McDonald’s, Burger King and Costa. The bakers’ union wrote to them all asking for the chance to come and discuss with their workers about joining a union. McDonald’s replied that their workers were per- fectly happy, and we knew that when we left their stores in Oxford Street, Lon- don, management ripped leaflets and flyers from the hands of staff and kicked us out.

Unemployment rates among black and Asian workers in Britain are the highest in all of Europe, with the highest unemployment in the EU.

Labour no alternative

Labour has re-adopted its ‘youth guarantee’ – promised a six month job for all 18-24 year olds out of work for a year - supposedly funded by a one-off levy of bankers’ bonus- es. We know Labour, the party of the 1980s under John Smith was forced to admit this plan would mean the party would have to re-think using this money to fund house-building as had previously been promised.

The big businesses that take part have not paid a penny of wages. And of course it won’t actu- ally create any new jobs so the vast majority of participants would be

Activists in the US demand $15 Now!

In Seattle on 15 March (and inset the front page of The Seattle Times) photo Socialist Alternative

15 Now campaign

On 15 March a national day of ac- tion took place across the US as part of the 15 Now campaign for a $15 an hour minimum wage. In Seattle 750 protesters took to the streets.

Union activists, 15 Now volun- teers and low-wage workers rallied to chants of “Tip Credit? Forget it!” warning against a proposal full of loop-holes and exemptions, such as lower wages for tipped workers or a so-called “total compensa- tion” package which would only attempt to count everything from health benefits to bus passes to- ward a minimum wage of $15.

At the end of the rally Kshama Sawant, Seattle’s socialist City Council member, said: “Let’s use these next two months to hit the pavement and build a grassroots movement like Seattle has not seen in a long time. Let’s get a first- hand experience of the power of working class solidarity – where we stand up for the interests of everyone – workers and the unem- ployed, the poor and oppressed, of all races and colors, immigrants and American-born, elderly and disabled.”

The movement’s next big mobi- lisation will be a conference on 26 April. The conference will launch a campaign to collect the 21,000 signatures required to put a robust $15 minimum wage on the November ballot, should it become necessary.

For a full report and campaign updates see www.15now.org
The union stands for the working class using its power to defend and extend its rights and share of the world's wealth and for socialist change.

What we think

A debate ofalbys followed the hit and death of Bob Crow at the Maritime and Transport union for the TUC. The TUC had engaged with the movement and traditions of the RMT because the union is to be remembered. As the Economist put it, “Under Mr McShane, the RMT stood out. Impeccant premises. As the TUC, the RMT supported a range of action – demon strikes, occupations and storms on the streets and offices. Members engage, as the BBC, ICTU’s, ‘Why are theyere? a time every year, even during austerity, good parties and e-lobbying to defend our future and combine working class action results.”

What next?

For all who resist. “What will happen to its union now?” The magazine’s pre-eminence is evident by its discussion of Crow’s role in the Working class action. The questioning of union officials, the election of someone who stands in Crow’s tradition. Who will be the next general secretary will be to the RMT members to decide, in doing so they will be conscious that their union plays a vital and leading role in Britain’s working class action. The question we ask is who will lead the working class action in the years to come?

Tony McLean, a Militant activist who served on Socialist Party member who was also a trades union specialist and editor, wrote in 1986: “The memory of Tony Benn will live in the consciousness of the working class, long after the Labour Party he once represented has faded from the public eye.”

The young woman in Bristol who said that he felt that Tony Benn and his role in politics on Channel 4’s ‘The Politics Show’ was ‘more a prisoner in New Labour, reduced to a figurehead, a prop to be used in the distant future for the Labour Party’s propaganda purposes.’

The death of Tony Benn is another sad and shocking death of Bob Crow. We stand in their memory and remember.

Legacy

In South Africa the working class is taking another step to transform a new way to carry on the legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle, particularly in the form of the Workers And Socialist Party.

This passionate work, with socialist, centrists, radicals, Lesson’s revolutionary class, and TUSC, makes sense to keep Bob Crow and Tony Benn alive. “Labour’s” present the people who want to continue the legacy of Bob Crow and Tony Benn. “The future is not in the air, it is in the union and the struggle. To carry on the struggle is not to be individualized. We are all together, united in the struggle.”

Re-elect Keith Morrell, Coxford rebel councillor

The TUSC and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral party formed in 2005. It seeks to create a new political voice for working class communities of the working class, as an essential aspect of the struggle against austerity. Its origins can be traced back to the 1990s, when groups have been striving to create a new political voice for working class communities. 

The TUSC and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was formed in 2005 with the aim of creating a new political voice for working class communities. It is a coalition of trade unions and socialist organisations, and it seeks to provide an alternative to the mainstream political parties.

TUSC against cuts

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Election Appeal

Put your money where the struggle is!

Ken Douglas
National treasurer, Socialist Party

At its recent national congress the Socialist Party launched an appeal to raise £15,000 to help finance our 2014 election campaigns. Across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, Socialist Party members are getting ready to stand alongside members of the RMT rail union, other trade unions and community campaigners in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to mount the biggest left-of-Labour challenge since the end of World War Two.

We have a battle in these elections to make TUSC as visible as possible so the media gives the coverage it should to our challenge. We need to make sure in our local campaigning that TUSC leaflets, banners, posters, postcards and other material are widely available and prominent at every protest against cuts and privatisation, at every picket line and demonstration.

Socialists everywhere have been inspired by the success of Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative in the Seattle city council elections in the US. The power of Kshama’s campaign was based on the appeal of her socialist programme and particularly the demand for $15 an hour minimum wage to the thousands of ordinary people who made relatively small donations to her campaign. These donations enabled Kshama to mount an effective challenge to the candidates backed by all the financial might of big business.

Southampton rebel councillors Keith Morrell and Dan Thomas have generated a groundswell of support for their stand against the cuts and won £1.8 million to refurbish the local swimming pool that the council was going to close. TUSC will be standing city-wide in Southampton and other areas; the press, the political establishment and the television companies will try to brush away the TUSC challenge. We must make sure we have the funds and the support so they can’t ignore us.

The Socialist Party is also participating in the ‘No2EIS – Yes to work- ers’ rights! Portugal’s European elections being held at the same time. Socialist Party members are standing in a number of seats. Dave Nel- list leads the list in the West Mid- lands and leading trade unionist Roger Bannister leads the challenge against the racist BNP’s Nick Griffin in the North West.

In addition we also aim to raise £4,000 to help finance the election campaign of the new Workers And Socialist Party (WASP) in South Af- rica. Moses Mayekiso, the inaugu- ral general secretary of Numsa, the metal workers union, is heading WASP’s election list.

These campaigns all explain that the working class needs new mass parties to replace those like the Labour Party that speak only for big business and the crisis-ridden capitalist system. Fewer than 400 individ- uals worldwide even own as much wealth as three and a half billion people so we need parties that represent the bil- lions, not the billionaires!

Can you make a donation to support this historic challenge? Can you donate £10, £20 or £100 or more? Every pound will take us closer to our target and will make a difference in this campaign. You can donate via our website socialis- tparty.org.uk/donate or telephone 020 8988 8777.

Get your May Day Greetings in

Suzanne Beishon

Over recent years we have had brilli- ant May Day displays in the Socialis- t. Let’s aim to repeat that success in 2014. This year marks the 40th anniver- sary of the founding of the Com- mittee for a Workers’ International (CWI) - which the Socialist party is affiliated to and in the autumn, the 50th anniversary of the first issue of our party’s paper.

Our ‘reporters’ are actively involved in the struggles they write about, from workplaces, communities, universi- ties, schools and colleges. We report the victories that show that if you fight back you can win from construction workers’ disputes in Britain, to miners in South Africa. And the Socialist doesn’t just re- port workers’ strikes and the anti- cuts movement, but goes forward a strategy to defeat the cuts and to fight for a socialist alternative. Help the Socialist continue that work with a May Day greeting this year! Get a 25% discount by paying by Friday 11 April.

Ross Longhurst of Nottingham, aged 72 and a longstanding cam- paigner, has been jailed for 28 days for not paying his council tax. Cathy said the council should receive letters from the council or so- cial landlord including court letters. http://youtu.be/f-9VfpdHNjs

Pensioner jailed for non-payment.

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South Africa: WASP registers for the 2014 elections

Workers And Socialist Party

The Workers And Socialist Party (WASP) in South Africa has registered for this year’s elections to the national assembly and for the provincial legislatures of North West, Limpopo and Gauteng.

WASP candidate and number one on WASP’s national list is Moses Mayekiso. Moses was a long time union activist in the 1970s and 1980s for the Metal and Allied Workers Union (Mawu) of which he became the general secretary. Mawu, along with other unions, founded Cosatu (the largest trade union federation in South Africa) in 1985 and was a key founding union of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numasa).

Moses became the first general secretary of Numasa, elected from jail for his labour movement activism and anti-apartheid activities. He was the hero of an international campaign demanding his release and demonstrations to “free Comrade Moss” were held in cities around the world.

Moses was general secretary of Numasa when the union in 1993 adopted a resolution calling for the formation of a workers’ party. In joining WASP and taking his place in the leadership, Moses is retying the knot of history.

Please donate towards the WASP election appeal by writing cheques to “South African Miners Fund” and post to South African Miners’ Solidarity, PO Box 66682, London E1 5EB.

For more see socialworld.net

In the eastern cities of Donetsk and Kharkiv.

If some clashes develop momentum it could lead in majority Russian ethnic areas to calls for more referendums, attempts to break away and the horrific possibility of bloody break-up of the country.

Both sides say they are not going to go to war over Ukraine but a deepening of tensions can lead to “localised” conflict nevertheless.

Working people across Ukraine will pay the price for an escalation of the crisis. Several people were killed last weekend when fighting broke out between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters and mi-

A recent WASP recruitment drive and election campaigning in Limpopo photo WASP

Crimea referendum will not deliver peace and stability

Nail Muhallo

Crimea’s 16 March referendum saw an overwhelming majority vote in favour of joining Russia. According to unconfirmed official result, 96.77% voted “for” integration and turnout was 83.1%. Tens of thousands ofcelled in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea.

A referendum was only then put to vote to rubber stamp the decision. All pro-Ukraine media was shut down and weeks of state-run media blasted out pro-Russian nationalist rhetoric and the involvement of international leaders. Crimea’s minority population was not consulted and the referendum is seen as a sham.

“Crimea. Living standards will not be transformed by Crimea’s integration into a weakening Russian economy.”

Both sides say they are not going to go to war over Ukraine but a deepening of tensions can lead to “localised” conflict nevertheless. Working people across Ukraine will pay the price for an escalation of the crisis. Several people were killed last weekend when fighting broke out between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters and mi-

96.77% claimed official result in favour of integration of Crimea into Russia

Venezuela: Popular Revolutionary Council Launched in Caracas

International solidarity needed!

As the recent revolt of workers and youth in Bosnia Herzegovina shows, new upsurges against dire economic and social conditions and corrupt politicians are inevitable but they require organised, political expression to provide a working class and socialist alternative.

Bosnia Herzegovina: Mass protests of working people and youth show the way forward

Working people stir to end poverty, joblessness, corruption and ethnic divisions!

CWI Leaflet text

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 visit: www.cwiworldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net
### Review

**Call the Midwife**

Sarah Wrack

The third series of the BBC’s Call the Midwife finished recently. The programme is based on the real life memoirs of Jennifer Worth (formerly Lee) who worked as a midwife in London’s east end in the 1950s.

The series finale saw Jenny leave Nonnatus House after she fell in love with the midwife’s team work from Jenny and her fellow midwives work under the instruction of an order of nuns, who were the traditional providers of maternity care for poor women in the Poplar area prior to the launch of the NHS.

For me the most poignant episode was in the second series. Nora Harding and her husband already have eight children when she discovers she is pregnant again. The family live between two rooms and are in dire poverty.

Distraught at the idea of another mouth to feed, Nora has an illegal backstreet abortion – selling everything she can to get the money which leaves her fighting for life.

Jenny says: “Nora’s life was saved by doctors who asked no questions, but she never conceived again.” She explains that, in the expansion of council housing, the family was relocated to a larger house outside London. The midwives all come from relatively well-educated backgrounds. This contrasts with the deprivation conditions in Poplar.

The area was devastated by bombing during the war, the local workhouse had not long closed its doors, many families still lived in one or two rooms with a shared bathroom.

Maternity care and labour make a good prism for the audience to look through, particularly given the post-war baby boom.

But the programme’s interest stretches much further – it provides insightful social commentary on a unique period in British history.

The main running theme is the huge impact that the introduction of the NHS, and the welfare state in general, had for working class communities – slum clearance, health promotion, social work. The programme documents the rapid influx of patients which followed the launch of the NHS. The women of Poplar can’t believe their luck when gas and air become available – the doctor ends up running between houses with the machine as every woman in labour demands it. A mass chest x-ray programme is launched to combat tuberculosis.

Two baby brothers whose mother is suffering depression because she thinks their illness is her fault are diagnosed with the little-known spina bifida. The doctor points out that a decade earlier this would not have been identified and they would never have survived.

Issues such as prostitution, illegitimacy, racism and domestic violence are dealt with sensitively, while giving a relatively realistic impression of how hard life was – there are no guaranteed happy endings.

Every episode emphasises how impossible life was for working class people before the welfare state.

It should make everyone who watches it redouble our efforts to stop the Con-Dems’ onslaught of cuts and privatisation that threatens to reverse the progress shown in the programme.

Call the Midwife has been renewed for a Christmas special and fourth series next year. It remains to be seen whether the makers will do justice to the story and characters once no longer following the real stories of Jenny Lee and without the lead character.

But I’ll certainly be tuning in to find out...

### Obituary: Stan Pearce, a Militant miner

Ian Isaac, former St John’s NUM, S Wales Area

I heard the sad news that Stan Pearce has died. In a week that commemorated the 50th anniversary of the strike, Stan’s passing ranks with that of Bob Crow and Tony Benn for a whole generation of Socialist miners associated with Militant, forerunner of the Socialist and the real Miners’ Broad Left.

It was my privilege to work with someone who I looked up to as having the virtues of an irreconcilable militant miner. He was 20 years my senior with Militant, forerunner of the Socialist and the real Miners’ Broad Left.

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I am a science teacher and you’ll be surprised at how many students have absorbed a lot of the misleading ideas about climate change, GM foods and even the lunar landings. In the US, science teachers are at the forefront of the battle against creationism in the science curriculum.

Giving students the power to look at information in a critical way and to understand the science is very important.

Since the beginning of agriculture, farmers have modified their environment, allowing human societies to flourish around the world. The problem with capitalism is that the health benefit to society is no longer the priority – the priority in agriculture is profit. Monsanto typify this.

‘Traditional’ selective breeding is different to GM technology – both have radically altered the genetics of agricultural crops or animals, but just on a different timescale. I think selective breeding (or inbreeding) has just as damaging an impact on the genetic health of some organisms and very damaging to biodiversity around the world.

Selective breeding is responsible for the mono-crop livestock practices in the US and the plains of Russia and the grotesquely distorted bodies of cattle or dog breeds. It is also the reason for the loss of traditional seeds.

Many hybrid crops won’t ‘breed true’ if you plant the next generation, you don’t get the same characteristics. Most grain hybrids are like this. So, there is no real benefit from saving the seeds and, in fact, this does mean that the farmer has to continually return to the seed companies to buy seeds, but this is not a GM issue in itself.

The research behind much of the GM health scare has been discredited. The real threat to health is from the aggressive marketing of cheap, high sugar, saturated fats and salt foods which we are exposed to everyday.

Other health scares are linked to agrochemicals which were used well before GMOs were introduced. Monsanto’s own ‘Roundup’ herbicide is one such example.

Many environmental campaigners have been warning against over-use and mis-use of chemicals in agriculture for decades – from Agent Orange, to DDT, to artificial fertilisers. It is estimated that 20,000 workers are dying from exposure every year to these agrochemicals.

There are some promising advances in GM crops. For example, in Bangladesh, brinjal (aubergine) crops are routinely sprayed with very toxic pesticides (linked to many diseases). A GM version of the crop has been developed which can provide resistance to the pests, which will greatly reduce the dependence on chemicals, and the companies like Monsanto who make them.

Join the debate. Contact: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

### Genetic Modification

**A contribution to the Socialist debate**

Simon Robinson

Leicester NUT member

The recent article in the Socialist issue 800 on genetic modification (GM) was an excellent antidote to the plethora of reactionary anti-science nonsense which prevails in a lot of media today. I would like to add my thoughts on GM to the debate.

I am a science teacher and you’ll be surprised at how many students have absorbed a lot of the misleading ideas about climate change, GM foods and even the lunar landings. In the US, science teachers are at the forefront of the battle against creationism in the science curriculum.

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Join the debate. Contact: editors@socialistparty.org.uk
No to the bosses’ EU – Yes to an independent socialist alternative

by Hannah Sell

Secretary, UK party deputy general secretary

The question of a referendum over Britain’s membership of the European Union (EU) is problematic for all the mainstream capitalist parties. In this parliament Tony Prime Minister David Cameron has faced enormous pressure from the predominantly ‘euro-sceptic’ Tory backbenchers, fuelled by increased support for UKIP - a right-wing populist, anti-EU party. UKIP are promoted by the capitalist owned media as the best stick with which to beat the pro-EU parties... Cameron has attempted to defuse the issue by ‘promising’ an in-out referendum on EU membership in 2017. Membership of the EU will...

Nonetheless, in order to stand a chance of winning the election, Labour has to put forward some policies that are popular with the majority, such as the promise to freeze fuel prices for 20 months. Modest as they are, they are (re)nationalising the energy companies would be far more popular, over 70% of people support it) these proposals are unpopular with the capitalist class, who object to giving up even the tiniest bit of their gigantic profits.

Big business also correctly fears that a Labour government would be under huge pressure to go further, as workers that have suffered years of austerity demand that a Labour government offers them some relief. It is in this context that Miliband has set out to show big business thatLabour is more ‘reliable’ for them than the Tories. Since then the pro-EU Tories have tried to reassure big business of their own party’s reliability on the issue.

The majority of the British capitalist support remaining in the EU because it is a crucial actor in the ‘periphery’ of the eurozone. The EU capitalist project is fundamentally a series of inter-governmental treaties that treat in the interests of the capitalist classes. Despite the fig leaf of a few workers’ rights, the EU’s directives and treaties push forward the interests of capitalism: deregulation, privatisation and the ‘liberalisation’ of labour markets are the norm.

Defy the directives
The EU has attempted to overcome the limits of developing the productive forces within Europe’s nation states and to enable the different capitalist classes of Europe to compete better with other global capitalist powers and blocs. But, as the Socialist Party has always predicted, capitalism has been proven incapable of overcoming the barriers between states and the antagonisms between the competing ruling classes.

As the late Tony Benn aptly put it, Labour now represents the interests of ‘Great Britain PLC’. This means a Labour government would continue to attack the living standards of the majority, the working class. Meanwhile the passing of the Colloids Review - at the behest of the Tories and the right-wing capitalist media - has destroyed the last vestiges of a voice of the organised working class within the Labour Party.

Working class opposition
Workers in each EU country should demand that their government defy the pro-market, anti-worker EU directives and rulings. As opposed to a capitalist bloc, socialists stand in genuine international solidarity with workers in Europe and across the world to fight for a better future.

The crisis in the eurozone is not over and will enter a new stage, with countries abandoning, or being forced out of the eurozone, or even a breakdown of the EU itself. The Socialist Party campaigns for the working class to have its own independent position: no to the bosses’ EU - for a socialist Europe.

Exit the EU on the basis of socialist policies
Reject EU treaties and policies that privatise our public services. Yes to the NHS as a publicly owned, nationalised healthcare service free at the point of delivery – No to the EU-US Trade Agreement. Reverse the privatisation of Royal Mail – No to EU postal services liberalisation

No to public spending cuts – whether they come from politicians in Brussels or Britain

Defend and develop sustainable manufacturing, agriculture and fishing industries in Britain

Repeal anti-trade union rulings by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the EU rules which undermine collective agreements, workers’ conditions, pensions and pay

Blame the bosses and bankers for the crisis, not immigrants. No to racism and the anti-immigrant solidarity of working people

No to EU militarisation and an EU army

Yes to restoring democratic powers to EU member states

Replace unequal EU trade deals with fair trade that benefits developing nations

Scrap EU rules designed to stop member states from implementing independent economic policies. Keep Britain out of the eurozone

Socialist Party

European Parliament - no friend of workers

However, he posed even more acute...
The Socialist

Defend education

SOLIDARITY WITH TEACHERS’ STRIKE

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

● Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant, not to academics and ‘Free schools’!
● A socialist NHS to provide for everyone’s health needs – fees 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.

ENVIRONMENT

● A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.
● 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.
● Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

RANTS

● Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
● Reject ‘Workfare’. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without computers.

NEW WORKERS’ PARTY

● For a new massa 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!

Solidarity price £2

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Issue 803

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Martin Powell-Davies

Member of NUT national executive

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