



Support striking Doncaster Care UK workers

The Con-Dems are destroying our NHS. Alongside cutting 5,000 jobs, their privatisation drive threatens the very existence of a national health service. Health union Unison warns that the government is planning to privatise 30 hospitals driven into 'financial difficulties' through cuts, profiteering pharmaceutical companies and rip-off PFI schemes. The Mirror revealed in February that private health firms with Tory links have been awarded contracts worth nearly £1.5 billion. Prominent among them is Care UK. But while the Tories promote these blood-sucking parasites, workers are fighting them. This speech was made by a striking Doncaster Care UK worker at the miners' strike 30th anniversary rally in Edlington, Doncaster on 5 April.

" I'm proud to say I was born in Edlo. I was a teenager in the miners' strike and I can remember the hardship a lot of people suffered because of it. But I also remember how everyone stuck together and looked out for each other. It's things like that that

makes me proud to be part of this today.

Just as the mining community fought Thatcherism against pit closures, we long-time NHS employees are standing up against the privatisation of the NHS. Unfortunately for us who care for people

with learning disabilities it is already too late. The contract was up for tender and the mainly Labour council awarded the contract to the inappropriately named company Care UK. Shame on Doncaster council!

Within just a few weeks of taking the contract over, they informed us that for the contract to be sustainable, reductions in our terms and conditions would have to be made. For some of us this would mean losing £500 a month, £6,000 a year, so some are facing losing their homes.

What this company has neglected to make public is that a substantial part of their budget goes straight to their shareholders in profit. Can't pay their staff, but can pay their shareholders!

These people are not just making profit off of us workers but are making profit off of the most

vulnerable people in our society, our service users. This is shameful in any civilised society.

We have been striking and will return to the picket line, standing united. We are doing this with a heavy heart but we are resolute that what we are doing is morally the right thing to do.

The support we have had from the unions and other affiliations and the general public has been overwhelming, and all recognise we are fighting against the greed of those profiteering capitalists who have no conscience whatsoever.

What we haven't had is any recognition from any of our local MPs. No acknowledgment of our plight. [Doncaster Labour MP Caroline Flint was in the crowd]. The leader of the Opposition, Doncaster MP Ed Miliband, has not uttered a word of support.

Shame on them!"

The Care UK workers, members of Unison are taking further strike action over Easter, with a demonstration on 19 April. Please send messages of support to admin@unison-dab.org.uk and donations/cheques made out to: "Doncaster, District & Bassetlaw Health Branch" and send to: Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster, DN4 5GJ.

the **Socialist**

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what we think

Ending MPs' expenses scandal requires socialist change

To anyone living outside the Westminster bubble it seems incredible that David Cameron actually believed he could save the career of the Tory MP and now ex-cabinet minister Maria Miller by offering her his 'warm support'. In five years his memory of the hot fury of the working class over the expenses scandal had clearly faded. It has now been brought back with a jolt. Even before the current scandal broke an opinion poll at the end of 2013 asked people what they felt about MPs. The biggest number - 47% - answered with one word: angry! Maria Miller sums up why.

Housing crisis

At a time when the housing crisis in Britain is becoming overwhelming, with the majority unable to even afford to buy a shoebox and rents sky-rocketing, Miller illegitimately charged the tax-payer £90,000 for her mortgage. She then made over a £1 million profit on selling the house. For this crime she has had to repay a puny £5,800.

The inevitable result was deep-seated anger from the majority of the population, who see that nothing has changed in Westminster since the expenses scandal of 2009. This anger is fed by the contrast between the endless bureaucracy that is faced by the poorest in society compared to the 'anything goes' rules that are applied to MPs. Imagine if a benefit claimant had falsely claimed £9,000 - never mind

£90,000 - they would be locked up and the key thrown away!

The Labour leadership's attacks on Maria Miller were muted, only calling for her resignation when she had already gone. No wonder, the party is also in it up to its neck. Labour was in power when the expenses scandal first erupted and has the most convicted expenses criminals in its ranks.

In the short term anger over expenses has resulted in a further increase in support for Ukip, which is now on 20% in opinion polls, as voters look for a stick with which to beat the establishment MPs. In reality, however, Ukip is one more establishment party, led by stock-brokers and millionaires. Ukip's record on expenses is also 'more of the same'. In 2009 Ukip leader Nigel Farage admitted he had claimed over £2 million worth of expenses as an MEP. Ukip MEPs claimed £800,000 in expenses in 2012 alone.

What is urgently needed is a party that really is 'of a different type'. Never has the need for a mass party of the working class been so clear. Like the socialist and Marxist MPs in the Socialist Party's predecessor Militant - Dave Nellist, Terry Fields and Pat Wall - MPs we had elected for such a party would only take the average wage of a worker, instead of the current bloated MPs' salaries.

In next month's local elections the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC, www.tusc.org.uk) will be preparing the ground for such a

party by standing candidates across the country in the biggest left-of-Labour challenge in over half a century. TUSC will also be planning a widespread challenge in the general election.

If a mass workers' party existed now it would be able to channel the wave of anger over corrupt MPs and use it to push forward workers' interests. This would include beginning a discussion on how to massively extend the current extremely limited 'parliamentary democracy'.

Socialists and the labour movement fought for and defend the democratic rights that exist. Our forebears made the greatest sacrifices for the right to vote, a free press, trade union rights and representative systems at local and national level which reflect 'the will of the people'. But the present parliament is a million miles away from this ideal.

Rich moguls

The press and media are controlled by a handful of rich moguls with the voice of ordinary people drowned out by a cacophony in favour of the 'market', which has utterly failed the majority of the population. Three almost identical parties - the Tories, Liberal Democrats and also Labour - are mired in corruption, and offer absolutely no way forward.

Parliament itself, with fixed five-yearly elections and MPs on bloated salaries and expenses, is completely unrepresentative. The pioneers for democracy in Britain, the Char-

tists - the first independent workers' party in history - demanded annual parliaments. The election of any representative for five years to an institution like the present parliament is inherently undemocratic. These MPs are not accountable to the constituents who elect them, other than once every five years, and even then their record is never properly put under scrutiny.

Socialists support all democratic rights, including voting for parliament. We would fight along with working people against any attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government as happened in Chile in 1973 and Spain in the 1930s.

But a more representative and accountable system than we have at present is necessary. The House of Lords should be abolished; there should be a single assembly which combines the legislative and executive powers hitherto divided in Britain.

Members should be elected for a maximum of two years with votes at age 16. MPs could then be elected on the basis of democratic local assemblies with the right of recall by their constituents, and should receive the salary of a skilled worker. Democracy like this would lead to greater participation by the mass of the population. A change in the electoral system to proportional representation would also be an improvement.

Compared to the present undemocratic set-up - which rests power in the hands of an elite - the above changes would represent a big step

forward. In the absence of a mass workers' party in Britain today, such demands and slogans are probably in advance of what most, even working class, people would support at the present time. But the nausea arising from the revelations of thievery by parliament and parliamentarians is preparing the ground for the adoption of such bold demands in the future.

In the meantime, the salary of MPs must be cut to the level of the average wage. Where expenses are needed, they should be strictly necessary ones only - similar to what some building workers and others are paid as they travel the country in pursuit of their work. Moreover, rather than the MPs checking and auditing their own expenses, why not scrutiny committees made up of workers, the unemployed, those forced onto benefits and small shopkeepers and business people threatened by the present recession?

The MPs' expenses scandal will lead to recognition that a system based on production for profits for the few - the millionaires and billionaires - rather than for social needs of the majority, the millions, inevitably produces the kind of rottenness and corruption that we are witnessing.

We defend all democratic rights - which must also include today the abolition of the vicious anti-trade union laws inherited from Thatcher. But at the same time we aim for a huge extension of democracy, for a democratic socialist state, not the truncated 'elected dictatorship' which parliament is at present.

Help the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition offer a no-cuts alternative on 22 May

New candidates take TUSC within sight of BBC's 'fair coverage' threshold

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has approved a further swathe of no-cuts candidates to stand under the TUSC umbrella in the local council elections taking place on 22 May.

As the Socialist goes to press 539 candidates have been approved by the steering committee - with the number of councils with TUSC candidates also increasing.

Most importantly, with more applications arriving even since the latest approvals broke the 500 barrier, TUSC is now less than 100 candidates short of reaching the BBC's threshold for 'fair media coverage' in the official election period. The full list of the candidates so far, presented in a regional breakdown can be found at www.tusc.org.uk, including the latest applications agreed.

There is still time to come forward as a candidate. The official nomination papers have to be handed in by Thursday 24 April. That means nomination forms could be collected from your council next week, with plenty of opportunities remaining to get ten electors in the ward where you want to stand to sign your form (there are guidance notes for TUSC candidates and agents on electoral procedures on the TUSC website). Reports have come in that candi-



Campaigning in east London photo Martin Reynolds

dates have got their forms signed in just an hour's door-knocking, such is the anger at the establishment politicians.

The other formal requirement to appear on the ballot paper as a TUSC candidate is to get a 'Certificate of Authorisation' from TUSC. That means completing the council candidate authorisation application form available on the Candidates page of the TUSC

website and e-mailing it as soon as possible to Clive Heemskerk, the TUSC national election agent, at cliveheemskerk@socialistparty.org.uk

This is also a political requirement for TUSC, signifying that prospective candidates have signed up to the TUSC Local Elections Policy Platform, which commits candidates, among other points, to oppose all cuts to council jobs, servic-



...and in Southampton photo Southampton SP



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport union, leading members of other unions and socialists including the Socialist Party. This May TUSC plans to stand hundreds of no-cuts candidates in the council elections against all the austerity parties voting through the destruction of jobs and services. Could you be a candidate? See tusc.org.uk

es, pay and conditions if they were elected. The full platform is available on the website.

It remains to be seen what the BBC would describe as 'fair media

coverage' for this platform, a bold alternative to the austerity consensus. But getting TUSC at least to the negotiating stage is now within reach.

Health workers vote to fight government pay cuts

Neil Cafferky

Unison health conference has overwhelmingly passed a resolution from the Service Group Executive calling for a strike ballot over pay. The government's pay freeze has meant that 60% of NHS workers will get no pay rise this year, including 70% of nurses.

There was a real mood to fight within the conference. In one particularly emotional speech, a member from Scotland said through tears that he was getting phone calls from his daughter saying there's no food in the house. She'd also spot-

What do you tell your daughter when you're so low paid you can't afford to feed the family?

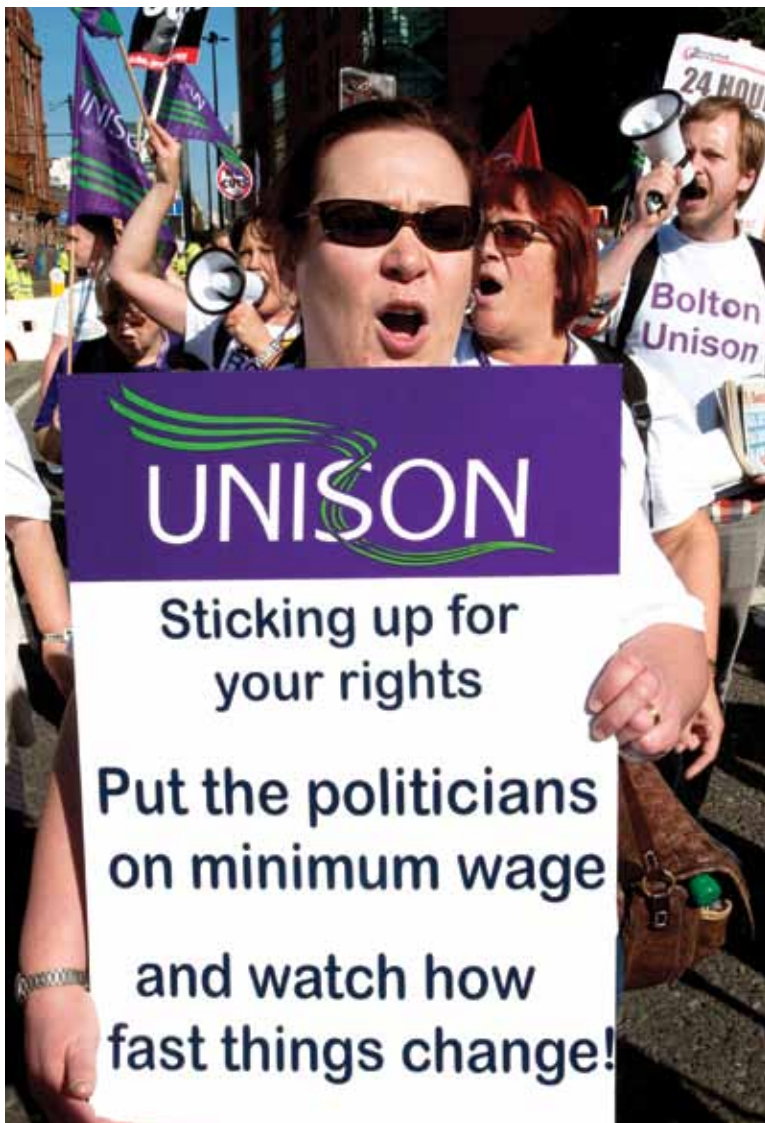
ted emails from Wonga and she'd asked him why he was using Wonga: "Aren't Wonga a bad company?"

He asked what do you tell your daughter when you're so low paid you can't afford to feed the family?

The union hasn't named a date for when the ballot will begin but they are looking at organising a long campaign among the membership. To kick-start the campaign there will be a national day of protest on 5 June across the NHS. This will include lunchtime demos and protests.

Five Socialist Party members spoke in favour of action. Gary Freeman from Nottinghamshire health said there should be the widest possible coordination with other unions: "Let's get back what we've lost over two years".

Roger Davey from Wiltshire and Avon said: "The credibility of our trade union is at stake. We have no option but to fight. We're facing a global



Health workers are demanding strike action over pay photo Paul Mattsson

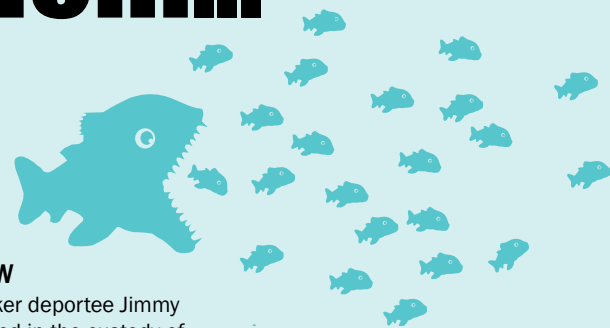
capitalist crisis and years of austerity and stagnation unless we fight. What will our pay packets look like in ten years if we do not fight?

"There's no future without a struggle. We should seek the widest coordination with other unions and sustained action. We can defeat the government and austerity. That can give hope, not just to our members but to millions of workers in this country."

In a forceful speech, Alan Manley from Tayside insisted: "We must not repeat the mistakes of the pensions' dispute. I don't want to be marched up the hill and marched back down again having lost a day's pay".

●The Unite union also says it will be consulting its 100,000 members in the health service over possible strike action over the Con-Dems' 'divide and rule' pay offer.

Them...



Cash cow

Asylum seeker deportee Jimmy Mubenga died in the custody of G4S security guards; armed forces personnel had to be drafted in to secure the London Olympic Games after G4S failed to provide enough stewards; money was paid to G4S and Serco companies for prisoners' electronic tags who were no longer wearing them and in some cases were dead! If social justice played any part following these crimes then G4S's directors would be languishing in jail. Fortunately for them, the government is now considering lifting the bar on G4S bidding for new public service contracts.

Down and out

Almost four million families who rent or pay a mortgage have so little in savings that they are just one pay cheque away from eviction according to housing charity Shelter. Some 2.4 million of these have no savings at all.

Rich justice

Rail fares evasion can lead to hefty fines and a criminal record, even for a £1 'outstanding fare'. But the criminal justice system appears more lenient if you happen to be a City executive and dodge £42,550 in fares over a number of years. In this case the dodger simply paid the outstanding bill plus £450 costs and walked away, a free man.

Deeper in debt

Work hard in your studies, go to university and graduate with £67,000 of debt! That is increasingly the prospect for many students due to sky-high fees and no living maintenance grant. The Sutton Trust estimates that graduates will end up repaying a total of £66,897 on average. In fact

some will never clear their education debts after a lifetime of work. Moreover, the Con-Dems' hike in university tuition fees to £9,000 a year has also increased the cost to the public purse due to unrepayable loans.

Buy to profit

Research by the GMB trade union and the Daily Mirror has revealed that one-third of all council housing sold under the Tories 'right-to-buy' legislation in the 1980s is now in the hands of private landlords. In the south London borough of Kingston 46% of ex-council properties are now owned by private landlords, 40% in Nottingham and 37% in Leeds, despite tens of thousands of families languishing on council house waiting lists.

Super-rich investors own large portfolios of ex-council housing stock via offshore holding firms operating in tax havens such as the Channel Islands.

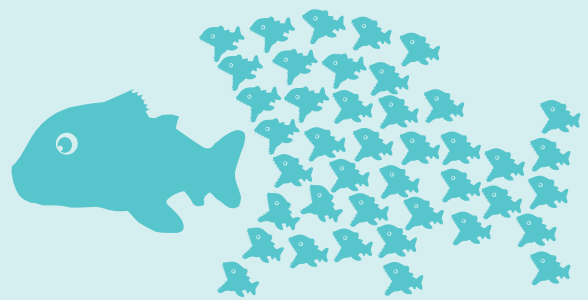
The son of Ian Gow, former Tory parliamentary aide to Margaret Thatcher who oversaw the sell-off legislation, now owns a swathe of such properties which generates a large rental income.

Perfect smog

A Public Health England report found that, 3,389 deaths in London and 4,034 in the South East, linked to air pollution in 2010 - mainly due to nitrogen dioxide emissions from road traffic and particulates in diesel fuel. 148 schools in London are situated within 150 metres of roads carrying 10,000 or more vehicles a day.

These alarming facts didn't stop reactionary Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson enraging Londoners during the recent smog by blithely commenting that, as a "leading connoisseur" of air quality around the capital, he found it to be "perfectly fine".

...& Us



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Con-Dems escalate housing crisis

James Kerr

TUSC candidate for Telegraph Hill ward, Lewisham

'I don't know how I'm going to be able to afford to live in London'. This phrase, is being heard across the capital as workers, especially the younger generations, struggle to cope with sky-high rents, out-of-reach house prices and a shortage of social housing.

Is it any wonder when the Right-move property website reported asking prices for some properties in Brent had risen by as much as 7.3% in a single month?

And to top this, last week, a garage in Camberwell next to an industrial estate - with 'development opportunities', according to Southwark council - sold for an eye-watering £550,000!

These prices are mirrored in the rental market with more workers being forced further out of Inner

London as landlords cash in and the super-rich flood the housing market with cash.

As this crisis develops we ask - 'what is the solution?' The Con-Dem government's 'help-to-buy' scheme was hailed on its launch a year ago but is a drop in the ocean when it comes to housing need. Moreover, this programme is actually fuelling the housing price bubble.

Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson's 'First Steps' website advertises shared ownership for those on 'low and modest incomes'. From a sample of 75 homes only four would be affordable to a London firefighter, showing how many skilled workers are priced out of even the so-called affordable housing options.

A mass programme of council house building is required to deal with the root of the problem, but will the main parties deliver the goods?

In my borough of Lewisham there are over 17,700 people on the waiting list for social housing. The La-

bour-run council proposes to build a mere 500 council homes over the next four years, not even scratching the surface of the problem.

Contrast that to TUSC candidate for Mayor of Lewisham, and former Socialist Party councillor in Telegraph Hill, Chris Flood. His proposal is to build 18,000 homes; launching a mass campaign in Lewisham to demand the money necessary from central government, and creating jobs for the unemployed.

Chris is also raising the call for rent controls and a register of landlords to make Lewisham an affordable place to live, not a cash cow for rip-off landlords and lettings agents.

Up and down the country the issue of housing is being discussed on the doorsteps but only TUSC is providing a fighting political solution.

If you want to fight for decent homes why not support TUSC by voting, getting involved and standing as a no-cuts candidate?

What we saw

On YouTube: 2014 election Dave Nellist on TUSC socialist policies



Dave Nellist on BBC TV's The Politics Show, talking about the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) electoral challenge and the socialist alternative to austerity

Gains for left on NUT executive

Martin Powell-Davies

Member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) national executive

The election results for the NUT national executive for 2014-16 have seen a further loss of support for the 'Broadly Speaking' (BS) group on the right of the union. Just as significantly, the two gains for the NUT Left were made by supporters of Lanac, the Local Associations National Action Campaign.

Phil Clarke won the Kent and East Sussex seat. Phil's victory, alongside the election of Jane Nellist in the West Midlands, the re-election of Peter Glover in Merseyside/Cheshire and my successful campaign to hold my seat in Inner London, means that there will be four Socialist Party teachers on the new NUT executive. They will form part of a bloc of around eight consistent supporters of Lanac together with others who may support our calls for escalating action. Liam Conway

won the NEC seat in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire

Our successes could have been even greater. As well as Liam and Phil's victories, Lanac supporters came close to winning further seats from the BS group in both Cheshire/Merseyside and in the Manchester area.

Lanac was formed at the 2012 NUT annual conference by delegates angered at the lack of a clear calendar of strike action to defeat the attacks on teachers' pensions. As the union has continued to hesitate in the face of further attacks on pay and conditions, Lanac has continued to build support.

These election results reflect a growing mood among NUT members that the union has to act far more decisively to defend teachers and education. They also suggest that the outcome of June's general secretary election, which will be a contest between myself and the existing NUT GS, Christine Blower, is certainly not a foregone conclusion.



In brief

Pay victory

Low-paid hospital workers in west London have scored an important victory. 150 GMB members working as domestic, catering, portering and other staff working for Medicrest, part of Compass, were on £6.31 an hour.

After eleven days of well-supported strike action they have won an increase to £7.31 an hour from 1 April and two additional days leave.

From April 2015 pay rates will be harmonised across the health trust so the workers should be on £9.10 to £9.30 an hour – the same rates as NHS staff and those transferred from the NHS to Compass under the TUPE agreement.

Site deaths scandal



There has been a significant rise in construction industry deaths. This is happening in London particularly as the amount of building activity increases. Baroness Donaghy, former government advisor on the sector, has pointed out that this increase in deaths and injuries is at the same time as the Health and Safety Executive has had a 35% cut in funding. Only 10% of construction workers are trade union members and the industry has relied on casual workers to maximise profits. The urgent need to campaign to organise sites, eradicate the blacklist and fight for proper health and safety provision was underlined by a death in central London on 14 April. A building worker was killed when a floor collapsed under him at the former US Navy site in Grosvenor Square. Another worker was injured. This comes at the same time as construction workers are having to fight attempts by the big construction companies to take advantage of a change in tax legislation to worsen workers' pay and conditions. But workers have been walking off sites in the battle to be employed directly on PAYE terms – a tactic which has proved successful in many cases so far.

PCS



As well as the elections for national officers and the national executive of the PCS, there are elections for the union's group executives. The Department for Work and Pensions is the biggest group in the union and the Left Unity slate, of which the Socialist Party is a part is available on www.leftunity.org.uk. Ballot papers should be distributed by 29 April and must be returned by 9 May.

Strikers shut cinema in battle for living wage

James Ivens

"The Dude minds, man! This just won't stand!" Workers at the Ritzy Picturehouse in London are fed up with poverty wages. "The Dude" quoted on their placards is the hard-partying protagonist in cult film The Big Lebowski. Their strike on 11 April was as much a festival as a picket line. The Dude would have been proud.

Members of media and entertainment union Bectu are fighting for the London Living Wage of £8.80 an

hour. They are paid a measly £7.24. Picturehouse Cinemas, their employer, is part of the Cineworld chain – the largest in Europe by number of screens. Bosses plan to spend £20 million opening new cinemas. So why can't they afford an extra £1.56 for their staff?

The Ritzy is known for the creative events made possible by its workers. They brought the same passion to industrial action. Parents could not attend the Ritzy's popular, baby-friendly daytime screening. Reps arranged musicians and comedians to entertain them outside instead – in-

cluding "Anti-Dühring Battalion", a Socialist Party member.

Strikers danced in placard-waving conga lines round Brixton's Windrush Square. The cinema was shut all day. The party atmosphere lasted well into the night.

Backing for the campaign has been enormous. One rep said he was "more than snowed in" by messages of support. Socialist film-maker Ken Loach and writer Irvine Welsh have publicly expressed solidarity. The campaign's Twitter and Facebook pages have seen substantial growth in followers. Customers constantly

ask workers about progress.

Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary of public sector union PCS, visited in the morning. He discussed linking strike action with Bectu officials. Local trade unionists and Socialist Party members supported throughout the day. The Brixton Bugle newspaper has reported the backing of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Ritzy Pickets, in turn, sent solidarity to the Care UK and Lambeth College strikes.

Workers have planned a series of escalating actions. On Friday 18 April, they will walk out again, and stay out on Easter Saturday too. The struggle is becoming something of a cause célèbre. Poverty pay just will not stand, man.

The Socialist Party says:

- No to poverty wages: £10 an hour living wage for all!
- Link up the struggles: strikes should coordinate for maximum impact
- Spread the dispute: campaign to unionise other Brixton and Cineworld workplaces to fight for the living wage

Messages of support should go to ritzylivingwage@gmail.com

Let down by Welsh Labour

A Unison and Socialist Party member in Wales

Bridgend council has withdrawn itself from national pay-bargaining – deciding unilaterally not to honour any agreed pay increase for 2014. Socialist Party members in Unison Cymru offer our solidarity and full support to our brothers and sisters in Unison and other local authority unions in Bridgend and call for all trade unionists to get behind them.

Once again this calls into question our union's support for Labour and exposes Welsh Labour claims to be more supportive of trade unionists than the rest of the Labour Party.

It also shows that our union's advocacy of 'partnership-working' with the public sector employers in Wales and the Welsh government is fundamentally flawed. Welsh Labour councils are leading the way in attacking our members' pay, terms and conditions. The Welsh government, in partnership with the employers, is doing the same in the NHS, as they aim to tear up 'Agenda for Change' (the current set of pay, terms and conditions for health workers). The partners we should be

working with are service users fighting to defend provision threatened with cuts.

The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, is Assembly Member for Bridgend but has washed his hands of any responsibility for attacks on workers in his own constituency.

The only council workers getting the nationally negotiated 1% pay rise in Bridgend would be staff on the bottom two spinal column points of the pay structure, because if they didn't they would be paid less than the national minimum wage!

I'm glad Unison Cymru is backing our members in Bridgend and calling for a ballot for industrial action if the threat is not immediately withdrawn. But why does our union continue to fund this party and its Pontius Pilate of a First Minister?

Break with Labour! Fight all cuts alongside service users!

Please sign the workers' petition calling for the local authority to overturn this decision: www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/cllr-mej-nott-we-want-bridgend-council-to-reverse-its-decision-to-withdraw-from-national-pay-bargaining

RMT: Put the tube strike back on and escalate



An RMT member

The six weeks of talks since the tube strikes early this year have exposed London Underground (LU). It continues to demand 953 job losses and another 900 front-line jobs will become managers. Every ticket office will be closed. There will be massive downgrading of work, loss of pay and displacement. LU has also tendered for driverless trains. There is no point in further talks without significant movement from LU. There is now a need to put the strike action back on

and escalate it.

There is huge public opposition to the £4.2 billion in cuts and the resulting plans to close ticket offices and cut jobs and pay.

This was revealed during the two-day tube Strike in February and in the aftermath of Bob Crow's untimely passing away.

The majority of working class people and even big sections of the middle class who have been hammered by the Con-Dem austerity and the bosses' offensive will support workers when they take action to defend themselves.

We now have to go out and win support for further strikes among our members. We also have to restate our determination to defend those like Mark Harding who have been victimised for nothing other than carrying out their right to withhold their labour in a legal strike.

The question in front of our members is to escalate the strike action, otherwise we will have to pay the consequences in job and pay cuts, casualisation and driverless trains. The future of all workers on LU is now on the line. It's time to fight again until we win!

Election appeal: help us make history

Lenny Shail

In Coventry 19 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing in the council elections. Over 20,000 leaflets announcing the campaign across the city have already been delivered by Socialist Party members and supporters, trade union activists and socialist voters, keen to do their bit for the TUSC challenge.

The five key demands of the campaign call for an end to austerity and the bedroom tax, a £10 an hour minimum wage, thousands of new homes and jobs and an end to the parking charges at Coventry's Walsgrave Hospital, including scrapping PFI and all privatisation in the NHS.

The launch meeting last month of over 65 people reflected local backing for the campaign. Dave Nellist is seeking re-election in St Michael's Ward.

Many people just want confirmation from our canvassers that Dave is standing again before instantly giving their support. On seeing us at the door some have gone straight back into their house so they can make a donation to the campaign - from a few quid or a tenner to over £100.

Working class people in Coventry,

and St Michael's ward in particular, have understood what is at stake and are responding in all ways they can to support the campaign.

Dave Nellist is also standing in the West Midlands for No2EU, Yes to Workers' Rights - a joint list for the European elections with members of the RMT rail union and the Communist Party of Britain.

Donate

Can you help the Socialist Party make history? Over 500 TUSC candidates are now registered to stand in the local elections - the biggest left-of-Labour challenge since the end of World War Two.

We have launched an election appeal for £15,000 to help us finance both this campaign and No2EU. A proportion of the appeal will also go to assist the newly-formed Workers And Socialist Party in South Africa to stand candidates to challenge the pro-big business policies of the governing ANC in the general election there.

You can donate via the 'Election appeal' button on our website or telephone 020 8988 8777 to pay by card. Please make cheques payable to the Socialist Party and send to Election Appeal 2014, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.



Dave Nellist, second from right, and some of the campaign team in Coventry photo Lenny Shail

Why I joined the Socialist Party Disgusted at politicians' big business links

Jason Fawley

I work in the Tesco distribution centre in Doncaster. My wife is a former NHS support worker, now privatised to the employment of Care UK.

My wife and her colleagues have been transferred under TUPE regulations which apparently means nothing to Care UK as the company is trying to bully them into taking a vast cut to their pay and worsening of terms and conditions. They say this is to make the service "sustainable" - in other words to add £1.2 million to their already healthy profits (£120 million last year alone).

To me and my family the £550 a month pay cut Care UK wanted my wife to take was the difference between staying afloat and losing our home. In response, the workers voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action.

I decided to do a bit of research about Care UK and quickly discovered that a former CEO and his wife were Tory party donors and that Care UK was being given NHS contracts all over the country doing the very same thing as they are trying to do in Doncaster.

I then discovered that Stuart Rose,



Jason's message for Miliband photo Alistair Tice

the newly appointed NHS advisor, is on the board of Bridgepoint, the private equity company that now owns Care UK and other private health-care companies.

I have been in touch with Ros Jones, the Labour mayor of Doncaster, and numerous politicians to state the clear conflict of interest. All these contracts should be inves-

tigated and torn up, with criminal prosecution where necessary. Sadly this was to no avail.

I then discovered the links between MPs and Lords and health-care companies. I quickly realised that they - the capitalist politicians and their business pals - are the ones "in it together".

I was on my own with nobody to turn to. But on the picket line I met like-minded people with a conscience who are also disgusted by the political elite and their business interests.

So I joined the Socialist Party and decided to stand up and fight back by putting myself forward as a TUSC candidate in the May local elections. I, for one, having paid tax all my life to help buy every hospital, bed, X-ray and dialysis machine, do not want to see it being given away to Tory donors and MPs who then attack the already trained staff they have been handed on a plate.

More cuts and another resignation in Southampton

We've had another busy week in Coxford, Southampton, delivering 6,000 copies of anti-cuts councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas' newsletter, 'Coxford Call'.

This month's has highlighted news of the re-opening of Oaklands Pool and set the record straight on who fought to save it.

Desperate to get rid of Keith, a critical voice of the Labour-controlled cuts council in Southampton, Labour leaflets have resorted to claiming Labour councillor for Coxford, Sally Spicer saved the pool. This ignores the blatant fact that she and every other Labour councillor voted to close it!

No wonder so many people have been enthusiastic in their determination to see Keith re-elected as someone who "does what he says". Keith and Don have also highlighted the latest attack from the Labour council on council tenants with a 7% rise in rents.

Our recent canvassing has had to highlight yet more cuts to the area with news of attacks on



On the door step in Southampton

Hampshire Fire Service.

Keith reported: "I have contacted the FBU and given them my full support. We have worked together closely over a long time to protect the safety of our community and will continue to do so."

As our campaign continues to grow in support, news of another Labour councillor resigning means one more TUSC candidate for the list in May!

Nick Chaffey

Anti-cuts campaign agrees to support election candidates

Kevin Corran

Salford Against Cuts secretary

On 3 April, 150 attended a Salford Against Cuts (SAC) public meeting to discuss the devastating cuts to services for vulnerable people proposed by Labour-led Salford council. There were representatives from all the services under attack, including mental health, care, youth, homelessness, welfare rights and transport for vulnerable adults.

Steve Cullen (United Service Users Committee) described how mental health services continue to be under attack, and how resisting these attacks in an organised campaign has won victories over the last

couple of years.

George Tapp (Salford Pensioners Association) talked about the impact on the elderly. This was supported on numerous occasions by carers who talked about how the Care on Call service, which is under threat, makes their lives tolerable.

The meeting agreed to organise a rally at Salford Civic Centre on Saturday 17 May.

The meeting also voted to support anti-cuts candidates in the local elections in May - a motion put forward by Steve Cullen, who will be standing as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate. Three other people at the meeting also signed up to stand for TUSC.

Ed Miliband, MP for Doncaster North and leader of the No Opposition, remains silent in his own backyard. Not a single Doncaster Labour councillor or MP has offered any support, let alone been down to the picket line.

So TUSC has organised a protest lobby of Ed Miliband's next surgery on Thursday 24 April asking: "Where are you? Who's side are you on?"

TUSC is standing ten candidates in Doncaster in the May council elections including four directly related to the Care UK strike.

On the same day, TUSC supporters around the country will be protesting at Care UK offices to increase the pressure on Don't Care UK to withdraw the new contracts and maintain NHS terms and conditions.

Protest Lobby of Ed Miliband

3.30pm, Thursday 24 April

Bentley Library, Chapel Street, Bentley, Doncaster, DN5 0DE



Socialism and internationalism

40 YEARS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

International solidarity is a vital aspect of the struggle for socialism. The Socialist Party fights for a world free of poverty, war and inequality. But that requires more than just supporting workers in struggle in other countries, important though that is. We need

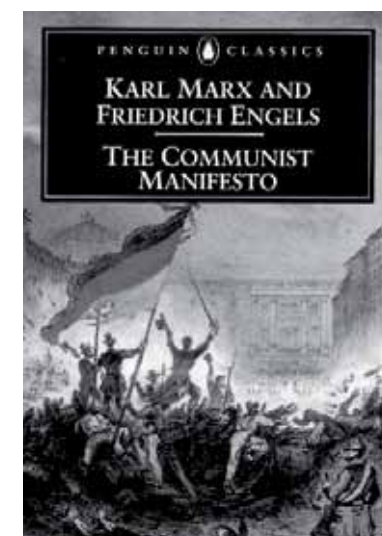
to build a powerful international organisation, capable of helping the working class to replace the capitalist system with democratic socialism. To aid this task the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) was founded at a meeting of 46 comrades from 12 countries

on 21 April 1974. Today it spans 48 countries on every continent. **ROBERT BECHERT** of the International Secretariat of the CWI, one of those at its founding meeting, explains the need for an international in the 21st century.

The First International, founded in 1864, brought together the different forces in the then newly arising workers' movement and helped give them a firm political basis

Workers of all countries, Unite!

In 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained in the Communist Manifesto that "modern industry has established the world market... The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country... In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations."



that it was necessary to fight to free the workers' movement from this influence. The victory of the October revolution in Russia in 1917 transformed the situation. The German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg summed up the feeling of many activists and workers around the world that the Bolsheviks, "Lenin and Trotsky and their friends" set "an example to the workers of the world".

The example was both political - programme, strategy and tactics - and organisational, in the sense of building workers' organisations that were willing and able to fight to end capitalism. The subsequent struggle in the workers' movement was fierce, sometimes bloody as the pro-capitalist elements sought to drive out, and sometimes even murder, the left.

Internationally this split was seen in the 1919 formation of the Communist International, an organisation then dedicated to overthrowing capitalism. It had a mass base in many countries as the events of 1917 in Russia sparked a mass revolutionary wave that travelled around the world. However the Communist International did not fulfil its early promise.

Stalinism falls

The defeat of post-World War One revolutions in Europe led to isolation of the Soviet Union. In post-war conditions of poverty, exhaustion and underdevelopment an increasingly privileged strata was, under the false banner of "protecting the revolution", able to gradually consolidate its power and suppress democratic rights.

This was the basis for the rise of the Stalinist dictatorship which increasingly tried to avoid international upheavals or revolutions that could disrupt its rule. Thus, desperate to avoid war, it suddenly in 1939 signed a deal with Hitler, which included sending raw materials and returning German anti-fascist refugees to Nazi Germany.

But this did not, as Leon Trotsky wrote at the time, prevent a Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. Later, allied with the US and Britain, Stalin decided in 1943 to dissolve the Communist International as a way of showing that his regime was not seeking to overthrow capitalism internationally but rather seeking an accommodation with the main capitalist powers.

Trotsky, the co-leader with Vladimir Lenin of the Russian Revolution, who in the 1920s led the opposition to the rise of the Stalinist system, had already drawn the conclusion in 1933 that the Communist International was no longer capable of leading the struggle against capitalism. This was after the Nazis came to power in what was probably the worst defeat that the workers' movement has ever suffered.

Thus, once again, the question of building a genuine international was posed. However, while Trotsky raised the banner and programme of a Fourth International in the 1930s, initially it was only in Ceylon/Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Bolivia that it attracted large forces, although in the 1930s and 1940s its activists played important roles in struggles in other countries. During the more difficult political period after the Second World War, political and organisational disagreements led to divisions within the Trotskyist movement. It was out of this development that the CWI was formed. Since then it has grown as individuals and groups have joined with us in the work to build an international socialist movement that can transform the globe.

In striving to achieve this aim we do not see past events as dead history. On the contrary, while paying tribute to past courageous working class struggles, we aim to learn, and apply, the real lessons of these events in the battles of today and tomorrow.

Since the beginning of the 20th century every decade has witnessed revolutions as the working and poor masses attempt to end the oppression and exploitation they suffer under capitalism. There have also been mass struggles, counter-revolutions and mighty, world changing, developments.

The past 40 years have been no exception. A mere four days after the CWI's formation, 48 years of military and dictatorial rule in Portugal ended with the 25 April revolution. A few months later the Greek military junta collapsed. But history does not develop in a straight line. In both countries the ruling classes were able to survive to defend their system mainly because the mass movements that threatened them did not have a concrete strategy of how to replace capitalism, and a leadership prepared to lead that battle.



CWI Pakistan on International Womens' Day

Capitalist crisis

The past 25 years have been complicated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the other Stalinist states. Being ruled by a privileged totalitarian elite meant that these states could not be regarded as socialist. However, the fact that these states rested on a planned, nationalised non-capitalist economy meant that their very existence proved that capitalism was not the only possible system.

The post-1989 collapse of these states into capitalism was utilised by the ruling classes in their counter-offensive after the radicalisation of the 1960s to 1980s to ideologically claim that there was no alternative to capitalism. This helped accelerate the rightward, pro-capitalist move in much of the labour movement.

But since the 2008 onset of the latest crisis in global capitalism we have entered a new world period. In many countries, especially the main imperialist ones, capitalism means living standards have fallen or are still falling. However, an important feature today is that a combination of globalisation and communications' innovation has strengthened an international consciousness.

Growing numbers see the questions of the economy, war and peace, and the environment as international and also as tied to capitalism, or at least to the domination of the giant financial, manufacturing and trading corporations. At the same time more people are aware of the possibilities inherent in scientific and technological advances if they are utilised in the interests of the population and the envi-

ronment rather than corporate profit. But most importantly, the experience of austerity and the struggle against it is forging an understanding of the need to change society fundamentally. Thus events like the 2011 overthrow of Egyptian dictator Mubarak had a worldwide impact.

These developments have provided an important potential base for an international socialist organisation, linking together movements around the globe. This century has already seen international movements and struggles, such as the opposition to the US and British led invasion of Iraq, the worldwide Occupy/Indignados protests, the anti-austerity protests in Europe, the impact of the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions and the recent international dock workers' struggle.

Building a new international

But if the workers' movement cannot provide a concrete answer to today's issues then there is the danger that reactionary nationalist 'answers' can gain support, laying the basis for future chauvinist or ethnic conflicts within and between states. One of the objectives that the CWI has set itself is to help arm the workers' movement with a programme and strategy to both win our immediate battles and to remove capitalism's poisonous grip over the world, starting with explaining the central role of the working class.

It was not accidental that the foundation of the CWI took place in a very turbulent and radical period. The long post-World War Two economic upswing was ending. But already, before the 1973 oil crisis that came to symbolise the changing economic situation, Europe and then Latin America had been gripped by revolutionary movements and crises. In Vietnam, US imperialism was facing its first ever military defeat. The Stalinist regimes had been shaken by the 1968 'Prague Spring' in the then Czechoslovakia and the 1970/71 wave of workers' strikes in Poland, movements which were not pro-capitalist but in essence looking towards establishing a workers' democracy.

At that time the trade unions in Britain were at a high point, but not just in terms of numbers. The miners' victories and the 1974 defeat of the Tory government in the "who runs the country" election showed their potential strength.

The onset of a generalised capitalist crisis deepened a political radicalisation in the workers' movement in many countries. The bitter experience of the bloody 1973 overthrow of the Allende government in Chile provoked a wide discussion on how socialism could be achieved and also how to prevent counter-revolution blocking the labour movement's path. It was truly a period of international struggle.

In 1974 the Spanish dictatorship of Franco, faced with a developing revolution, was crumbling. But the Spanish ruling class sought, and obtained, the help of the workers' leaders to contain the revolutionary movement and was able to establish a capitalist democracy.

Against this background Marxists, then around the Militant, the forerunner of



Kshama Sawant's victorious election campaign in Seattle photo Alex Garland

the Socialist, had begun to reach a much wider audience in Britain and in other countries. This was mainly in Europe but also in Sri Lanka where the history of a Trotskyist movement with mass support meant that our ideas found an early echo.

But after the experiences of the Socialist and Communist Internationals, the idea of an international workers' organisation that struggles, that goes beyond solidarity, became less central to the workers' movement. But in the 21st century all these issues are again posed sharply.

Experience has shown, however, that protests alone can win individual demands but not fundamentally change the situation. For that a movement needs a concrete programme of action and a clear-sighted leadership.

Today the capitalists have little optimism. They lack confidence, as revealed in their discussions on whether they can stop funnelling money into many economies via Quantitative Easing (QE) and, if they do, what will be the effects?

These conditions are preparing new periods of struggle and revolution. Generally in this period of crisis most struggles have been defensive, against the ruling classes' onslaught, but in countries which have seen economic growth, like Brazil and China, there have been offensive battles to win improvements.

Opportunities

In Greece the workers have conducted an incredible 36 general strikes since 2010, but have not been successful in stopping the ruling class's onslaught. But this does not rule out a new radicalisation, perhaps initially on the political plane. All the time sections of the movement are drawing lessons from their experience.

The revolutions and mass struggles of recent years have again posed the age old question of how can gains be consolidated and the old order really removed? Egypt is the latest example of where, in February 2011, the working masses potentially had power in their hands but did not fully understand that or see what needed to be done.

Mighty revolutions can almost completely sweep away the old order but, as in

Portugal after 1975, it can come back if the working class does not secure power. Obviously every revolution and struggle has its own characteristics, but in revolutions the general lesson of how the working class and poor in Russia were able to come to, and stay in, power in 1917 is still essential.

Today's situation is similar in some ways to the late 19th century when the mass workers' movement developed. Now it is a question of re-building or building afresh workers' organisations. A complication is that, in many countries, workers have the bitter experience of the decay or collapse of the old workers' organisations, with especially the former social democratic, socialist and communist parties now mostly being transformed into pro-capitalist or totally capitalist organisations.

The CWI is, in many countries, playing a key role in this rebuilding and, where appropriate, arguing that a start must be made to create new political parties of the working class as a step towards building a mass socialist workers' movement. But it is not just propaganda. In Britain, South Africa and Nigeria we have been instrumental in steps being taken to form new parties. In Ireland, the USA and Sweden, CWI comrades currently fight elections under their own banner.

Where left parties exist, like PSol in Brazil and Die LINKE in Germany, CWI comrades are active in them while also arguing what steps need to be taken to further build them as socialist organisations. This is part of our CWI tradition. From our beginning we have not been passive - participating in and initiating struggles, big and small.

But in many ways these first four decades of the CWI are really only a pre-history. We are already in a tumultuous period, everything is either being questioned or soon will be. The experiences of this period of capitalism, the growing environmental crisis, with no future on offer to the vast mass of young people, will produce revolutionary storms. The CWI will play a full part in these events, including the building of a movement that can finally end this brutal, chaotic and unfair capitalist system and make life a pleasure for all.

Founding the Workers And Socialist Party to offer a real working class alternative in South Africa



Socialist Alternative leading the fight against foreclosures in Minneapolis

A Socialist World is Possible: The History of the CWI

by Peter Taaffe

Just £5 (free p&p for readers of the Socialist)

This book, published in 2004 to mark 30 years since the founding of the CWI, is an important contribution to the building of a genuine socialist international organisation.

The first section deals with the tasks facing socialists, and draws a distinction between the outlook and approach of the CWI and other groups that claim to be Trotskyist. The second deals with key events in the CWI's history, based on a speech made by Peter Taaffe in 1997 and containing reports from some of the 36 countries in which the CWI organises.

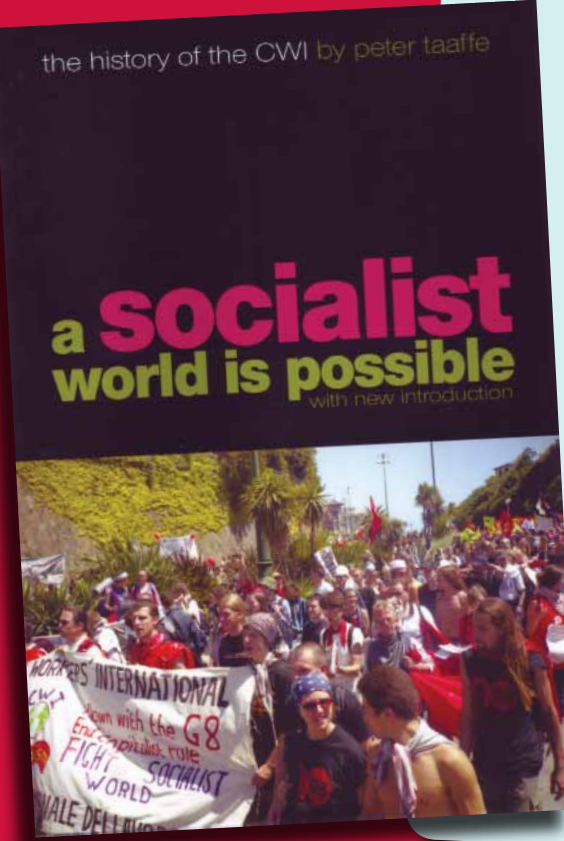
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The revolutions and mass struggles of recent years have again posed the age old question of how can gains be consolidated and the old order really removed?



Beating Bedroom Tax evictions

Basildon

Salford

Dave Murray

Basildon Socialist Party

In a clear signal that the bedroom tax is more trouble than it is worth, even for a mean spirited Tory local authority, Basildon council withdrew 35 out of the 36 possession orders it had listed at Basildon Crown Court on 11 April.

Socialist Party members have been campaigning against the tax in Basildon for over a year, launching BABS (Basildon against the bedroom surcharge) at the public meeting we held as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) election campaign in April 2013.

When we started the campaign we were on our own, with prominent local Labour councillors refusing even to sign our no-evictions petition.

It was only thanks to pressure from campaign members and the threat of an amendment from a breakaway group of independent Labour councillors that the Labour group put forward a no-evictions policy.

The council not only withdrew 35 of the 36 eviction cases, but also paid off the tenants' rent arrears by using discretionary housing payments. In the one case that went to a hearing and resulted in a suspended



possession order against a member of the campaign, the council only managed to get the court to play ball on the grounds that they had paid off that part of the arrears that was due to the tax. A council officer told one of us that to evict someone because of the bedroom tax was "politically unviable".

The struggle is by no means over. It is possible that Labour will gain control of the council in May - but they are at best uncertain friends. There are still over 1,400 tenants in Basildon somehow paying bedroom tax out of their meagre benefits.

Even if the bedroom tax proves to be a dead duck our work will not be done. While Labour is offering austerity with a human face and Ukip are selling austerity with a Hitler moustache, we will be standing for TUSC in the local elections and building a socialist alternative.



photo Hugh Caffrey

At less than 24 hours notice, over 40 people turned up in Walkden, Salford, to prevent an eviction for bedroom tax arrears.

News came through that City

West Housing Association had backed off, and a judge had ordered a month's respite.

A number of anti-fracking campaigners from the Barton Moss

camp supported the picket and speakers from Salford City Unison and Salford against Cuts spoke at a victory rally - if we are needed we'll be back in a month!



Over the last years we have had brilliant May Day displays in the Socialist.

Let's aim to repeat that success in 2014, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the CWI and later in the year the 50th anniversary of the first issue of our party's paper.

Our 'reporters' are actively involved in the struggles they report, from workplaces, communities, universities, schools and colleges.

We report the victories that show that if you fight back you can win - from construction workers' disputes in Britain, to Lonmin miners in South Africa. And the Socialist doesn't just report workers' strikes and the anti-cuts movement, but puts 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.

Greeting price guide: £500 for a whole page; £300 for a half-page; £170 quarter-page; £90 one-eighth; £50 one-sixteenth; £30 1/32; £20 small box. Other rates are available.

Contact: **020 8988 8781** Email suzannebeishon@socialistparty.org.uk

Give your greeting online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday

NUS conference: sip tea or put up a serious fight?

Claire Laker-Mansfield

From 8 to 10 April, the National Union of Students (NUS) met for its national conference. The big debates offered delegates a clear choice: do we want a national union that produces reports, sips tea with MPs and prepares its officers for high flying Labour Party careers, or do we want one which organises a serious fight against the brutal austerity that's devastating education?

Socialist Students members fought for the NUS to take the second of those two potential courses. The two biggest debates were on what position the union should adopt for education funding, and how we fight to achieve it. The right-wing Labour Students-led leadership argued that NUS should accept the logic of students paying for education. They argue that the costs should be levied via a graduate tax



Socialist Students members members on the 2012 NUS demonstration

(in reality, repackaged student debt).

The right wing cynically counterposed widening access to higher education with making it free. But these arguments were taken apart by members of Socialist Students and other left-wing delegates. University can never be fully accessible to all when it comes with at least half a lifetime of debt attached.

Delegates voted against the leadership's proposed policy on education funding and in favour of fighting for free education.

Unfortunately, the left was not able to win the debate on what action NUS should take over the next year. Here, the leadership attempted to put support for the TUC's march in October against organising a national student demonstration.

This created some confusion among delegates, which was increased by mistakes made by other left student groups like the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts. They had allowed the national demo amendment to have its political content removed during compositing, opening the door to the right wing, who made arguments like 'we don't need a demo for demo's sake'.

It is a disgrace that NUS will not be organising any national action in the new academic year.

But policy submitted by Socialist Students on supporting university and college workers taking industrial action was passed overwhelmingly. Edmund Schluessel, a Socialist Students member on the NUS executive introduced the debate, arguing that it was vital for students to stand in solidarity with workers - especially those in education.

On the back of his consistent work on the executive this year, as well as support for Socialist Students, Edmund has been re-elected to his position.

The real fight to defend education will take place not on floor of a conference centre but on campuses and in colleges all over the country. It is disgraceful that the leadership of NUS have abdicated responsibility for leading this fight, and we must continue to re-claim our union. But students cannot afford to wait. We need to build anti-cuts campaigns and groups in every college and on every campus, and we need to link them together nationally.

See www.socialiststudents.org.uk



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India: massive election process could end in turmoil

New party expresses, but cannot solve, major discontent

Clare Doyle
CWI International Secretariat

India is halfway through its five week general election process. There are half a million candidates and more than 800 million potential voters. Nearly a million polling stations will have been opened and closed in phases across the country.

A relatively high turnout of 65% is expected and results will be released on 16 May. It is widely predicted that the rabidly right-wing Narendra Modi, leader of the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), will become prime minister, though without an overall majority in the country's 545 seat lower house of the National Assembly.

The Congress party has headed governments in India for 45 of the last 67 years since independence, often in coalition with various regional and so-called communist parties. Attempting to cling to power, its prime ministerial candidate is Rahul Gandhi - son of former prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, the party's president.

The current prime minister, Manmohan Singh, has appeared incapable of taking decisive action on either economic or social policies. According to a new book by his former 'spin doctor', he has had little or no say in government policy for the past ten years.

On his watch the Indian economy has slowed from quite spectacular growth rates, reaching more than 10% just over three years ago to a projected rate this year of just over 4%. Even while parts of the Indian economy flourished, the mass of the population falls further into poverty. While the number of poor farmers resorting to suicide continues to increase, oligarchs and well-placed politicians continue to rape and pillage - literally!

'Communist' parties

Last year 100 million workers took strike action for two days against crippling inflation. The general election should have been the occasion for the communist parties who were behind this strike to put forward a fighting, anti-capitalist programme including demands for price control, a living minimum wage and public ownership under workers' control of all basic utilities.

The two main 'communist' parties - CPI(M) and CPI - patently fail to conduct an all-out offensive against capitalism and its political representatives.

In the vacuum created, a new political voice has appeared which aims to channel the anger and frustration of working class as well as layers of better-off middle class Indians against the dirty, corrupt politics at national and local level.

The AAP, or Common Man Party, won 28 seats in the Delhi administration last December and held the chief minister's position for 48 days before resigning, unable, as the leaders explained, to carry out the policies they wanted to implement.

More than half of India's population is under 24, one third is under 15. Every third person in an Indian city is aged between 15 and 32. In this election there are 120 million first-time voters. A recent report by the UN commented that there is

a 'vibrancy' among young people "but there is great anger too".

The new generation of voters appears less prepared to accept their 'lot' or be interested in the battles of the past which are used by the two major parties to discredit each other.

Some youth ignore Modi's role in the slaughter of more than a thousand Muslims in 2002 and even his recent inflammatory statements - on Muslim rights, Kashmir's status and nuclear policy.

Many believe Modi's apparent ability to develop a thriving, business dominated, modern economy in his home state of Gujarat can be replicated nationally and bring jobs and prosperity for all.

This is mere wishful thinking. In the context of a new crisis in Asia, fuelled by a currency flight that has spiked inflation and hit India's export capability, no capitalist party is likely to be able to restore the growth rates of the past.

\$2/day
most of India's
population live
below the UN's
poverty line

The urbanisation of the Indian economy has gathered pace and a new middle class has developed, predominantly engaged in India's international and domestic IT industry. But these industries and this layer of 'consumers' are not enough to maintain India's GDP growth. It is once again 'dot.com' companies which face a new crisis worldwide. Neither does this layer determine the outcome of elections.

The majority of India's population lives on less than \$2 a day - whether it be scraping a living in the vast rural areas or in the notorious city slums.

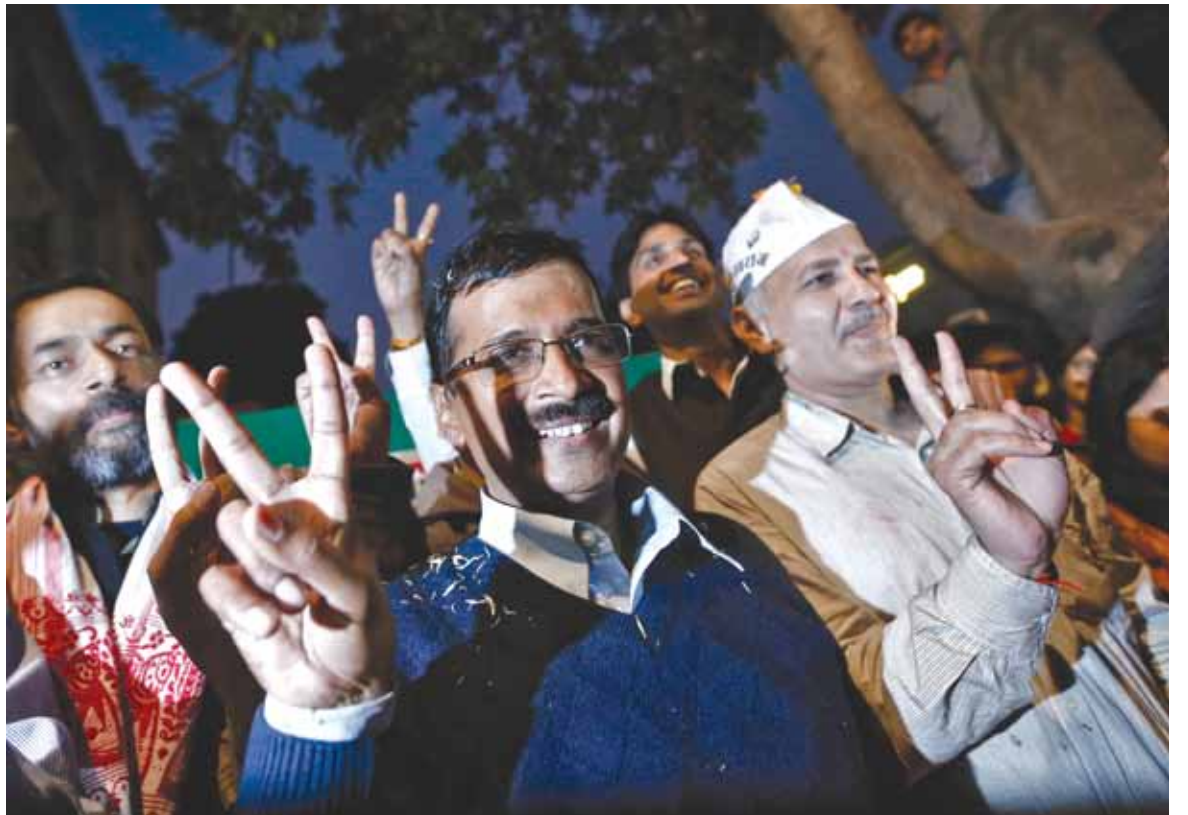
In Bangalore, for example, even the 'new rich' are fed up with living in a world class technology hub whose infrastructure is collapsing due to the pressure of a near doubling of the population in just ten years.

The city has the highest automobile density in the country, air pollution is up to eight times the world health organisation limit, water and electricity are in short supply, the city's waste disposal system often gets literally clogged up. For them, the attraction of a new party which claims to be a 'new broom' - the Common Man Party - may cut across traditional allegiances.

'Clean government'

Some remote areas of the country have always been without roads, without electricity and without fresh running water. Some are more or less run by Maoist guerrilla groups or separatist armed forces and are unlikely to be influenced by the existence of a new force claiming to act for the 'common man'.

Many AAP candidates are anyway said to be rupee millionaires and billionaires. They have jumped on the bandwagon of anti-estab-



Arvind Kejriwal, leader of the Common Man Party

lishment party feeling which runs through Indian society as in many other countries worldwide.

On the other hand, AAP candidates include well-known and respected leaders of anti-nuclear, anti-multinational and anti-corruption campaigns in different parts of the country.

Like the Reformasi movement in Malaysia or the Five-Star Movement in Italy, the AAP stands for 'clean government' but not against capitalism itself. But capitalism is a dirty system by its very nature.

Consequences

Socialists explain that such populist-type parties can grow like mushrooms where no left party with at least a small mass base is advocating a programme of nationalisation and democratic planning to end the daily crises that workers, poor people and even middle layers face.

What support a force like the Common Man Party will get and how long it will last on the political arena is difficult to predict. But, by its very nature as a party of protest, it can lead to unforeseen consequences. If cheated on the electoral plane, its voters can rally to other forms of protest.

The political situation that emerges from the present election in India could be the most turbulent for decades. If the majority of regional parties line up with Modi, national tensions within the country will intensify and he will whip up hatred and violence.

Pogroms and riots could ensue - against Muslims, against Dalits, against national minorities, against the LGBT community and against organised workers. Movements of resistance and defence of communities would have to be organised.

New Socialist Alternative (CWI in India - NSA) has explained in an election statement that the Congress Party distinguishes itself from the communalism of the BJP without talking about secularism. But its slogan of 'Defeat BJP - Save India' nevertheless leads the electorate "once again into the blind alley



Narendra Modi

of choosing Congress because it is secular rather than the BJP because it is communal".

The rise (since the early 1990s) of communalism, as represented by the BJP and its chauvinist 'ultras', the RSS wing, has developed in parallel with the twin evil of neoliberalism brought in by the Congress party in 1991. "In fact, if not feeding off each other, surely one has complemented the other".

NSA has no illusions in the AAP being a new workers' party but understands it can express the frustrations and anger of many voters. NSA advocates voting for genuine candidates "of the traditional left parties,

120m
first time voters are
eligible in these
elections

smaller radical parties and those who focus on the issues concerning working people, the marginalised and downtrodden" and in this way "registering their protest against both communalism, neoliberalism and capitalism".

Socialist Alternative calls for vot-

ers to "Reject all political parties of one shade or the other who stand for capitalism. Prepare to fight back against a communal totalitarian government under the BJP's Narendra Modi. Build a genuine anti-capitalist, mass democratic socialist alternative to challenge the system".

More analysis will follow on socialistworld.net as the election and its results unfold.

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

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

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the Socialist postbag

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Tory crimes, Labour's failures

This government has been allowed to stomp on the poor while filling the pockets of already wealthy individuals. The sale of Royal Mail put £36 million in the pocket of Peter Davies company, who happened to be George Osborne's best man, while costing the taxpayer £2.4 billion. The poorest and most vulnerable faced billions of pounds of cuts to vital services while six hedge fund owners quadrupled their yearly earnings from £250 million to a billion pounds. Essential services such as train companies and energy companies can charge whatever they like, while having no accountability to the people it exploits. Tax evasion for the wealthy is common practice while for the same crime a worker would be thrown in jail. Labour failed to hold the Tories to account and cut ties with the unions, of which there should be more with more powers. And they fail to represent the left which I believe is this country's true political leaning.

Leon Garner, Charlton

Benefit Cuts Suicide

You take your last cigarette from your mouth
Stub it out on your wrist
The bills piled high on the table
They won't let you exist

The clock ticks too loudly
In your bare living room
You go down to the High Street
In the late afternoon

But you walk right on past
Your favourite café's door
You can't even afford
A cup of tea anymore

24% council tax
Is money you simply can not find
And the 14% bedroom tax
Is deliberately, religiously, unkind!

Ashamed to say it
You're too poor to pay it
Too young to retire
You're too old to hire
No one wants you when you're 55
You're a benefits cuts suicide

The car horns blare urgently
As you stumble across the road
Head bowed and shoulders slumped
Like you're bearing a heavy load

And the sun shining brightly
You don't notice at all
Your mind shrouded in darkness
From the bridge you do fall

And the horns of the cars
Once more they do sound
As the corpse that was you
Lies dead on the ground

Another poor beggar
Who was sentenced to die
By a respectable gangster
In a jacket and tie
Mugged by the system
Cut down in your prime
Not having a job
Was your only "crime"

And those self-righteous monsters
Who govern our land
Will boast of the success
Of their cost-cutting plan

Paul Kegan

Hard loads - and a fightback - on the bins



By a bin worker

I first became a union rep for Unite about a year ago but I have worked for the council on the bins for two and a half years. My job as a loader is hard physical work and can be very stressful.

We tend to get quite a lot of stick from motorists - one tried to run me over! Some motorists feel we're holding them up and get frustrated but we try to work as fast as we can. I have also had angry residents shouting at me, sometimes because they are confused about recycling and which bins the different rubbish has to go into.

These days our job is not just about taking rubbish away - we also have to know about recycling.

I became a union rep because my Unite branch encouraged me. The senior union officers in the branch are Socialist Party members. They helped me recruit and organise on the bins.

Most bin workers were in another union that was not doing anything about the issues that mattered. So when I started to speak to my workmates about doing things differently, people started to join Unite which is now the main union on the bins in my council.

I represent my workmates at disciplinary hearings. But as importantly, we are doing things together, as a group of workers and getting results. The bosses wanted to install cameras in the cabs in the lorries. They said it was for health and safety - but we feel safe in our cabs - it's outside the cab that there is a problem.

So we took the campaign to the workers. I didn't just complain to the bosses. Instead, I made sure that workers backed the campaign and I got the branch involved. We were not going to stand for being spied on by the bosses, while taking

abuse from a minority of people when doing our jobs - something the bosses do nothing about.

The good news is that we won. We made sure the bosses knew we, as a group, would not stand for it. The cameras are now not going to be installed.

I joined the Socialist Party soon after becoming a rep. I saw how party members are serious about helping workers in work places like mine. I now go to party meetings and hope to get some of my workmates to come along too. The meetings definitely help me to deal with subjects that come up at work, like racism or cuts.

Working on zero-hour contracts

By an Sports Direct worker

At the Sports Direct (SD) store I work in, 90% of us are on zero-hour contracts. Before Christmas they were hiring so many people, every day there was someone new. Over 180 people were working in the store. But now it's maybe 120.

Through January, where sales drop, the manager had a way of making people quit by giving them one shift in a week, maybe three or four hours, forcing them to look for another job but not actually sacking them.

So really people don't have a job and have to find another one. The manager's happy because sacking someone at SD is very hard, you have to have three warnings and three investigations but this just makes people go without sacking them.

One worker at my store, when she started there, put down her availability to work as four days. At the start she got full shifts. But now she gets one, and guess how long for - three hours! There's no point even coming to work for that. And other people, if the manager doesn't like them, she doesn't give them the work.

The 'blue-shirts' - manager and supervisors - get bonuses for every good stocktake and another bonus every four years. We don't. We get no bonuses and our holiday pay is based on the hours we've worked.

Breaks are another thing. We work five hours and 45 minutes so



there's no breaks - but then they say 'stay for an hour', 'stay for another hour', but there's still no time for a break. In the morning when deliveries come at 5.30am, two people are needed to open up the shop, but then they will be in till 12 without a break.

And I don't think the supervisors know how long the breaks should be. One will say 20 minutes, an-

other 30 minutes. And sometimes we'll be in from 5.45 or 6.15 to 12, and then off for a couple of hours, then in for four or five hours more.

We need 16 hours. Everywhere we go they want to see contracts with a minimum of 16 hours. I'm not saying I want to claim benefits, but that's what they ask for. Before Christmas I was doing 36 hours but now, it's maybe just 20 hours.

Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine

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Tamiflu scandal exposes bloodsucking big pharma

Jon Dale

Nineteenth century snake oil sellers travelled the USA, claiming they could cure all manner of illnesses. Sharp sales methods earned them a few dollars from ordinary people. By the time their medicine's useless properties were discovered, the connen had moved on.

Today, pharmaceutical corporations follow similar practices, while profiteering on a giant scale.

The government has paid £473 million for flu treatment Tamiflu in the past five years. A new report concludes it is no more effective than paracetamol. For years its manufacturer, Roche, deliberately hid research showing Tamiflu's limited benefits and significant side-effects.

When 'bird flu' broke out in East Asia in 2007 there were justified fears it could spread to become a worldwide killer, like 'Spanish flu' after World War One. More people died from it than soldiers killed in the trenches.

The last Labour government stockpiled enough Tamiflu and

a similar drug, Relenza, made by GlaxoSmithKline, to treat 25% of the population. The US government spent \$1.3 billion stockpiling these anti-viral medicines. Other governments also spent vast sums. Now it is clear this money was poured down the drain.

Independent Cochrane Collaboration academics repeatedly asked Roche between 2009 and 2013 for

Governments spent vast sums stocking Tamiflu. It is now clear this was money poured down the drain

reports of the drug trials the company had carried out or commissioned. Roche refused to release the data, giving a variety of excuses.

First Roche offered to hand over some information, but not all of it, and it demanded a contract, with secret terms, requiring secrecy about the methods and results of trials. The researchers would not be

allowed to reveal this contract even existed!

Then Roche claimed it couldn't send the information as it had given it to another group of researchers. It then sent incomplete information, before raising a new objection - 'patient confidentiality'. Finally they accused members of the Cochrane group of not being independent.

Through persistent work the Cochrane researchers discovered that only some of the evidence available to Roche had ever been published - the evidence that showed Tamiflu in the most favourable light.

Trials that had been poorly designed - or deliberately designed to give the answer company executives demanded - were published. Those that showed significant side-effects or few, if any, benefits were suppressed. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of people around the world were taking Tamiflu.

Roche has a long history of profiteering. In 1973 it was exposed as charging the NHS £370 a kilo for Librium and £922 for Valium.

The same active ingredients of these tranquillisers could be obtained from small companies in Italy

(where Roche's patents were not protected) for £9 and £20 a kilo respectively. Roche argued that it was unfair to look at the profitability of individual drugs, especially such highly successful ones as Librium and Valium, since these financed the company's overall research effort.

The Tamiflu scandal shows Roche's research is deliberately biased to sustain its mega-profits.

Roche is no bad apple in an otherwise wholesome barrel. In this past week alone a French inquiry has been announced into collusion between Roche and another pharmaceutical giant, Novartis, blocking the use of a cheaper alternative to their eye treatment, Lucentis.

A US court found Takeda and Eli Lilly guilty of hiding evidence of a possible link between their Actos diabetic drug and bladder

cancer. Takeda destroyed large volumes of relevant documents.

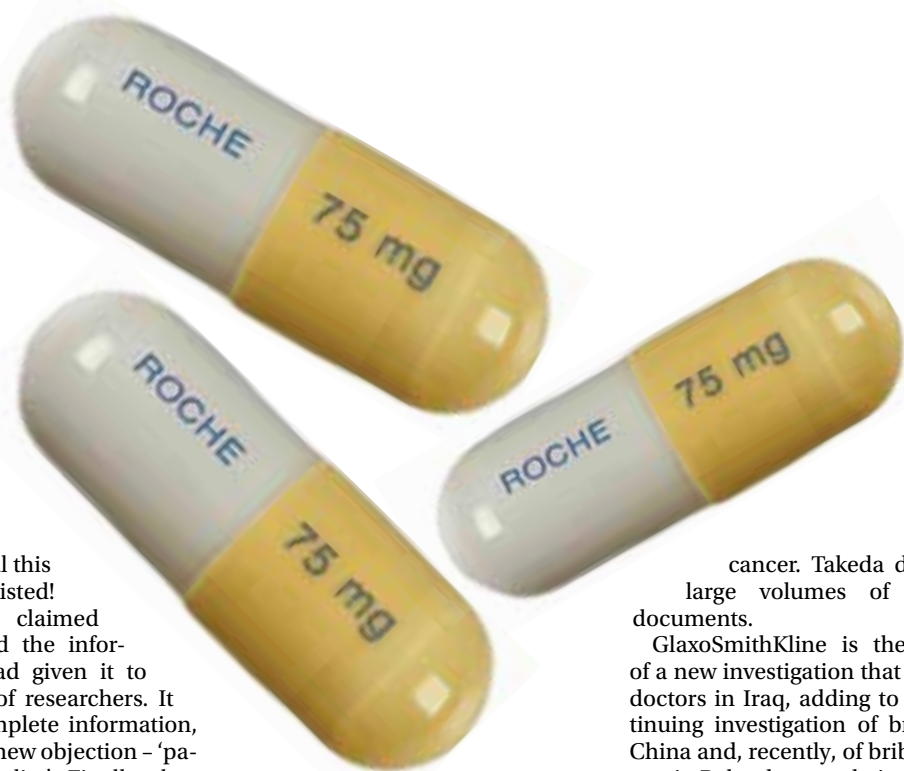
GlaxoSmithKline is the subject of a new investigation that it bribed doctors in Iraq, adding to the continuing investigation of bribery in China and, recently, of bribing doctors in Poland to use their products. Drug companies have long carried out this practice worldwide.

Research and production of medicines and vaccines is far too important to be left in the hands of these ruthless corporations. Their aim is to generate ever-increasing profits - not safe and effective treatments.

A socialist government would nationalise the pharmaceutical industry, with compensation only to small shareholders in genuine need. The industry could then be integrated with the NHS.

A major shift in research would take place into prevention, rather than copying existing drugs in profitable markets, using the skills of their scientists and resources of their laboratories.

The global nature of the industry shows the need for socialism throughout the world.



30 years since the historic NUM miners strike



Anti-Thatcher anger still reverberates

One year ago, the ex-mining village of Goldthorpe in South Yorkshire hit the headlines with its street party celebrating Thatcher's death, burning an effigy of her in front of the TV cameras.

This year, the local authorities didn't want a repeat of that because they "don't want to give the village a bad name and frighten off investment." But on Saturday 12 April that didn't stop 600-700 local people demonstrating their working class anger against Thatcher and the Tories who are really responsible for the destruction of the local community.

Chants of "Here we go, here we go" and "The workers united will never be defeated" rang loud as the march to celebrate the 1984-85 miners' strike poured out of the Comrades Club.

The demo was led by a symbolic cow representing the 'Milk Snatcher' [Thatcher had withdrawn free milk to schoolchildren over seven in 1971] and by the new banner of the "30th anniversary of the miners' strike" Facebook page, with ex-miners and supporters joined by a delegation of Care UK strikers.

Alistair Tice

Final act of Tory vandalism

30 years after the historic miners' strike against pit closures, the Tories are presiding over the axing of two of the last three deep mine coal pits in Britain.

Some 1,300 jobs will be axed in the closure programme which comes only nine months after a 'rescue' from administration.

In a final act of industrial vandalism the privatised UK Coal company is shutting Kellingley colliery in North Yorkshire and Thoresby, Nottinghamshire, and selling off six surface mines.

The only remaining deep mine colliery will be the workers' cooperative at Hatfield, South Yorkshire.

At the time of the 1984-85 strike there were around 200 pits.

Yet millions of tonnes of coal are imported each year to keep the UK's electricity power stations running.

Energy minister Michael Fallon said: "The taxpayer is better served by supporting a managed closure of the mines." To assist this "managed closure" the Con-Dem government is loaning UK Coal £10 million.

Labour MP Dennis Skinner pointed out in the Commons that the government had, in February, taken £700 million out of miners' pension scheme.

A civil war without guns

by Ken Smith

£8 (postage included)



The Socialist Party's history of the 1984-85 miners' strike, *A Civil War Without Guns*, by Ken Smith, has been reprinted with a new introduction for the 30th anniversary of this colossal struggle.

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NATIONAL STRIKE ACTION NEEDED TO:

STOP THE

EDUCATION

CATASTROPHE!

Jane Nellist

Coventry National Union of Teachers (NUT) and newly elected member of the NUT national executive, personal capacity

Amalaise is spreading throughout our schools. It's hitting teachers young and old, male and female, primary and secondary. Education is heading for catastrophe for pupils, parents, teachers - society as a whole - unless we stand up and fight for it.

It's not that teachers want an easy life - we just want a life! We have always worked hard; what we demand is our professionalism back and to be trusted.

Parents understand this. Many of them are suffering the impact of Con-Dem job cuts and pay freezes. A new poll shows that there is little support for Tory Education Minister Michael Gove's meddling with education.

In the face of his maniacal drive to turn schools into academies and free schools, 57% say that councils have an important educational role, and "should keep responsibilities in relation to schools". A big majority is opposed to his policy of allowing non-qualified people to teach in academies.

Many teachers are just walking away from the job they have. Teachers are being driven to work-induced ill health in pressure cooker schools. Even our pupils are

commenting on how tired we look! And they themselves are exhausted by the stressful testing regime.

Many young teachers are no longer able to rely on an annual automatic increase. One young teacher I know in Coventry has worked out that their real hourly pay is below the national minimum wage!

Older teachers look to retire earlier with a reduced pension - not something that will be available in the future with pension ages rising. 68 is definitely too late!

At the Birmingham NUT strike rally last month, 1,000 teachers took to the streets in defiant mood. Elizabeth Selimi, a primary teacher in Coventry, told the crowd to massive applause: "I am striking be-

cause I don't have a life outside of work - I want it back."

Teachers will be looking to the trade union conferences over Easter for a lead. School-based action can be successful if teachers stick together, but the real answer lies in an escalation of national strike action.

And more and more teachers are realising that the Labour Party is no 'White Knight' riding to the rescue. It isn't just one 'demonic' character in the form of Gove that is to blame, as much as we try to focus our anger against him.

Tristram Hunt, shadow education minister, crossed lecturers' union UCU picket lines and supports most of the government policies, including

performance related pay. Both the Con-Dems and Labour threaten a comprehensive education that is publicly funded, accountable and democratic. They and their system need to be challenged. Over 500 no-cuts candidates standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the 22 May local elections are with the majority in opposing all privatisation.

As a newly elected member of the NUT's national executive I'll be demanding that the NUT has a clear strategy for escalating strike action and policies that provide a proper work life balance. That was the programme that I was elected on and one which will achieve a real difference for teachers and education.

What we stand for

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

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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