One million people are now being fed by food banks. In an effort to cut across the horror and sympathy this figure generated, government sources have denounced the author, Trussell Trust charity, as “misleading and emotionally manipulative.”

The Mail on Sunday went further, sending an undercover reporter to a Nottingham food bank to prove that he could get three days free food without having his story checked out. In reality he reported that he was “asked a series of questions.”

And as @KennyDownSouth tweeted: “No, no Daily Mail. The scandal isn’t that food bank volunteers didn’t check your cretin’s ID. The scandal is that food banks exist at all.”

The so-called upstanding Christian ethics of the Mail on Sunday in Easter Week attempted to portray one million people as scamming the system, asking us to believe that even though many have secret stashes of tinned sausage and beans at home they’d rather rip off the local food bank and artificially inflate food bank figures. In response to this poor excuse for genuine investigative journalism, £38,000 was donated in a matter of hours - heart-warming evidence of human solidarity.

It’s not surprising that the Con-Dems and the big business-owned press attack food banks. They are a physical manifestation of the failure and inability of capitalism to solve the most basic human needs. In the sixth largest economy on the planet people are going hungry because of soaring rent and bills, austerity measures, wage cuts and unemployment. The economy is supposedly in recovery, sales of luxury goods are booming. Whole streets in Chelsea are bought up by oligarchs and sit in darkness as empty investment holdings.

There are more than enough resources to enable all the people of this island and the planet to have warmth, shelter and food - but we don’t all have these things. The logic of capitalism is that, as Oxfam revealed, Britain’s five richest families are worth more than the poorest 20%. This is Con-Dem ‘all in it together’ Britain.

Labour is also implementing the cuts agenda, contributing to the extension of the food bank queues. Labour MPs might run marathons in the name of eliminating hunger but Labour-led councils are slashing benefits, jobs and services just as much as their Tory and Lib Dems counterparts. The Labour leadership has endorsed the expansion of food banks by committing to Tory spending cuts if it forms the next government.

We need an alternative. Councillors have a choice not to make cuts – but all the establishment parties are making us pay for the bankers’ crisis. On 22 May I will be one of the over 550 trade unionists, socialists and anti-cuts activists offering a no-cuts alternative. Candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will offer hope that we can fight for a future where food banks are utterly redundant - not a growth industry. Help us build that struggle. See www.tusc.org.uk

All of us standing for TUSC in May will make one pledge above all else: We will not raise our hands and vote for cuts to jobs, services or benefits.

See page 8 for more on TUSC
New figures reveal capitalism in crisis - not recovery

Desperate times call for desperate measures. That must have been the line of CoV-Dem Chancell.

George Osborne’s thinking when he went about claiming new jobs and wages figures proved that his austerity measures were yielding a recovery. Far from bringing relief to “hard-working families”, the Coalition’s cuts and pro-capitalist policies are rapidly turning the clock back on living standards at a terrifying rate. Real growth can however be seen in workers’ anger.

Osborne’s claim, faithfully re-produced across the big business-owned media, was that wages are now rising faster than inflation. Statistical contadorists manufac-tured this figure by including fat cat bonuses in the measure of wages and excluding skyrocketing house prices by using the CPI not the RPI measure of inflation. In reality real wages are now below the pre-crisis peak of 2008. The London Evening Standard (ES) produced a devastating graph: it showed that energy bills have gone up by 57%, food prices by 40%, and petrol has risen by 49%. Housing is in a league of its own with prices and rents increasing at a speed Usain Bolt would envy. Lon-don house prices have risen by 22% in the past year, with other areas also seeing significant rises.

We were also invited to celebrate the latest employment figures. Un-employment is down to 30,000 or 2.2 million. But again the devil is in the truth. Almost half the jobs are young people. Scandalously at most a million workers are in the grip of zero-hour contracts, living precariously, trapped out of work. Un-surprisingly ONS figures show that two million or five in one part-time and temporary workers say they would like full-time work.

Lack of investment

Other figures reveal that Britain is being propelled back to the 19th century. As job cuts in the public sector hit hard and big business refuses to invest its hundreds of hoarded billions in new jobs “wor-ried workers price themselves into the jobs market”, as an ES writer put it. In particular, frustrated and demoralised workers, seeing to the pits of destitution (Homer’s Scylla and Charybdis of humiliating benefit regimes and warlike and the one side and lone-paid loser work in the other, have opted out to enter into self-employment.

Increases among Britain’s 4.5 million-strong self-employed work-force account for more than 40% of the jobs growth over the last year plus of course the rise in self-employment over the last quarter. This, accompanied by ag-gressive privatisation drives, rep-resents an attempt by big business and its servants in government to undo all the gains of the working class over the last century.

Self-employed people are often forced into financial and personal uncertainty. While the capitalist press is awash with tales of wealthy whiz kids, for the majority of self-employed workers this is hard graft with poor returns. Tax expert Richar-d and Taylor worked out that “the av-erage, inflation adjusted, earnings of those who are self-employed fell from just under £15,000 a year at the turn of the century to £10,400 in 2011, a real decline of just over 31%.”

By the Socialist Party has ex-plained many times, capitalism is in a blind alley, unable to further develop the productive forces (tec-tories, offices, science and tech-niques), or to use the surplus cre-ated by workers to invest in much needed industrial development, so the basic’s clean water, basic jobs, healthcare, environmental protection- are denied to billions of people.

Instead the capitalist classes ap-pear to be retiring from their his-toric role. In Britain the number of employing businesses has fallen in most years since 2008. The number of private-sector business- es with 250 or more employees dropped 8.2% to 6,600 between 2000 and 2013. It is also predicted that there could be more self-em-ployed by 2013 than the number of employees in the public sector. The FCO has no capacity to invest in this sector, normally a feature of recession, is growing fastest among impoverished pensioners, part-time workers and old job-siders.

Bubbling anger

But, as the Socialist Party has pre-dicted, this will not continue like this forever. The working class will not continue trying to make ends meet while watching the rich get so obscenely richer. The anger that is bubbling below the surface will explode at a certain stage and pay and jobs will be a major factor in that explosion.

A fore-taste of the action we can ex-pect has been provided by the construction workers who success-fully demanded to be taken on by the profiteering building companies on direct contracts. The frustration is also fuelling the votes for strike action in Britain, in the NHS, among teachers, on the rail-ways and more. It is what makes the presenters put that largely down to the 24-hour general strike as well as arguing the case for action on the issues affecting workers in the dif-ferent sectors.

Fundamentally, though, we ex-plicitly explain that capitalism is utterly inca-pable of delivering the most aspirations of the 99% for a secure job, for a home that is not prey to the whim of greedy landlords or banks, for public services that meet their needs. So linked to the struggles for jobs and decent pay, must be a campaign for nationalising those basic needs, as part of a struggle to change society along socialist lines. This would mean, as a start, na-tionalising the banking system and the big companies that dominate the economy and placing them un-der democratic workers’ control. This would mean nationalising the big companies so mean democratic planning to end the chaos of the market and envi-ronmental destruction. And it would mean the end to the misery of mil-lions in Britain and across the world.

In the fight for a future, a so-cialist future.

You income needed for all

The BBC took some time off from promoting UKip recently to discuss the NHS and social security. Incomes for many retired people have fallen well below what they would get from working on the mini-mum wage. A lot of workers from now on will simply not be able to afford to retire.

The presenters put that largely down to the fact that they have to put aside much they need to put aside for their pensions. Apparently we don’t under-stand and no one tells us that it is not enough to provide even a basic subsistence level.

The truth is our wages have fallen so much that even those of us in work are forced to work a 24-hour a day job to make ends meet. There is no hope looking for money aside for retire-ment because we ‘re trouble enough saving ourselves the wages to the end.

The Socialist Party demands a real ‘living wage’ linked to a ‘living income’ for retired workers as well as a socialist future with the means to provide with an opportunity to work.

Terry Pearce
Chair, Bracknell Forest Peoples Healthwatch

In their attempts to destroy the NHS the government has established lo-cal organisa-tion under the guise of local accountability. In reality these bodies are part and parcel of the privatisation and fragmen-tation agenda.

The most important are the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). They exist in every locality, are responsible for spending about 80% of the national NHS budget, comprise of local GPs and commission most NHS services. It is they that are responsible for outsourcing medical services to private providers.

For example in Bracknell, when the NHS Missions Inquiry Unit closed at Heathwood Hospital, it was the CCG that commissioned a private provider to replace it. Sometimes there could be a clear conflict of in-terest with GPs both commissioning and being themselves pro-viders of private services.

Another body is the Healthwatch (HW), which is meant to be the local independent, health watchdog on behalf of patients. It is neither inde-pendent nor democratic. It is funded by the government and the local au-thority, although the money is not ring-fenced. HW is commissioned by the local authority although the latter is responsible for public health, a clear conflict of interest.

In Bracknell our HW is support-ive of all the government’s reforms, including the privatisation of many ser-vices. In fact they castigated campaigns for demonstrating against the privatisation. So we launched Blackwell Forest Peoples Healthwatch, which is democratic, accountable and fights against NHS privatisation and calls for openness and transparency in the NHS.

We recently organised a survey asking people what they know about these bodies. Early indications are that many people have never heard about them, yet they are the organisa-tions running the NHS at a local level.

Mobilising the trade unions na-tionally to fight the government’s privatisation plans is vital. But it is also important to build local struggles. Here in Bracknell we have built a united front against the government policies, involving trade unionism, Youth and Jobs’ ‘Fast Food Rights’ campaigns, political activists and patients. We think that to defeat the government we must first understand their strategy. While the local NHS bosses do not like us they have learned to respect us, after all we obtained £5,000 names opposing closure of our local hospital and they were forced to back off.

In the future to defend our NHS, join the socialists - www.socialistparty.org.uk

In the fight to defend our NHS, know your enemy.

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Doncaster care workers stand firm against cuts

With another four days action over Easter taking us to Day 20, the Doncaster Care UK strike is stronger than ever.

Since the Labour-run council awarded the contract to Care UK, its workers have been subjected to insensible changes to their terms of employment. Some face losing £500 a month in pay, which could mean losing their homes.

Care UK striker and shop steward Kirstine Carbutt finished the rally with an impassioned speech: “At our strikers’ rally we heard from a member who had been for their consultation meeting with Care UK regarding the transition payment and transfer over to new terms and conditions. At this meeting they were told to budget! This from a company whose idea of budgeting is to tender for a contract they knew they couldn’t afford to fulfil at its current rates. They had no intention of budgeting. They knew exactly how they would make the numbers fit.

Care UK expected us to roll over and accept these cuts because Doncaster Council has reduced the budget and there is no more money in the pot. Well I for one am sick of going to work to struggle and budget. It’s our turn! Care UK blames the council. The council blames the government. Where is the responsibility? Don’t tell me this is part of a bigger picture about privatisation of the service, NIJT teachers, expelled Hull Labour councillor Gill Kinnett, Disabled People Against Cuts, South Yorkshire Freedom Riders, other Unison branches and health workers, including the three activists from Gwalia Social Care in Swansea who will soon be striking over the very same issues.

On Friday 18 April, the strikers rally voted unanimously in a secret ballot to strike again, next time for two weeks in May. On the following day 300-400 strikers and supporters marched through Doncaster to a great reception from local people. Solidarity speeches came from the bakery union, RMT rail union, Unite in Yorkshire ambulance service, NUJ teachers, expelled Hull Labour councillor Gill Kinnett, Disabled People Against Cuts, South Yorkshire Freedom Riders, other Unison branches and health workers, including the three activists from Gwalia Social Care in Swansea who will soon be striking over the very same issues.

Recently, a number of strikers met with two of Doncaster’s Labour MPs and a representative of Labour leader Ed Miliband (Doncaster North). All that came out of the meeting was a letter from the MPs to Care UK asking them to “negotiate to end this long-running dispute.”

At the resulting meeting with the arbitration service Acas on Sunday 20 April, Care UK had nothing new to put on the table. One of the stewards attending said: “That’s two hours of my life I’ll never get back!”

So, after 20 days of strike action against “a cost of living crisis” of 35% pay cuts and privatisation of the NHS, not a single local Labour councillor or MP has publicly supported the strikers.

That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) organised a protest lobby of Ed Miliband’s surgery on Thursday 22 April coinciding with TUSC supporters’ protests outside Care UK offices.

Coffee dregs
Starbucks, notorious in the UK for tax dodging, surprisingly announced it was relocating its European head-quarters from the Netherlands to Britain. Had the multinational seen the light after only paying 0.3% of £1.78 billion sales in tax between 1998 and 2012? At the risk of sounding cynical – well! – thanks to Chancellor George Osborne Starbucks can relocate knowing that all its royalties from Europe will be tax free. Osborne has changed the legerdemain of corporation tax from companies worldwide prof- its to profits generated in the UK. The tax analyst Richard Murphy com- mented: “One of the functions of its [Starbucks] European head office is to move the royalties earned on the use of Starbucks name from each operating country through to Starbucks in the USA.”

Murphy also reckons that even taxes charged on Starbucks UK profits will probably be less than the overall tax paid to date in the Netherlands. But what about the jobs created? Apparently, no more than ten employees will be relocated!

Clear off
An inquiry into RBS’s business prac- tices, commissioned by RBS, cleared the bailed-out bank of driving small businesses to the wall in order to acquire their assets and boost the bank’s profits.

Anyone who considers this investiga- tion to be compromised obviously doesn’t understand big businesses’ ethics!

Bad choice
Tory Prime Minister David Cameron is in a bit of pickle over his choice of appointees. Firstly, it transpires that his new City minister Andrea Leadsom has in- divulged in offshore banking to avoid taxes on her buy-to-let property company.

Mind you, tax dodging Tory MPs is nothing new. Back in 2010 Channel 4’s Dispatches accused several of them, including George Osborne, of such practices.

And secondly, Cameron’s judgement seems a bit iffy after appointing bankrupt businessman Tony Caplin chairman of the Public Loans Board – a £50 billion quango.

Phone manners
On the subject of poor judgement, the Tory party carried out telephone canvassing of constituents in the Mansfield constituency of West Midland MP Esther McVey during the recent two-hour commemoration service of the 96 Hillsborough sta- dium victims. 12 of the victims had come from the Wirral.

Eat cotton
Environmental pollution is a worldwide killer. A report by China’s dictatorship revealed that one-fifth of the country’s agricultural land is polluted. Recently, benzene run-off from soil at a water treatment plant in Lanzhou resulted in water being used out to 2.4 million people. The problem is particularly bad in the rice growing areas where hazardous levels of toxic heavy metals have been found. But the regime’s solution is not to instigate a clean-up programme but to encourage grow- ers to switch to producing non-edible cash crops!

Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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

Zero-hour contracts damage your health

A recent report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills found that zero-hour contracts or flexible working generally can have a damaging effect on a worker’s mental health, causing anxiety and other stress related disorders.

A fast food worker in Wales describes the stresses and strains of this exploitative practice, “Having been on a zero-hour con- tract myself and worked with others on this I can confirm the findings of the report from first-hand experience. Not knowing if you will get enough hours and earn enough money from one week to the next in order to pay bills and buy food causes high stress levels for a worker and their family, if they have one.

You live with a constant feeling of insecurity and have no chance of relaxing when you could be called in at a moment’s notice or risk being fired.

While some workers will prefer to be on a flexible contract, low wage, insecure zero-hour contracts with very little employment rights should be scrapped.

Workers who opt for flexibility should be guaranteed a minimum number of hours each week and should play a far greater part in deciding when to work those hours.

A trade union should be set up to ensure this process is not abused by employers.”

Fast Food Rights – International Day of Protest, 15 May.

Involving industrial action by low paid workers in the UK and protests organised by campaigners in the UK including the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union and Youth Fight For Jobs (YFJ).

See www.youthfightforjobs.org.uk for updates

Join the socialists - www.socialistparty.org.uk
Don’t let Gove wreck education!

Don't let Gove wreck education!

Neil Cafferky

Hundreds of teachers gathered in Brighton over Easter for the National Union of Teachers (NUT) annual conference.

The run-up to the conference saw gains for the left on the union’s national executive (NEC), particularly for Lanac (Local Area Network for National Action) as an alliance of rank-and-file NUT activists in which the Socialist Party plays a leading role. The growing influence of Lanac in the conference was clear from the fringe meetings and debates on the conference floor.

Teachers are currently in dispute with the government over pay, pensions and conditions. Conference debate was dominated by the question of the union’s strategy in this. The NUT leadership had put forward a plan calling for strike action in the week beginning 23 June, followed by unspecified action in the autumn term as well as a programme of consultation with the membership.

To strengthen this Lanac put forward an amendment calling for a day’s strike action in the summer term followed by two days of strike action in either half term in the autumn. As well as this, Lanac called for clear demands to inspire the membership such as a £2,000 pay rise for all teachers.

Clear strategy

Moving the amendment Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies argued that it would: “send a message to Michael Gove, and our membership such as a £2,000 pay rise for all teachers. 

Shelia Caffrey warned in the debate that: “We spent months waiting for the NUT. This should not happen again”. An attempt by the leadership to close the debate down early was defeated on the conference floor.

The eventual vote on the Lanac amendment was close on a show of hands. A card vote was called Worked out where the amendment was defeated two to one. Despite this loss it was clear that Lanac has a large constituency of support in the union. This was underlined the previous evening at the Lanac fringe meeting that attracted 128 delegates to debate the way forward. 56 delegates attended a further Lanac fringe at the end of the conference.

A surprisingly controversial debate took place around a motion on discrimination against older women. The motion was moved by newly elected NEC member Jane Nellist from Coventry Socialist Party. It concentrated on the many different types of discrimination older female teachers face, including employers’ refusal to make reasonable adjustments for women experiencing the menopause.

The motion was opposed by the Socialist Teacher Alliance delegates who criticised the prominence given to the menopause. In her reply Jane Nellist made no apologies for raising this “long taboo” subject. After debate the motion was carried overwhelmingly with many female delegates thanking Jane for raising this question.

The attacks by Gove on the education system, and the tactic supported by the Union for National Action, an alliance of fringe meetings, has made the mistake of holding off the boycott while balloting membership for the offer. The offer of a 2% pay rise across the board, with 2.2% for those paid for part-time, is an improvement on the previous 3% offer, but still fails to meet inflation - running at 2.5% this year - and does not make any past ground for the 13% in real terms since 2009.

Strike action and the threat of the boycott have won some successes. Coordinated industrial action in universities has, importantly, broken through the 1% public sector pay freeze, and shown employers’ claims that their old offer was all they could afford to be lies. Instead of passing, UCU and other higher education unions should press on and call additional strike days. The Government has a threat of a legal challenge, but this is likely to fail.

Higher education pay

Socialist Party members in UCU are counting on Gove and other employers’ latest offer in the bitter, months-long higher education pay dispute. Employers have made the offer as a face-saving exercise in order to avoid a national boycott which would cause major disruption to universities as the exam period approaches. The union has made the mistake of holding off the boycott while balloting membership for the offer. The offer of a 2% pay rise across the board, with 2.2% for those paid for part-time, is an improvement on the previous 3% offer, but still fails to meet inflation - running at 2.5% this year - and does not make any past ground for the 13% in real terms since 2009. Strike action and the threat of the boycott have won some successes. Coordinated industrial action in universities has, importantly, broken through the 1% public sector pay freeze, and shown employers’ claims that their old offer was all they could afford to be lies. Instead of passing, UCU and other higher education unions should press on and call additional strike days. The Government has a threat of a legal challenge, but this is likely to fail.

In brief

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Rail workers prepare for action

RAIL member Birmingham

Recently it was revealed in the Guardian newspaper that from the £4 billion in tax-payer subsidy to train operating companies, £200 million was siphoned off as dividends to shareholders.

One of these companies, London Midland, is on course for a major collision with the RMT over a profit-maximising jobs cull. The company is intending to cut its overheads by slashing its revenue protection department (ticket inspectors and associated clerical staff) and getting rid of 150 jobs, replacing them with 48 new positions on inferior pay and conditions.

At a packed and combative RMT branch meeting in Birmingham on 3 April members from various grades were brought up to speed on the situation. The Company, Midland management that we are not going to be bullied into cutting en-sue. The meeting room was too small to accommodate all the workers wanting to hear the presentation, so several CWU branches, and not just Midland, were also represented.

Importantly, everyone agreed that if the company is allowed to get away with attacking the revenue side, there can be no doubt that other grades will be next. Get-ting rid of guards and extending Driver Only Operation is a real and very dangerous aspiration for profit-hungry railway bosses.

Reps from other grades including the guards stood up and pledged maximum support for the revenue staff which was met with rounds of applause.

Rail workers generally enjoy better than average pay and conditions but this is only as a result of the struggle and sacrifice of previous generations of rail work-ers and the willingness of today’s workers to defend conditions.

Once again it could be neces-sary to take strike action to defend ourselves and prove to London Midland that we are united and are not going to be picked off one grade at a time.

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**Why is there a housing crisis?**

Caroline Vincent

The Daily Telegraph predicted that 2014 will be another profitable year for homeowners, suggesting that “the spring could be a great time to get your own house or town-country property, sit back and watch the value soar! A stark contrast to the situation that most of us are facing. Homelessness in England has increased by 34% from 2010, and home ownership is now at its lowest level in 25 years. Most building companies are proud of their massive and rising profits. But while profits may be increasing, output in the building sector is only likely to worsen. The consequence of this shortage of homes is sky high rents and house prices.

The percentage of disposable income, a measure of how much one can spend after paying taxes, is now little more than a dream for most people. Currently rents take up an average of 50% of disposable income, a trend that is only likely to worsen. Moreover, the number of housing benefit claimants who have worked is up by 104% since 2009, which says a lot about intensifying exploitation and casualisation in the workforce.

**Housing benefit**

£24 billion pounds of taxpayer’s money a year goes on housing benefit – most of which is going in the pockets of property owners. The government’s housing benefit system has been criticism for its ineffectiveness and high cost. It is a system that is only likely to worsen. Moreover, the number of housing benefit claimants who have worked is up by 104% since 2009, which says a lot about intensifying exploitation and casualisation in the workforce.

**‘Land-banking’**

While the working class suffer, landlords profit off of the rich, with land prices having grown by a factor of 16 between 1983 and 2007. This has led to the super-rich engaging in a practice known as ‘land-banking,’ creating a situation where homes are not built despite the existence of planning permission. Such land is then sat on until such a time as it is can be built on even more profitably. A report for the Greater London Assembly in 2012 revealed that 45% of homes for which planning permission had been granted would not be built because the companies that secured them are not in the building business.

**No need for affordable homes**

- **Mitterrand’s Social Housing Plan** that the government for scrapping the requirement for private developers to build affordable homes, saying: “People won’t be able to afford to live in Mitterrand Ventres.” Deputy leader of the council, David Hopkins, wrote to the planning minister saying the government must drop the policy “that unfairly and inappropriately favours the interest of developers over the needs of present and future residents.”

- **Simpkins** after questions in parliament the planning minister admitted that the government’s new garden cities will not include any affordable homes at all.

**Why would big business worry about providing roofs over people’s heads if there is no profit to be made?**

**Our demands on housing include:**

- **Tackle the housing crisis by mass building and renovation of council houses**
- **Cap all rents in the private sector at council rent level**
- **Scrap the bedroom tax**
- **For a £1 an hour minimum wage for all**
- **Nationalise the house-building companies**
- **Fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism**

**Fighting anti-union housing bosses**

Bryan Kennedy, convener for Unite the union at One Housing group spoke to the Socialist.

I have been suspended from work since 12 February. I could well be dismissed at my hearing on 23 April (after the Socialist goes to press). This has meant I have been out of work for eleven days which managed to stave off pay cuts and also won company payments.

We were about to launch a campaign – not for a living wage, but for a living home. We were about to launch the campaign – not for a living wage, but for a living home.

**End rip-off letting agents fees**

Jain Dalton

Anyone who’s lived in private rented property probably knows its problems such as poor quality, high rents and short-term tenancies. Shelter’s 2013 report, Letting Agencies: the fees. Rents too increased, on average, while tenancies were cut to two years. As a result of this, 15,000 letting agencies in the UK have cut their rents privately, but the turnover of housing in this sector is very low.

Increasingly, properties are let on short-term tenancies. Shelter’s 2013 report, Letting Agencies: the fees. Rents too increased, on average, while tenancies were cut to two years. As a result of this, 15,000 letting agencies in the UK have cut their rents privately, but the turnover of housing in this sector is very low.

This vicious attack was then followed by New Labour’s demunicipalisation of social housing through stock transfer. This has involved selling off council housing, as growing waiting lists for subsidised homes, saying: “People won’t be able to afford to live in Mitterrand’s Social Housing Plan.” Deputy leader of the council, David Hopkins, wrote to the planning minister saying the government must drop the policy “that unfairly and inappropriately favours the interest of developers over the needs of present and future residents.”

Separately, after questions in parliament the planning minister admitted that the government’s new garden cities will not include any affordable homes at all.

The government’s affordable housing budget for 2011-2015 has been almost halved. The social rented housing model has now been dropped in favour of an ‘affordable rent’ tenure. New homes will built will be let at up to 80% of local market rents with ‘flexible’ tenancies of a minimum of two years instead of secure lifetime tenancies. This is just the latest in a long line of attacks on social housing. The 2011 Localism Act brought about the ‘right to buy’ scheme which has given rise to the ‘Tories’ big society’ vision of privatisation and charity-based welfare. The housing crisis that has been framed in such a way that blame has been shifted towards the welfare state, and the policy to reduce public spending and increase tax has been sold as a solution to the crisis. The reason for this is that the crisis is caused by the collapse of demand for rental accommodation caused by the financial and economic crisis.

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There are factors other than alleged red tape that can block house building.

- **Land-banking**
- **No need for affordable homes**
- **End rip-off letting agents fees**
- **Fighting anti-union housing bosses**
- **Why is there a housing crisis?**

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- **Land-banking**
- **No need for affordable homes**
- **End rip-off letting agents fees**
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- **Why is there a housing crisis?**

**Why would big business worry about providing roofs over people’s heads if there is no profit to be made?**

**Our demands on housing include:**

- Tackle the housing crisis by mass building and renovation of council houses.
- Cap all rents in the private sector at council rent level.
- Scrap the bedroom tax.
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The social case for independence

**SNE: change flag, not system**

All three main pro-independence parties are now promising more powers for Scotland to remain in the UK. The SNP’s argument is that it would mean the break-up of the UK. That the SNP intends to appeal to the OECD to order a better deal for the big business. They are opposed to even modest measures of public ownership, including of the profiting gas and electricity companies. They have failed the case for independence the SNP intends to appeal to the OECD to order a better deal for the big business. They are opposed to even modest measures of public ownership, including of the profiting gas and electricity companies. They have failed the case for independence.

**Power bills will rise.**

A deluge of announcements by big business quickly followed this choreographed assault. RBS claimed they would have to move parts of its business to England, as did Lloyds, Tesco Bank and the supermarket chains. These developments have driven former Labour minister Robin Cook to propose a referendum on an independent Scotland.

**“EU would force Scottish banks to move to England”**

The White Paper from the Scottish National Party leader is saying to people that you can have independence and keep the pound and the Bank of England. That is not going to happen. The SNP’s argument is that it would mean the break-up of the UK. That the SNP intends to appeal to the OECD to order a better deal for the big business. They are opposed to even modest measures of public ownership, including of the profiting gas and electricity companies. They have failed the case for independence.

**“Scottish independence will bring guaranteed costs, warns Weir Group”**

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**“More powers for Scotland”**

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**“Care will be unsustainably expensive”**

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**Sky high costs for banks as we exit the EU**

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**Sneaky changes, a threat to the welfare system.**

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**Supermarkets will increase food prices**

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**“Pensions system will collapse”**

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**We say:**

- Stop austerity and reverse the cuts.
- Introduce a living wage of £10 an hour and end zero-hour contracts.
- End the attacks on welfare - for a living income for all.
- Build a new mass working class party based on the trade unions, socialists and anti-cuts campaigns.
- Bring into public ownership the banks, oil and the big corporations that dominate the economy under democratically working class control.
- For an independent socialist Scotland as a step to a socialist Federation with England, Wales and Ireland and a socialist Europe.

Queuing up to hear socialist ideas

350 people attended the socialist case for independence meeting in Dundee on 15 April to hear Tommy Sheridan, former leader of the PCS union, speaking in a Socialist Party member. One hundred seats were left 15 minutes before the meeting started. Chairman Stewart Dix welcomed the meeting, explaining that it was organized to offer a vision that was absent from the official Yes cam- paign. “This meeting will discuss how the programme of independence could be used for the working class. It doesn’t come from the SNP. It comes from all of us.”

Tommy Sheridan made a very pow- erful speech arguing against Tory food banks and cuts. He announced that he planned to start a new party called for public ownership of gas, electricity, oil and the pharmaceutical industry, for a living wage and an end to public ownership of food banks. He was quick to point out that the Yes campaign was not putting it: “what is not in doubt - and has been out for years - but new is the level of confidence that there is a Yes vote that will win.”

Tommy Sheridan: Search for:

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Scotland: Capitalist ‘Project Fear’ backfiring?

**SCOTLAND: CAPITALIST ‘PROJECT FEAR’ BACKFIRING?**

The social case for independence

**Project Fear’ backfiring?**

This is not reflected by the policy of the Social Democratic Liberal Coalition. In its bid to prove itself a safe pair of hands for the UK, it walks away from the UK pound. “It would be crystal clear a no-winner would cause more capita-

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As we go to press the campaign for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition’s no-cuts challenge in May’s local elections has reached 554, with a few days to go before nominations close. Whatever the final tally is – and the official nomination process is full of pitfalls designed to intimidate working class people from participating in ‘politics’ – it has been a massive achievement to put such a challenge in place.

And it is a real coalition that has been assembled to make sure the establishment parties don’t have it all their own way - of trade unionists, community campaigners, and members of different socialist organisations.

The number of RMT members standing has now reached 54, from the union’s assistant general secretary through to regional council officials, branch secretaries, industrial reps and workplace activists.

And, while the Unite union general secretary Len McCluskey tells the Guardian that Labour will face ‘a defining moment’ at its policy forum in July, in May 137 Unite members will be standing under the TUSC umbrella, including the Southampton ‘rebel’ councillor and Unite member, Keith Morrell, expelled from the Labour Party for voting against the cuts.

There are a broad range of working class community fighters in all-bedroom tax organisations, local save our services groups, disabled people against cuts campaigns, etc who want to link their struggle with others by standing for election under the TUSC name. One of the Salford TUSC candidates is an anti-fracking activist at the Barton Moss protest.

Political spread

And there is a political spread. Candidates from the TUSC constituent socialist organisations, the Socialist Party, the SWP and the non-affiliated individuals organised in the TUSC umbrella, including the Southampton ‘rebel’ councillor and Unite member, Keith Morrell, expelled from the Labour Party for voting against the cuts.

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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 is standing hundreds of no-cuts candidates in the council elections against the ‘official nomination process’, voting through the destruction of jobs and services. Can you get involved? See tusc.org.uk

Vote TUSC to axe the bedroom tax

To be honest I’ve never been interested in politics. When I turned 18 I voted just because I could.

It soon became apparent to me that all of the parties were much the same and as a voter, I became dis- tended and confused at the cold, detached two-faced, greedy vibe from these parties who promised the earth and yet took away the moon.

Years rolled by and my disinterest in politics changed when the bedroom tax was introduced. I, and many others, am fighting to keep a bedroom, unlike the many politicians who draw the public purse for a second home.

How can they justify this suffocating tax that affects the most vulnerable in our society?

I was in a lot of debt due to the bedroom tax. If you don’t see an improvement worse and I was very scared.

I am one of the lucky ones, I knew where to go for help and advice. I believe there are many more people affected by this dreadful tax that we don’t know about. People who don’t know they have or can have a voice, who think they are alone. Well you are not alone and you do have a voice. Vote TUSC! We don’t promise to fight alongside you. Together we will fight to scrap the bedroom tax.

Sarah Smith Coventry

An RMT member who will be standing as a TUSC candidate went to her local pub seeking the ten names for her nomination. She went to her local pub seeking the ten names for her nomination. Now that’s the way to do it!

Can you imagine any Labour or other party candidate doing that? They’d be booted off the premises.

Wally Kennedy

Fighting for a fair, socialist society

All recent governments have attacked the hard-won rights of the trade union movement such as paid holidays and the NHS. With the serious weakening of the union position in the Labour party, will these rights survive the vicious cuts the three main parties want to implement to fix the crisis caused by the bosses?

Do we want to live in a society where we make you pay for decent healthcare as politicians cut funding to the NHS? Anyone with a heart would want a society where everyone has a good living standard with equal opportunity to get where they want in life no matter the wealth of their families. These simple ideas of socialism have been abandoned by Labour.

I’m proud to say that I will be standing as a TUSC candidate and doing my bit to bring in a fair socialist society for all. As Ralph Nader said: “If you don’t turn onto politics, then politics will turn on you”.

We are class fighters and we are winning. People have lost faith in politicians and the main parties don’t represent the working class and argued that Ukip was not an alternative. Socialist Party activist Mike Forster said: “Labour has moved so far to the right that you can’t even put a fag paper between the Conserva-

atives, Labour and the Lib Dems. The working class no longer has a voice. People have lost hope in politicians… We are class fighters and we are not going to sell out our class. That’s the difference between TUSC and all the other political parties stand-

ing in this election.”

Showing that these points struck a chord, we signed up one new Socialist Party member on the night and a further eight expressing an interest in finding out more.

Val O’Flynn

Successful meeting to launch TUSC in Grimsby

“A new party ‘for working class’ un- veiled at meeting” was the headline in the Grimsby Evening Telegraph after a public meeting on 14 April to launch TUSC.

Dave Mitchell, who chaired the meeting, opened by introducing the nine candidates standing in Grimsby in May’s election, explaining what we stand for and how we can make a difference if elected.

The meeting also heard from Malcolm Moorland, former Lib Dem and Labour councillor now standing for TUSC.

Malcolm criticised the record of both parties in the area stating that “the main parties don’t represent the working class” and argued that...
Building Socialist Alternative in the United States

Kohama Sawant's election as city councillor in Seattle has received repeated national media attention. Kohama is a member of Socialist Alternative – co-thinkers of the CWI in the US. This has helped to revivify interest in socialist ideas and establishing Socialist Alternative as a pole of attraction for workers and youth looking to get active in the struggle against capitalism.

Kohama's victory and the heightened national profile of Socialist Alternative come at a time when people are searching for a political alternative to the two major parties on a scale not seen in decades.

Growing fast

Across the country, we're growing at a faster pace than we ever have before. Our membership has increased by over 200 since our election victory – and more than half of that growth has been in areas where, previously, Socialist Alternative had not yet established branches.

Kohama and Socialist Alternative have shown that we are capable of using our elected position not just as a platform to popularise socialist ideas, but also to energise grassroots members. Kohama is using the momentum of our election victory to lead the 11 New Campaign, which is poised to win the highest minimum wage in the US.

As a result, people across the country are convinced that socialist ideas are an effective guide to strategy for winning real gains in living standards. In March, 21 cities across the country participated in a week of action for a $15 an hour minimum wage. Branches of Socialist Alternative, including brand new branches, led these actions in support of a truly historic step forward for working people.

Requests to join poured in by the hundreds on our website following Kohama's election victory and again following her appearance on Democracy Now! But the largest flood of interest came after Kohama gave a response to President Obama's State of the Union address in January. The response was viewed online by nearly 100,000 people – mostly on either the Republican or Tea Party reps.

This shows the demand for an alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the two major parties. The political impact of Kohama Sawant has spread far beyond Seattle!

In 2014, people have joined Socialist Alternative from 45 new cities – several of them have already developed new groups in their areas. We're on track to more than double our membership this coming year through recruiting working people across the country.

From the Bay Area, California, to Birmingham, Alabama; from Port-land, Oregon to Portland, Maine; and from Washington, DC, to Honolulu, Hawaii, members are organizing in their workplaces, campuses and communities. In February, Socialist Alternative held our first Southern Regional Conference with activities from Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana.

New branches

Socialist Alternative's first member in Hawai'i, Thomas Nishimura, joined after seeing the coverage of Kohama's election victory on Al Jazeera. He explains that he was looking for "a presence that has the direction and strategy to help lift the people of Hawaii out of the fog and to break free from the chains of corporate imperialism.

The time is right to build a strong force of workers to open the two-party system in Hawai'i! People across the US are seeking out and building a new global anti-capitalist movement.

Greece: International anti-fascist conference "No pasaran!"

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

http://knowyourstuff.org

One page of a document containing text about the growth of Socialist Alternative in the United States, with a focus on Kohama Sawant's election and her impact on the movement. The text discusses the increase in membership, the spread of socialist ideas, and the growing political landscape in the US.

China: labour disputes soar

Workers at six out of ten factories in Dongguan, China, owned by Taiwanese multinational Yue Yuen, have taken strike action after discovering the company has not been paying legally required levels of social security and housing contributions.

The strike is emblematic of a new wave of labour struggles especially in Guangdong, where Dongguan is located, and other developed regions of China. Samsung, Lenovo, Nokia and Wal-Mart are among the companies by recent stoppages. Strikes are up by almost one third in the first quarter of 2014 compared to the same period last year.

Dongguan, known as “the world’s factory” has a workforce of around ten million. In recent years it has been badly hit by the global crisis and downturn in China’s traditional export markets. The city has experienced repeated worker strikes over severance pay, wage arrears and non-payment of so-called fringe benefits.

The latest Yue Yuen strike involves tens of thousands of workers. Media reports give contradictory figures. This is to be expected given the fog of official censorship, while strikes are of course illegal in China. According to NGO activist Zhang Zhi-rui, who is in contact with strike organizers, more than 30,000 workers went on strike on Monday 14 April, with more joining on Tuesday. The Global Times, which presumably has its own sources within the security apparatus, also put the number of strikers at 40,000.

Yue Yuen’s website boasts it is “the world’s largest branded footwear manufacturer” churning out 300 million pairs of shoes a year for Nike, Adidas, Reebok, ASICS, New Balance, Puma, Converse, Salomon and Timberland among others. In recent years Yue Yuen has been shifting production to Indonesia and Vietnam where wages are lower.

All companies are, under Chinese law, supposed to pay full mandatory social insurance for workers – including pensions, medical insurance, housing allowances and injury compensation. Recent legal reforms allowing migrant workers to transfer these payments when they relocate to other cities has led workers to pay closer attention to how companies fulfill these obligations. A study by US-based China Labor Watch found that none of its survey group of 400 companies had paid the full amount of mandatory social insurance. So the problems facing the Yue Yuen workers – corporate evasion of social security contributions – are endemic across the manufacturing industry.

Some of my colleagues estimate that Yue Yuen owes the workers as much as one billion yuan over the years. A mid-level manager told China Labour Bulletin that the Yue Yuen strike began on 5 April, when hundreds of workers staged a protest action by blocking a nearby bridge. The company promised to resolve the issues, but its later offer failed to meet workers demands which led to a resumption of the strike on 14 April. Thousands took part in a protest march behind a banner that proclaimed: “Pay back the social security and public housing funding! Shame on Yue Yuen’s illegal activities!”

The government has drafted in around 2,000 police from cities including Guangzhou and Zhuhai. Around 20 strikers were arrested at this demos, according to eyewitnesses, who also said that some workers who held banners had been beaten.

Significantly, and replying a pattern seen elsewhere, police repression seems to have hardened the resolve of the workers, with reports of strike leaders running. Despite the regime’s increasing resort to repression and arrests, the rising tide of strikes shows not only the will to fight on the part of Chinese workers, but also a clear trend towards more sophisticated organization and tactics. Workers expectations are also rising. Online posts by striking Yue Yuen workers criticise the role of the official company-controlled trade union and demand the right to elect their own union representatives. This is an unstoppable process of workers struggling to build their own independent organisations in order to fight capitalist exploitation and the chains imposed upon the working masses by a dictatorial police state. Workers and trade unions around the world should give maximum support to these struggles in “the world’s factory!”
Workers’ Memorial Day
Building workers must strike for safety

Dave Walsh
Unitc councillor, Liverpool council deputy secretary of a large Unite construction branch

Workers’ Memorial Day is on 28 April. In many towns and cities, construction workers and their trade union branches will take a lead in organising activities. The reason for this is simple: construction is Britain’s most dangerous and deadly industry.

The Observer put this in context on 13 April, reporting that since 2001 there had been 760 workers killed on British sites; almost twice the number of soldiers killed in action in Afghanistan over the same period. And these figures don’t include the thousands of building workers who die each year as a result of exposure to asbestos, respirable crystalline silica and diesel exhausts.

The reasons for the industry’s dire record are clear; over the last 30 years it has been deregulated and casualised, while bogus self-employment, anti-trade union laws and the industry blacklist have pushed unions to the margins and left workers too afraid to raise concerns about dangerous practices. As well as this, since 2011 Health and Safety Executive funding has been cut by 35%.

In 2010, yet another public inquiry into the industry’s notorious state was overseen by Lady Dunaghy. Her conclusion - welcomed by then Labour prime minister Gordon Brown - was that not much could be done about casualisation because of its benefits to the industry.

So instead of recommending changes which would encourage direct employment and increase trade union density on sites she called for a new government minister to be created for construction. This was a feeble attempt to give the appearance of worker-participation while completely ignoring the pernicious practice of blacklisting in the industry.

Incredibly, brave and determined trade union activists like Frank Morris and Steve Atkinson have fought and won great victories over their employers in their fights to uncover and overcome the blacklist. Their campaigns helped build the confidence of rank and file activists in construction and helped the legal claims of thousands of victimised shop stewards and safety reps.

However, successive governments have failed building workers and worked hand in glove with industry bosses to marginalise trade unions. But workers have already begun to fight back. In 2009 workers won a stunning victory at Lindsey Oil Refinery after they took unofficial strike action to defend their national agreement (NAECI).

Striking back
In 2012 electricians took on a number of large construction firms which were trying to scrap their national agreement and attack their pay terms and conditions. Their rank and file campaign of protests and unofficial walkouts culminated in an official strike action ballot by Unite which forced the firms to capitulate.

Employers are now attempting to circumvent new regulations by forcing workers into umbrella payment systems. The strategy is to avoid paying holiday pay and to force the employer to pay the company’s NI contributions as well as their own.

But, again, building workers are fighting back.

On 4 April, 30 construction workers in Sussex downs tools and demanded direct employment for the duration of the job. They were successful and now enjoy the industry rate under the IB national agreement. And at the Manchester City training ground site, agency electricians working for Balfour Beatty sat in the cabin over similar attacks on their pay terms and conditions.

However, trade union density on building sites remains low. If this is to be turned around, the construction unions need to organise a national demonstration reinforced with the threat of a general strike. There should be a clear demand for direct employment and national agreements, i.e., proper terms and conditions, including health and safety.

Most agency workers on building sites don’t even claim the holiday pay that they lawfully accrue because they know if they don’t they get a call to return to work. There would be a tremendous response from these workers if the unions mounted a serious campaign for their rights. Their strike action would be strong and could eventually be coordinated with all the other unions in struggle.

Many unions including the NUT, FBU and NAPO have live national industrial action bulletins while many other unions are organising local disputes across the country, yet the TUC has failed to follow the initiative passed at its congress in 2012 which called on it to look into the practicalities of coordinating a general strike.

What is clear is that many trade union leaders are terrified of the political challenge that a general strike represents. This is why it is so important that a new workers’ party is created so that trade unions have political allies who are able to voice their campaigns.

TUSC will mount the biggest left-of-Labour challenge for generations in May’s local elections. TUSC candidates will campaign on issues affecting building workers and all other workers. We must continue to campaign within the trade unions to win support for TUSC and break the link with the Labour Party.

Rev Phil Lamb

The sun shone down on 15 April 1989. Little did Liverpool FC football fans heading for a cup semi-final know the sun would soon turn into the darkest night of their soul.

As the football ground got closer, they could see others they knew dressed in Liverpool’s famous red shirt, the songs, the banter, the You’ll Never Walk Alone, sung from the street and from the stands. At 3.06pm the singing stopped as 96 Liverpool fans perished on the Leppings Lane terrace at Hillsborough.

25 years later, fathers walk with sons, mothers with daughters and friends as brothers in arms bearing scarves from European teams and continue to fight for truth and justice, remembering Annie Williams who sadly died last year campaigning so hard for 24 years.

One banner stated: “Justice for the 96. Justice denial. There is no denying, justice is finally coming to a city and a football club whose families and supporters would not be silenced. They have never walked alone, not will they walk alone until justice for the 96 is received.”

25 years after Hillsborough
‘A day of coming together in unity’

photo Pete Dunwell

among the hundreds of flowers at the Memorial Service. Scarves from European teams were held aloft alongside the Liverpools faithful as Gerry Marsden led an emotional You’ll Never Walk Alone. Over 20,000 people sang their hearts out as balloons (one for each of the 96 and a number 25 balloon) were released into the Mersey sky. The service led with great sensitivity by local clergies, showed what the day was all about, a coming together in unity. Standing ovations were given to Brendan Rogens, Liverpool’s manager and Roberto Martinez from Everton who paid tribute to those who fought and continue to fight for justice, remembering Anne Williams who sadly died last year after campaigning so hard for 24 years.
The Broad Left Organising Committee
Organising militant workers

Bill Mullins

Thirty years ago a national conference took place in Sheffield organised by the Broad Left Organising Committee (Bloc). Thousands attended, with 500 turned away due to lack of space. The meeting coincided with the start of the miners’ strike in March 1984. The miners’ strike was a culmination of the rising tide of anger against the Margaret Thatcher government and its attacks on the trade union movement. Thatcher, the Tory prime minister, was preparing to close down the mining industry, mainly to break the most powerful trade union at the time, the NUM.

Launch of Bloc
Bloc was a formation of trade union broad lefths which had been set up earlier in response to developments in the Labour Party and the use of the trade union block vote in an undemocratic way by the right-wing trade union leaders. At that time many of the broad lefths were led or influenced by supporters of the Militant (the former name of the Socialist Party). Militant argued that, because of the growing list of attacks on the working class and the miserably low pay for them, the time was right to re-launch Bloc as a new initiative. The aim was to try to give a lead from below to all those ready to struggle against the Tory onslaught.

It was clear that the original aims of Bloc would need to be developed. Bloc had developed a certain amount of activity among many trade union activists. It needed to develop this rank-and-file organisation and at the same time continue to put pressure on the official trade union bodies to prepare their members for the coming struggle.

Bloc played an important role in mobilising workers and the miners throughout their strike, including organising pickets of the power stations and a 2,000-strong lobby of the TUC conference in September 1984 to demand a 24-hour general strike to back the miners.

Importance of strategy
Bloc held tremendously important meetings throughout the 1980s on many issues, including important international workers’ struggles. This included a London conference in October 1986 against the privatisation of Thames Water. Regional Bloc organisations were developed. In April 1986 the second national Bloc conference again took place in Sheffield. The miners’ strike had finished in March 1985. The defeat of the miners affected the mood of the whole working class. Nevertheless, 1,600 trade union delegates were at the conference to debate the key issues of the day.

The conference was called in conjunction with the socialist-led Liverpool district Labour Party and its theme was “how to map out a strategy to defeat the witch-hunt [in the Labour Party] and build the left.” In 1983 the Labour Party’s national leaders had expelled the five members of the Militant newspaper editorial board and in November 1983 they suspended Liverpool district Labour Party, in their drive to suppress socialist ideas. Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool councilors who had been sacked from office by the Tory government in 1983 along with 47 others, addressed the conference.

The conference also highlighted the battle by the South African working class against apartheid and discussed how the trade unions in Britain should aid that struggle. The president of the South African Transport and General Workers’ Union, Jeremiah Zulu, got a standing ovation when he called for direct links between the rank and file of the trade unions in Britain and South Africa.

The Special conference was held in July 1986 in Birmingham, attended by over 350 delegates. This had the theme of fighting the privatisation of the public sector which had been unleashed by the Thatcher government.

At the time Dave Nellist was the Labour MP for Coventry South East. He opened the conference by calling for the re-nationalisation of all privatised services and industries with one third of the management boards made up of elected representatives of workers in the industry, one third from the TUC and one third from a Labour government. Compensation would only be paid based on proven need. The conference called for Bloc to create a health service broadly left to fight NHS privatisation.

One-day general strike?
Bloc organised another conference in February 1988 which over 1,200 delegates attended, including many from the health service. When it was planned in September 1987 nobody foresaw the explosion of strikes, ranging from the health service to Port in Basildon and many others that would take place leading up to the conference.

On one night shift in Manchester 38 nurses had taken strike action in frustration at understaffing, working conditions and low pay. They then left the RCN and joined Unison, which later became part of Unison. The strike hit the headlines and forced the government into a u-turn which was massively support on the TV and media generally.

This changed the whole mood of the trade union movement.

The conference called for the TUC to organise a one-day general strike in support of the NHS and the TUC was forced - by the mood of workers - to organise a national day of action on this issue, which included strike action at local level.

Bloc’s role was crucial in showing what could be done if the trade union movement got together and acted in union. Unfortunately, despite Bloc’s growing influence, the right wing dominance at the top of the unions effectively blocked the path to more militant action.

The right wing’s policies were based on acceptance of the market and capitalism. The argument was that this required a “new realism” – in other words, unlike the 1970s when militancy was the norm, which the right wing argued led to the Thatcher government.

It was clear that by the end of the 1980s the role that Bloc could play in that period was drawing to a close. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and capitalist ideological offensive led to a fall in political consciousness of many trade union activists.

It required new events and a new, younger layer of activists to be brought into the struggle before the human forces for any new similar organisation would be available.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) today, in a very different political climate following the world economic crisis, has that chance. Indeed it is beginning to draw around in a new layer of trade union and community activists. It can fight to give an organisational form to the tremendous anger among working people against the government’s policies.

Bloc’s programme sought to unite all the struggles that workers were involved in. It called for:

- Regular election of all trade union officials
- Only the average workers’ wage for all officials
- Opposition to all witch-hunts in the Labour Party and the unions
- Building the shop stewards’ combines at local, regional, and national level
- A 35-hour week without loss of pay
- A campaign to defeat the attacks on abortion rights
- Repeal of all the anti-union laws
- Full support for health workers and for a 24-hour general strike
Every job matters!

SUPPORT THE TUBE WORKERS’ STRIKE

John Reid
President RMT London Transport regional council

RMT members working on London Underground (LU) will strike on 28-30 April and 5-8 May. This is because talks at Acas with LU have failed to make any progress. In fact, LU have reneged on their undertakings made when our strike in February was suspended to allow talks to take place. During this time LU has also rendered for driverless trains – another threat to safety on the tube.

After eight weeks of negotiations LU are still saying that every ticket office will close by the end of 2015. When we suspended our strike they undertook to review every station and that some ticket offices could stay open. But only five stations have been reviewed.

They plan to cut nearly 1,800 front-line staff and create 968 new managers. This clearly shows that these cuts are nothing to do with ‘modernisation’ but everything to do with cutting station staff and threatening safety on the tube. Our work is being downgraded and we face job cuts and pay cuts unless we fight for every job.

As well as the series of strikes in April and May we will be campaigning to get our message across to tube travellers - this will include demonstrations and protests.

The RMT has called a national mobilisation for the London May Day demo (details below). We will be celebrating the life of our general secretary Bob Crow with a rally in Trafalgar Square. And the building of an effective struggle to defend our members’ jobs on the tube and a decent public service for all is an important part of that celebration.

Tube travellers know that their safety depends on proper staffing levels in the stations and elsewhere. They supported our strike in February and we will be campaigning for their support again.

The strike runs from 9pm on 28 April to 9pm on 30 April and from 9pm on 5 May until 9pm on 8 May. (Fleet grades will start and finish their strikes at 6.30pm)

There will be an overtime ban among station staff from 29 April until further notice.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

As part of the campaign to defend jobs and services on London Underground, 35 RMT members are standing as candidates in the local authority elections under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

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 achieve possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to achieve what we stand for.

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