

SOCIALISM2014

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After the \$15 victory in
Seattle, hear
socialist
councillor
Kshama Sawant



the Socialist

www.socialistparty.org.uk

9-15 October 2014

Issue 828

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STRIKING TO END LOW PAY



ESCALATE COORDINATED ACTION

The Socialist Party says:

- Fight the pay freeze
- £10 an hour minimum wage
- End zero-hour contracts
- Major investment in job creation
- A society for the millions – not the billionaires!

Join the 18 October TUC London demo
Britain needs a pay rise

Assembles Embankment, 11am

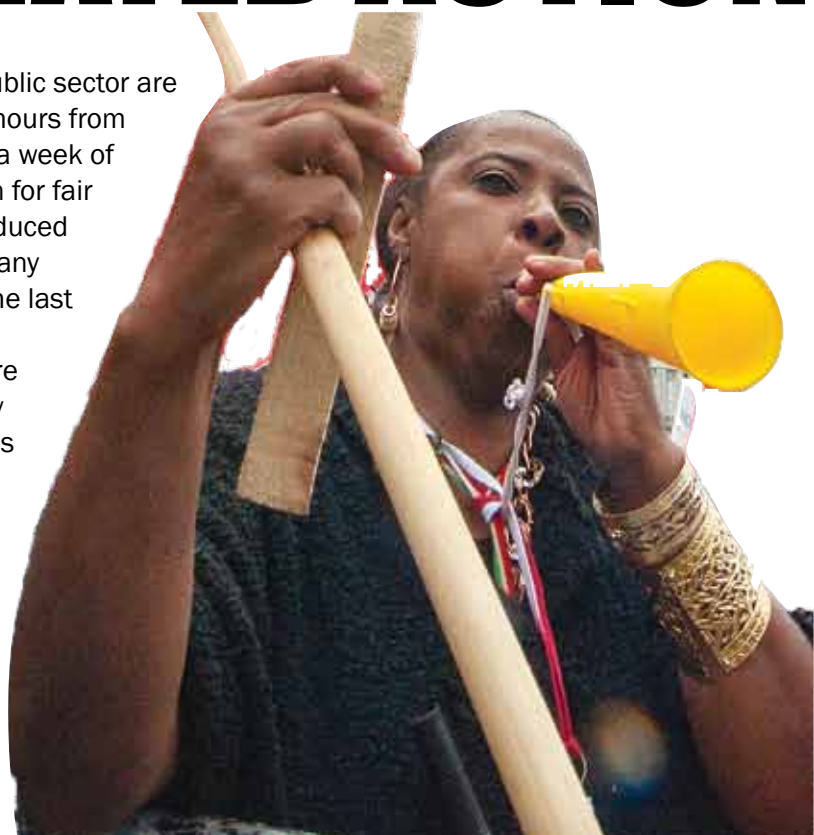
“Workers from across the public sector are striking over a period of 72 hours from 13 to 15 October as part of a week of coordinated industrial action for fair pay. The government has reduced real terms pay by 20% for many public sector workers over the last four years.

The government’s attacks are not just confined to pay, they are also about jobs, pensions and privatisation.

To win, we must be serious and that means the effective use of industrial action to defeat austerity.”

John McNally, PCS union national vice president

See more on pages 2 and 4



PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD • telephone: 020 8988 8777 • email: info@socialistparty.org.uk

the Socialist

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We can beat the pay freeze!

The national vice president of the PCS civil servants' union, **John McNally**, spoke to the Socialist about the 13-15 October strikes and the strategy needed to defeat the public sector pay freeze.

Why are public sector workers striking?

Workers from across the public sector are striking over a period of 72 hours from 13 to 15 October as part of a week of coordinated industrial action for fair pay. The government has reduced real terms pay by 20% for many public sector workers over the last four years. In actual fact many public sector workers have been effectively on a pay freeze for between six and eight years.

Many of our members are on very low wages and are really feeling the impact. Some Tory politicians are saying the freeze should last to 2016 and beyond. We need effective coordinated strike action across the public sector in order to defeat it. Trying to get settlements within the pay constraints set down by the government can only lead to spiralling poverty amongst public sector workers.

Who is involved?

PCS, GMB, Unison, Unite, UCU and others are involved. These unions

represent the workers who keep our country going. Civil servants, local government, education and health service workers are all taking action. RMT members on London Underground will also be striking against job cuts.

How is the action being coordinated?

This strike follows on from the successful day of action on 10 July. PCS has argued for coordinated action across the public sector to stop government attacks not just on pay, but on pensions and terms and conditions. PCS has brought this demand to successive TUC congresses and has won support on each occasion.

In reality, while the action in October is coordinated in the general sense, it would be more accurate to describe it as cooperative action. This is because there is not an overall linking of demands and a planned coordinated strategy for after October.

We have consistently called for the fullest possible coordination



The London strike rally on 10 July photo Paul Mattsson

among all public sector unions. These attacks stem from the same source and can only be defeated by fullest possible solidarity and unity in action, including coordinating strike action.

It is important too to coordinate our demands. PCS is calling for an end to the pay freeze but other unions are seeking to reach settlements at sector level within the constraints of the pay freeze. It is our view that we need to defeat the pay freeze and that should be the demand across the public sector unions.

The government's attacks are not just confined to pay though. They are also about, jobs, pensions and privatisation. PCS argues that rather than fighting separately we all need to be fighting together.

What are the next steps after the October strikes?

This action in October is very important and union members will want to see a stepping up of the action and for a fight on all the issues that are leading to the destruction of terms, conditions and services.

PCS will be pressing other unions to more closely coordinate their action in order to put more pressure on the government. This should clearly involve more national action

but also coordinated targeted action across different public service sectors.

PCS itself is building for targeted action across the civil service and has set up a levy for that purpose. We will also continue to take action at departmental group level where it is necessary and this will be coordinated across the union.

Are these strikes just aimed at the coalition government or will they continue if Labour gets elected next year?

Labour shadow chancellor Ed Balls and leader Ed Miliband have made it absolutely clear they will stick to the Tory spending plans. For our members and workers generally that can only mean more cuts, privatisation and relentless austerity.

We fought the Labour governments under Blair and Brown when they cut and privatised and we will fight Labour if it continues on that course if it wins the election. Of course nobody wants to see the Tories returned but neither do people want to see a continuation of the same austerity policies and that is why we need an alternative.

The trade union movement must be an independent voice fearlessly

representing workers' interests whoever is in power. Labour is no longer interested in representing the interests of workers, it is wholly in the grip of corporate interests. Effective 'no-strike agreements' have existed under previous Labour governments and some Labour-affiliated unions.

Any such attempts to dampen union struggles under a Labour government pursuing austerity policies will lead to a fundamental revolt against affiliation itself and leaderships who put affiliation to Labour above the interests of their members.

How can these strikes stop the cuts?

The trade unions are a major force in society representing and speaking for millions of workers and their families. It is a force that is capable of stopping these cuts by campaigning against austerity.

The TUC could build the widest possible alliance potentially including millions of working class and middle class people sickened by the brutality of the government's austerity programme. But to win, we must be serious and that means the effective use of industrial action to defeat austerity.

Socialist Party says: determined fight needed

If we are to win the 13-18 October week of action needs to be one step in a determined fight for victory.

Workers have shown their determination to struggle time and again. Two million walked out in defence of pensions in a mass strike on 30 November 2011.

But their courage was not matched by the right-wing trade union leaders who, instead of building on the big success and popularity of the strike, settled for a few crumbs.

As we go to press, there is a danger of a repetition of this if local government unions call off action on 14 October due to a new, but little improved, offer from the employers.

Instead, we need further mass coordinated strike action to smash the pay freeze. It should be a step towards a 24-hour general strike.

The unions could also draw behind them millions of unorganised workers and all others suffering from these brutal cuts.

The only way to defeat the attacks of the employers and the government is to determinedly set out to organise and fight until we win.

The best way to keep pressure on union leaders is through building democratic fighting left organisations in the trade unions, through organising local strike committees and involving more members in the activity and structures of the unions.

This is why the Socialist Party backs the National Shop Stewards Network.

www.shopstewards.net



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Kshama will be speaking at the Saturday night rally along with Bakers' union president Ian Hodson, Irish TD Ruth Coppinger, PCS general secretary Mark Serwojka and Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe

After the historic \$15 victory, don't miss Seattle's socialist councillor **KSHAMA SAWANT**



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NHS - The black hole

Stop the cuts, scrap rip-off PFI privatisation schemes

An NHS worker

The National Health Service (NHS) is mired in a deep financial crisis and in a desperate attempt to highlight this a body of health professionals have written an open letter to the government.

A conservative estimate says the NHS shortfall amounts to a black hole of £30 billion but others put this figure closer to £50 billion.

We see desperate patients in pain and distress waiting for appointments for scans and treatment and when frontline staff complain to management we are fobbed off or told 'you must do more work'.

We have seen our own pay frozen in the face of the increasing demands being put on us. Many more of us face being demoted and down-banded as fat cat private companies continue to leach off our NHS.

Privatisation

The Tory funding freeze, which they deceitfully call 'ringfencing the NHS budget', is one factor behind rising NHS debt.

However the introduction of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) into the NHS and their rapid expansion by New Labour in the late 1990s created a financial time bomb which is now about to detonate.

When PFI was being rolled out the Labour party allowed consortia of building companies and financial houses to flood into the NHS to build and refurbish hospitals at extortionate rents, spanning 30 years. Several NHS trusts have gone bankrupt as result of PFI debt.

We are also seeing a rise in the privatisation of core health care services, and NHS trusts are paying huge sums to buy in services from private companies who offer less. On top of this there is the added financial burden of administering these contracts. The state of hospital



NHS workers will strike for the first time in 30 years photo Paul Mattsson

meals post-privatisation is a warning. They are so dire that this issue has hit the headlines.

The privatisation of public services leads to rising costs, worse services and increased charges for patients. Hospital bosses are now talking of charging patients £75 a night for the 'hotel costs' of staying in a hospital. In the USA 62% of all bankruptcies are as a result of medical bills.

The NHS staff appeal to the Tories will fall on deaf ears. The Tories will carry on with their policy of freezing the NHS budget if they get re-elected.

The Labour party pledges £2 billion in 'new money' to the NHS but this is woefully inadequate considering the funding black hole. Whichever mainstream party gets

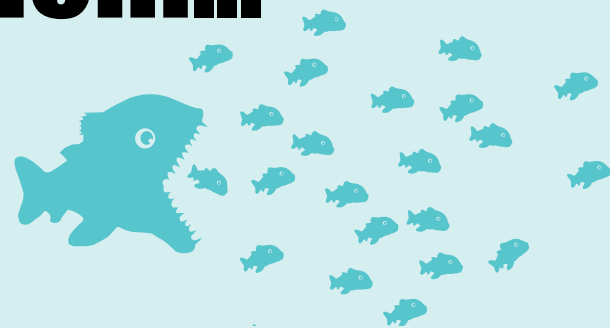
elected the tranche of cuts and the damage wrought by the privatisation of services will continue.

Nurses and other NHS workers are demoralised and desperate. For the first time in over 30 years unionised health workers are coming out on strike over our pay on 13 October. Industrial action is the most effective measure we can take that will force this government to take the future of the NHS seriously.

Half a day's action can be a starting point to escalating the industrial action in co-ordination with the other trade unionists in the public sector who provide essential services for our patients.

Our patients need us to step up and fight to prevent the total destruction of the NHS. If we can't fight for ourselves let's do it for them!

Them...



Room to rent

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, Tory Mayor of London, has an interesting take on what is "affordable". He has approved 98 "affordable rent" flats in Camden with tenants paying up to £2,800 a month or £34,000 a year. It's estimated that a family sized flat in this scheme would require tenants having an annual household income of over £100,000.

basement price of £747 million. Billionaire tax exile owner Richard Branson is now expected to make several hundred million pounds when Virgin Money is floated. All the Treasury will get is a £50 million fee.

Great train robbery

Talking of £50 million... that's the same figure which privately owned Train Operating Companies (TOC) handed over to passengers for delays after receiving more than three times as much - £167 million - in compensation from Network Rail, the publicly funded railway infrastructure company. One of the TOC's is, of course, Virgin Trains.

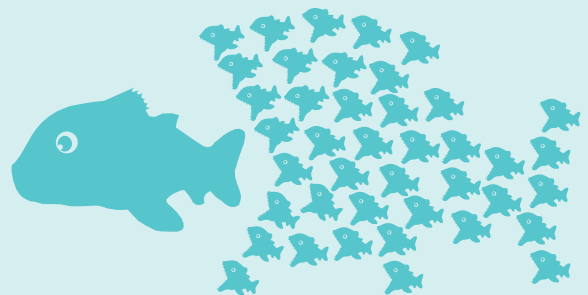
Scrap human rights

The Daily Mail has been wetting itself in recent headlines, trumpeting David Cameron's pledge to scrap the Human Rights Act if the Tory government is re-elected.

Instead of the HRA we can all sleep safely in our beds at night knowing that Home Secretary Teresa May is guarding our democratic rights by introducing a draconian 'snoopers charter' to allow British spooks even more powers to spy on us. After all, as big Dave points out, the HRA has: "Stop[ped] us deporting suspected terrorists."

Presumably he is referring to suspected terrorists such as Abu Qatada who, after a long and costly legal battle, was eventually deported to Jordan and found... "not guilty".

...& Us



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UK - A tax haven for the super-rich

Simon Carter

Prime Minister David Cameron pledged at Tory party conference to make tax cuts to assist 30 million "hardworking families".



We're paying for their crisis

However, according to tax experts, the main beneficiaries won't be the claimed 30 million but only the rich. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies only 15% of the gains from increasing the personal tax allowance would benefit the poorest 50% of people in the country.

And to pay for these £7 billion of tax breaks the millionaire Tory Chancellor, George Osborne, intends to apply more brutal public spending cuts. These including hitting 10 million households with a two-year freeze on benefits and tax credits amounting to £3 billion.

These extra cuts will devastate the poorest and most vulnerable families, who could lose up to £490 a year, are on top of the government's current austerity measures.

And having got the Tory party faithful salivating over these attacks Osborne tossed them another bone in the shape of continuing to freeze public sector workers' pay until 2017.

These attacks are entirely consistent with the Tory strategy of making the working class pay for the crisis in capitalism. Last year, Osborne introduced the hated 'bedroom tax' at the same time as lowering the top rate of income tax.

But with one eye on an angry electorate the Chancellor revived his discredited 'were all in it together' soundbite by announcing (again) that he's going to crack down on aggressive tax avoidance by the super-rich and giant corporations like Apple and Starbucks, etc.

George failed to mention that, like his Labour predecessors, he has consistently reduced the standard rate of corporation tax to one the lowest in Western Europe.

In addition, he has cut the tax rate on company profits derived from 'patented products' making the effective rate of corporation tax in the UK the lowest in the EU. As one economist put it: "The UK is now a tax haven for corporations!"

What we saw (cut!)



Lewisham council turns misery into a game with its "Big Budget Challenge"

Caring, sharing council cutters in the Labour-run south London borough of Lewisham have meekly accepted 'savings' ie cuts, of £85 million over the next three years.

But why keep all the fun for yourself? The council has launched a new online game, the "Big Budget Challenge", where residents are encouraged to 'balance the books'.

By moving sliders into the red, you can resolve the borough's funding crisis. Links detail exactly how many indispensable services will disappear as you swing your axe.

We weren't surprised to see that the sliders "reserves" and "prudential borrowing" were left off. As was the option to fight central government and win back essential funding.

Nice try Lewisham, but we prefer Super Mario Bros. At least there we get to fight the baddies instead of each other.

Public sector: why we have to strike

Brian Debus
Chair, Hackney Unison (personal capacity)

The October week of action is not before time: we have all suffered under a massive onslaught of job cuts and pay cuts since this Con-Dem government of the rich for the rich came to power.

This is not to let Labour off the hook: it also presided over cuts to living standards when it was in power. It has also promised to stick to Tory spending plans.

Local government employers have just blinked with a measly increase on their original 1% pay offer.

This indicates a fear that workers will start to realise their potential power through this current wave of

strike action for decent pay.

It is estimated that ordinary people - the working class - are on average £40 a week worse off than they were five years ago.

Contrast this to chief executives' pay: 45 times the average wage in 1998 and now 185 times.

In 2014 the richest 1,000 individuals combined wealth rose by 15.4%. So much, for all being in this together.

This is a weak and divided government. While they squabble lets stand together united for a £1 an hour pay rise.

Talk to your workmates, if they have not yet joined the union get them to do so and make our strike that much stronger.

Better still join the picket line at your workplace and publicise this strike to the world.



Pickets in Hackney on the 10 July public sector strike photo Paul Mattsson

Teachers: Pay rise? What pay rise?

As a teacher I have just been awarded the 1% pay increase which all teachers are potentially eligible to receive. At 1%, I wasn't expecting a huge increase but an extra £20 or £30 a month might pay for a night out or some other luxury.

When I opened my payslip this month, imagine my surprise when I found I was actually £6 a month worse off! When I compared my current payslip with last month's more closely, I found that my pension contribution had been

increased beyond my pay rise. This is a case of giving with one hand and taking with the other - the teachers' pension scheme is centrally run by government! Since this government's austerity measures started four years ago, the average teacher is 12% worse off. Or to put it another way we are now working a month for free. This is yet another reason for NUT members to vote for strike action in the current ballot.

Mick Whale, secretary Hull NUT

RMT tube workers join October action

Bill Johnson
London Underground worker

RMT transport workers' union has called a 48 hour strike on 14-15 October as the union continues to fight against London Underground's (LU) plans to cut around 900 jobs and reduce grades and pay-rates across stations on the tube.

In response to previous action by RMT, LU has been forced to offer

significant changes to its proposals that could protect the pay of existing members.

But LU still plans cuts of around £8,000 for new staff or those who get promoted in future. Existing staff would have to take on many new responsibilities in order to keep their pay.

LU is now insisting that any changes to its plans are linked to the unions accepting the proposals and moving on to discuss how they are

implemented. This is unacceptable to RMT.

RMT has fought a tenacious struggle against LU's plans in spite of being left isolated by the other unions on the tube. A unified strike by RMT, TSSA and Aslef could deliver a knock-out blow against LU management, the London Mayor and Department of Transport.

Nevertheless, RMT has forced LU to change its position and this action must force further movement.

Support Care UK day of action



A national day of action is due to take place on Friday 10 October on Doncaster Care UK workers' 81st day of strike action against 35% pay cuts. Protests will take place outside Care UK offices and other Bridgepoint-owned companies including Pret A Manger and Fat Face. Please send donations to Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5GJ (write cheques to 'Doncaster, District & Bassetlaw Health Branch') photo Karl Lang

Sheffield: Green workers red with anger

Alistair Tice

Money for old rope! Trade unions suspect that the boss of the 'charity' company running Sheffield's recycling centres is taking excessive consultancy fees and expenses out of the accounts.

Pete Davies, GMB regional officer said: "What's come to light is that £60,000 is paid out and that's absolutely incensed our members. They've seen their hours reduced, they work weekends and evenings without premium rates, and all of this money is being siphoned out"

So 30 recycling workers, GMB members, went on strike on Monday 6 October and will strike again for four days from Friday 10 October. They are demanding premium rates, welfare facilities on site, and an end to the bullying of some members (for whistle-blowing about these fi-

nancial improprieties).

The Green Company was set up in 2012 after charity SOVA, which used to run the recycling centres, transferred its share capital to another charity Salvaire.

The Green Company is sub-contracted to run the sites by multinational Veolia, which is contracted by Sheffield's Labour council to run the privatised waste management services. Profit from The Green Company goes to Salvaire.

Martine Laffan-Butler is a trustee and chairman of Salvaire and director and executive chairman of The Green Company.

Last year's accounts from Companies House show she was remunerated £10,085 expenses as direc-

tor of The Green Company. Another company for which she is a director, Roughly Translated Limited, was paid £45,146 by The Green Company for consultancy services, and £3,997 for expenses.

Pete said: "That's angered our members. If there is this money, then why are we still waiting for facilities like showers? A decent toilet in winter, somewhere to have a wash and a bit of honesty isn't a lot to ask for."

This whole saga is an embarrassment to the Labour council who must end Green Co's contract immediately and take recycling services back in house.

These workers took over 30 days of strike action two years ago and won't be fobbed off any longer.

Over 500 St Mungo's Broadway housing workers in the Unite union have voted for strike action with a majority of 95.9% on a 68% turnout. Look out for more in a future issue.

M25 maintenance workers protest over terms and conditions

As we go to press, M25 maintenance workers are due to protest on 8 October outside Balfour Beatty offices in central London against attacks on terms and conditions. Unite's **Malcolm Bonett** explains the situation

trimming back the verges and carriageway improvements.

There is an Incident Support Unit (ISU) which clears up the damage following accidents. This is a particularly difficult task where ISU workers are exposed to fatalities, body parts and blood stained debris.

Outsourced

Originally, these workers were on county council terms and conditions around the network, which was tendered out to Carillion.

Connect Plus Services were then awarded the contract. Some of the work has been sub-contracted out

to firms including Balfour Beatty.

Three years ago, in the BESNA terms and conditions dispute, electricians nationally were threatened with pay cuts of up to 35%. At that point, firms including Balfour Beatty caved in after activists and Unite got behind the campaign.

The same principle applies here. Why should it be the workers out there in all conditions day and night, being exposed to moving traffic, who are now having their terms and conditions eroded?

It appears no coincidence to me that Balfour Beatty has recently announced shareholder losses. It's trying to recoup money from those

hardworking operatives at the sharp end.

Balfour Beatty contracts are inferior to ones that the original council employees have.

Carillion TUPE (transferred) contracts have better terms and conditions, therefore the CPS strategy with a two-tier workforce is to harmonise down.

Only way is up

Unite's position is to harmonise up and make sure all operatives on the network get sick pay from day one.

CPS has no recognition agreement with Unite. However, we are

determined that Unite's voice will be heard and we could disrupt the network.

CPS is trying to drive these proposals through an 'employee forum' and sideline the unions.

The proposals mean a loss of four days' holiday and a horrendous shift pattern of four nights on, four nights off followed by four days on, four days off.

The unions want a 13-week shift pattern for work/life balance.

Unite's consultative ballot closed with a 96% vote in favour of a work to rule and selective strike action to win this issue. The next stage will be a full industrial action ballot.

Life on the factory floor: Exhaustion from buzzer to buzzer

A factory worker

You wake up in the morning after a bad night's sleep: you were worrying about work.

You get to work and the first thing is the team brief. When the management say you are only working at '70% efficiency' you challenge them to point out who is slacking. You know they can't because everyone is at their work area from buzzer to buzzer.

You know that yesterday, the day before and today you have worked as hard as you can and you were tied to your work area for 12 hours. Your shift pattern is four 12-hour shifts then four days off. But you are exhausted by the end of your last shift and spend your first day off recovering.

You hear that one of your colleagues has had an accident and cut his hand open or twisted his back or trapped his finger in a machine – these are real and reoccurring accidents.

The next brief tells you that your colleague was to blame for his acci-

dent for not following the Standard Operating Procedure. But he was probably behind on his schedule so was rushing to make his time up.

Your work colleagues literally run around their work area trying to keep

Team leaders bully and harass your colleagues every day but they deny it

on schedule and as a union rep you speak to them about safety and the risk to themselves. Many of these guys are agency workers and feel that if they don't get the work done then tomorrow they will be up the road.

Team leaders bully and harass your colleagues every day but they deny it. You know that what drives the management is the quest for ever increasing profits despite having made record amounts in recent years.

If the union were prepared to organise action against the constant



The factory floor

bullying or organise to end agency workers being used as second class workers this would receive support. An agency worker is earning much less than the full time worker standing next to him despite doing the same work.

The BFAWU bakers' union organ-

ised workers in Wigan. Strike action defeated zero-hour contracts and won permanent contracts for agency workers.

As a union rep these are the daily problems you face at work, but as a socialist you see the wider picture and that your colleagues will only

take so much. Then the union will have no choice but to fight these issues or they will be pushed to one side and replaced by those who are willing to fight.

I work in large scale manufacturing but I am sure this could be similar for you and your workplace.

Bedroom Tax: Still making tenants' lives hell

Cathy Meadows

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Scrap the Bedroom Tax

'The bedroom tax? Hasn't that been scrapped?' We get comments like this at our campaign stalls now. The Labour Party said it would scrap the tax and the Lib Dems said they no longer support it.

The well-publicised Affordable Homes Bill, which proposes changes to the tax, recently got through its second reading in parliament, with support from both parties.

But bedroom tax tenants are still suffering.

'Y' is terrified about the impact of a summons on her mental health and has borrowed money to pay her bedroom tax arrears. She doesn't know how she'll pay it back or what will happen when the arrears build up again.

'A' and 'Z' pay their bills fortnightly and buy as much food as they can afford and then stay at home until the next benefit payment.

'K' suffers from depression and is grieving the recent death of a close elderly relative. She is now facing mounting arrears as that relative helped her pay the bedroom tax.

'P' was refused a discretionary housing payment (DHP) and is using food banks to feed her family.

The bill does nothing for them now and it may still do nothing if and when it gets through eight more



One of the many anti-Bedroom Tax protests photo Lash

stages to become law.

The bill does not abolish the bedroom tax. It exempts households where:

- certain home adaptations have been made because of disability
- people expected to share a room can't because of disability
- no reasonable alternative accommodation has been offered

Not exempt

It doesn't exempt households who need an extra room for medical equipment or for overnight carers for disabled children. Or parents who are not their children's main carer, or

their children are away studying or in young offenders' institutions.

All the exemptions rely on tenants being aware of and proving them.

In Nottingham our campaign is still coming across bedroom tax tenants who are not aware they are eligible for a refund because of the pre-1996 tenant loophole confirmed in January 2014, or are having to fight to get a refund.

Labour-dominated Nottingham city council doesn't even ensure tenants are aware they can apply for DHP before taking them to court for bedroom tax arrears.

Advice centres are already working at full capacity. At least one advice centre in Nottingham no longer helps tenants complete the new eight page DHP application forms.

Critically the bill does not challenge the fundamental principle of the bedroom tax: if someone does not leave their home, their housing benefit will be cut and they will be expected to use money meant for food and bills to cover their rent.

While it brings hope, publicity about the Affordable Housing Bill is confusing and potentially reduces active support for bedroom tax campaigns.

Correction: Labour's private health links are even worse!

Following our article on 'Labour: no real alternative' in last week's issue of the Socialist we received an email from the corporate communications manager of private health company Bupa.

She was anxious to point out an inaccuracy in one sentence of the article that said: "Labour health minister, Patricia Hewitt, farmed out NHS work to Bupa and other companies on the grounds that it would reduce waiting times. She later became a director of the private equity company that owned Bupa!"

In fact Bupa itself was not and isn't now owned by a private equity company. It sold its UK hospitals to Cinven, one of the world's biggest private equity firms in 2007 for £1.4 billion.

Patricia Hewitt became the "special advisor" to that company in 2008. At the same time she became a "special consultant" to Boots, one of the biggest pharmaceutical chains in the world.

The email from Bupa also very kindly points out that between July

2013 and May 2014 she was a board member of... Bupa.

This only emphasises our point: the tangled web between Labour ministers like Hewitt and the private companies that benefit from the privatisation that they carry out while in government.

Big business

This is not confined just to Labour of course, but does show that they are in reality no different to other big business parties. These positions are all well paid of course, and we invite our readers to draw their own conclusions on this practice!

We are grateful to Bupa for its correction, since it clarifies these links. And we are pleased to know that the pages of our paper and website are so avidly read! However it will not stop us campaigning for the nationalisation of Bupa and all other privatised parts of the health service, so we can have a fully funded, publicly owned and democratically controlled NHS.

Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine
The October issue includes:

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"There will be no evictions from council run properties... as a result of the bedroom tax." Milan Radulovic, leader of Nottinghamshire's Broxtowe borough council made this commitment in April 2013 and has kept to it. With 17 Labour, 17 Conservative and 10 Lib Dem councillors, it shows that councils can be pushed if some councillors are prepared to take a lead. But this is not enough. They are still implementing

the bedroom tax though not evicting. Labour has a majority in local government, they could stop the bedroom tax tomorrow if all their councils made similar announcements. They should cancel all bedroom tax debts, using reserves in the short term and launch a mass campaign with unions, campaigners, community groups, disabled groups and others to demand the shortfall from the government.



Members of the Workers and Socialist Party photo DSM

John Malanga
Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI
South Africa)

The May general election in South Africa saw the African National Congress (ANC) returned to power for the fifth consecutive time since the end of Apartheid in 1994. But barely one hundred days since the election, there is widespread speculation that President Jacob Zuma will not see out his second term.

The scandal over the lavish state funding on 'security upgrades' for his private Nkandla palace (including construction of a swimming pool, cattle kraal and amphitheatre) continues to dominate headlines. "Pay back the money!" has become a popular slogan across a country where millions continue to live in dire poverty in shacks and shanty towns.

Despite a 62% share of the vote, this was the ANC's worst ever election result. A closer analysis nearly halves the ANC's real support to just 35% - their 11.4 million votes dwarfed by the 14.3 million who did not vote. Only 36% of the ANC's vote came from the 'metros' - the big cities and industrial areas. In Johannesburg, Tshwane (Pretoria) and Ekurhuleni, the ANC barely scraped a majority. Its vote share decreased between 10% and 15% compared to a decade earlier - these three areas alone accounted for over 20% of all the votes cast. It is fast becoming a rural party as significant sections of the working class and middle class break from them.

ANC tensions

This poor performance has heightened tensions in the ANC post-election. The ANC-run Gauteng Provincial Government, which only just scraped back into office, is holding public hearings on the hugely unpopular motorway e-tolls, a major election issue in the province. It is trying to distance itself from the national government and revive the ANC's dissolving electoral base in the area.

This is an act of open defiance against the national government which has insisted that motorists will have to pay e-tolls regardless of the enormous opposition finding voice through the public hearings. This is causing a split at the top of the ANC, with ANC General Secretary Gwede Mantashe ordering national

government departments to boycott the hearings. But Mantashe's deputy was reported as saying he would rather go to jail than pay the tolls!

The divisions in the ANC-aligned trade union federation Cosatu continue. The left in Cosatu, led by the metalworkers' union Numsa, Cosatu's largest affiliate, is fighting against the subordination of the federation to the ANC. A victory was won in April when the High Court ordered the reinstatement of suspended Cosatu General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, a vocal critic of the ANC. However this victory has not ended the factionalism. The pro-ANC faction has said that nothing less than the expulsion of Numsa will satisfy them. A split is almost certain.

WASP

DSM (CWI South Africa), alongside a number of mineworkers' strike committees, founded the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) in the immediate aftermath of the 2012 Marikana massacre that saw 34 striking mineworkers murdered by the police. WASP set itself the task to begin to assemble the forces that could lay foundations for the creation of a mass workers' party with a socialist programme. The creation of WASP has helped speed up the debate taking place among the most combative sections of the working class on the necessity for such a party.

Even the capitalist class seems convinced. One newspaper, rounding-up the 'scenario planning' of several capitalist think-tanks noted "the consensus is that, eventually, a workers' party must emerge". This is informed in no small part by Numsa which took the historic decision to break from the ANC at their December 2013 Special National Congress and has picked up the idea of founding a workers' party and made it its own.

Road to a party

While remaining resolute in the face of the virirol heaped upon them by their former 'comrades' in the Tripartite Alliance, including death threats, the route the Numsa leadership is taking to a new party is not the most direct. Their early failure to take a position on who their members should vote for in the 2014 elections left some people doubting how serious their commitment to founding a workers' party really is.

The Numsa leadership correctly un-

derstands that a workers' party will be best placed if it emerges from struggle. But they have attempted to create struggle in an artificial manner according to a timetable. The leadership proposed to create a United Front (UF) to assemble the forces that could create a workers' party. But attempts to muster the forces for the UF via a series of mass actions on broad socio-economic issues were called off after the working class, beyond Numsa's own membership, largely failed to respond.

Strikes

While pursuing this unsuccessful strategy, the Numsa leadership simultaneously failed to link the call for a workers' party to the decisive strike action taken this year by the two most important sections of the South African working class. Over 70,000 platinum mineworkers were out for over five months, seeking to finish the campaign for a living wage begun in the Marikana strike wave. Becoming the longest strike in South African history, it ended with an important, if partial victory. Just one week later, 220,000 of Numsa's own metalworkers began what would be a five week long strike for better pay, also achieving important gains.

The solidarity between the two strikes, exemplified in the metalworkers' slogan

that they would "turn their strike into a Marikana" showed the enormous potential. Unfortunately, in the face of the propaganda onslaught against 'political' strikes by the capitalist media, the Numsa leadership were silent on their own call for a workers' party throughout. However, Moses Mayekiso, WASP president and founding general secretary of Numsa, was widely quoted in the press and appeared on TV insisting that the strikes, if anything, should be more 'political' and should push forward the creation of a workers' party.

Despite these early missed opportunities, the Numsa leadership have since reconfirmed their commitment to a new party and the mood among members is decidedly in favour. Serious preparations are underway for the establishment of the UF. Gauteng province is launching its UF on 16-17 November by organising a mass action in Ekurhuleni - the country's industrial hub and Numsa's main base. It is to coincide with the anniversary of the 1984 two day general strike that began a period of mass uprisings against the racist apartheid segregation system and culminated in the birth of Cosatu.

Similar initiatives are under way in other provinces. The indications are that this process is taking on its own life, especially as the crisis of the ANC adds fuel to the fire and the working class weighs

“ DSM, alongside a number of mineworkers' strike committees, founded the Workers and Socialist Party in the immediate aftermath of the 2012 Marikana massacre that saw 34 striking mineworkers murdered by the police. WASP set itself the task to begin to assemble the forces that could lay foundations for the creation of a mass workers' party with a socialist programme ”



Numsa workers on strike



Julius Malema and EFF supporters

the options of continued mis-rule versus creating their own alternative.

EFF

While Numsa deferred the question of a new party until after the election, the desire for a left alternative found one expression in the electoral breakthrough of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the first breakthrough for a party to the left of the ANC. The left-populist EFF, headed by former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, won 25 MPs campaigning on a programme of partial-nationalisation and land reform. Since entering parliament the EFF has done well at exposing the ANC and the limits of capitalist democracy, provoking an enraged response from the ANC who are at sea over how to handle the 'fighters'.

In one remarkable incident, riot police were called to parliament when Zuma re-

fused to answer Malema who asked him, in a reference to the Nkandla scandal, when he would "pay back the money?" The parliamentary session was suspended when the EFF MPs started chanting demands for Zuma to answer the question. The summoning of the riot police ignored the 'immunity' of parliament and was in breach of the constitution.

At a press conference the next morning, hosted by ANC security ministers rather than the 'independent' parliamentary security officers, one journalist was prompted to ask, "is this a coup?" This was just the latest anti-democratic and authoritarian act by the ANC, a dangerous and growing tendency that has become pronounced under Zuma's leadership.

Going into the election the ANC rallied behind the deeply unpopular Zuma calculating that it would be more damaging to their electoral prospects to dump him before the election. The outrage at



Press coverage for WASP

'Nkandla-gate' has been fuelled by Zuma's contempt for any effort to hold him to account. He has refused to respond to the report by the state's Public Protector (PP) recommending that he pay back a "reasonable portion" of the money and now a witch-hunt is in full-swing to discredit the PP, including the ludicrous charge that she is a CIA agent!

Further piling on the pressure is the release of the five year delayed 'spy-tapes'. These contain recordings of a series of telephone conversations between government officials allegedly conspiring to manipulate the legal process to ensure the dropping of a staggering 700 or more corruption charges faced by Zuma.

If proved, this would be a conspiracy of epic proportions as the dropping of the charges took place in the run up to the ANC's 2007 conference that saw Zuma elected president of the ANC. Becoming president of the country was merely a formality once that battle was won. In another desperately transparent bid to save himself, the state prosecutor with the power to reinstate the charges is suddenly being investigated for his "fitness to hold office".

Despite his tenacity, there is a good possibility that Zuma will fail to save himself. He could be deposed by a party recall, the same method that Zuma orchestrated to depose former president Thabo Mbeki, assuring his own rise to power. All eyes are on the ANC's 2017 conference, though it is possible things could come to a head well before then, with trigger fingers becoming itchy as the 2016 local elections approach.

Crisis of capitalism

The crisis of the ANC and of Zuma is a reflection of the crisis of South African capitalism. The economy is stagnant with the first quarter of 2014 seeing the economy contract by 0.6% and the second quarter only growing by the same. Growth this year is predicted to be just 1.7%, even worse than 2009 which saw recession and the loss of one million jobs in the wake of the world economic crisis.

The current account deficit has widened to 6.2%. In June, South Africa's sovereign debt was downgraded by the global ratings agencies. Two months later the top four banks were downgraded. In mid-August, African Bank, the largest unsecured lender in South Africa collapsed, prompting a government organised bailout.

Meanwhile the crisis of South African capitalism leaves it incapable of even beginning to address the dire living standards of the working class. Of the 22 million South Africans that make use of credit, nine million are three months or more in arrears. Unsecured lending has been increasing at more than 30% a year as workers try and make ends meet.

But the working class continues to respond with determined struggle. Alongside the platinum and metalworkers strikes,

there has been no let-up in community struggles or struggle among the youth. In Ga-Nchabeleng WASP members played a leading role in a two week struggle of the community, culminating in a 3,000 strong demonstration that forced the municipality into a retreat over the cancelled opening of government services in the area.

Mass protests have taken place on several university campuses. The Socialist Youth Movement, WASP's youth wing, played an important role in a still ongoing student strike over inadequate financial support for students from a poor background at the Tshwane University of Technology which led to the closing of five of the six campuses.

Perspectives

Immediately upon being re-elected in May the ANC reconfirmed its commitment to plough ahead with its neo-liberal National Development Plan. This will provoke an inevitable response from a militant and confident working class.

The ability of the capitalist class to respond will be weakened given the crisis in the ANC which will ultimately lead to a bloody and debilitating succession battle not to mention the crisis faced by their 'labour-lieutenants' in Cosatu. The disastrous role of Zuma, the never-ending corruption, and the ANC's growing irritation with the 'niceties' of parliamentary democracy has all the makings of a looming constitutional crisis. The post-1994 settlement has decayed beyond repair and change is coming.

“ The Numsa leadership have reconfirmed their commitment to a new party and the mood among members is decidedly in favour. Serious preparations are underway for the establishment of the United Front ”

What Numsa' does on the question of a new workers' party in the next period has profound implications for the future. With raised expectations about the creation of a workers' party, the dire position of South African capitalism, and the severe poverty and inequality faced by the working class, the momentum toward the creation of a mass workers' party on a socialist programme, at this stage, seems unstoppable. The birth of such a party will open up a new chapter in the history of the working class and put the question of socialism firmly on the agenda.

Training tomorrow's trade union militants



Young workers and trade unionists marching for jobs photo Senan

Matt Whale

Chesterfield Socialist Party

The East Midlands region ran a successful event to help train newer Socialist Party unionists how to work effectively in their union. A dozen mostly young members from five different unions attended the day school in Chesterfield on 20 September.

The event was run by Dave Gorton, East Midlands Socialist Party trade union organiser. Dave introduced the opening discussion on our party's history in the movement and our role as Marxists in the workplace.

Everyone was encouraged to raise issues or ask questions on matters in their own workplace. These ranged from problems that arise in multiple workplaces to being asked to represent people with racist views.

The afternoon session featured some role play. We simulated a union branch meeting, complete with agenda, reports and motions.

We had to decide if and when to intervene as if we were the only Socialist Party member present. This was a great opportunity for us to ask questions on terminology. We also learnt some different approaches the party may take to the same issue, depending on the mood of the workers and the meeting.

Finally there was a brief introduction to casework, aimed at us looking beyond each individual member's problems to see recurring patterns in a workplace.

In the pub afterwards (run by local party member Trevor Maris!) all of us agreed the day was a huge success. We're going to meet again next year to discuss how we've been able to apply the skills we learnt. This will be vital for each of us to carry on the key work of our party in building and galvanising trade union activity.

If your region is interested in knowing a bit more about the day school, or even want Dave to come and run something similar, please email davegorton@gmail.com.

Finance to fight for the future

Heather Rawling

Leicester Socialist Party

A central theme of the East Midlands finance school, held on 5 October, was the need to prepare for the future.

The US, Scotland and elsewhere have shown that big upheavals will develop - before or after the next election. We need to be on a sound financial footing to be ready for these struggles.

Naomi Byron, from the Socialist Party's finance department, spoke

about Socialist Alternative, our co-thinkers in the United States. In particular how they have organized to respond to a radicalization of American workers, along with the successes and problems this has thrown up.

Socialist Alternative raised \$160,000 (around £100,000) for Kshama Sawant's election campaign. This came mainly from a large number of small donations. Activists asked for raised specific amounts for specific things, such as \$10 for a yard sign.

They emphasised that the cam-

paign got no money from the corporations, and contrasted Kshama's record with that of the Democrats. Money used was for raising the profile of the campaign, which in turn helped raise more money. The discussion on these lessons was inspirational and set the tone for the rest of the school.

The task begins with developing organisers who can develop other organisers. Understanding the need to raise finance for the party stems from understanding our theory, perspectives, programme and tactics.



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We discussed recruitment and how to discuss subs (membership dues) with new members, to lay the basis for the possibility of them raising their subs in the future.

Every active member should have a discussion about paper selling, fighting fund raising and increasing subs where possible. Everyone should be asked what they can do to help build and

finance the party.

After a report back from the meeting at the Leicester branch committee, several members have pledged to increase their subs by £164 per month between them. All branch committee members took responsibility for discussing with others in the branch about whether they can raise their subs.

School students organise disabled rights meeting

Caroline Vincent

Leicester Socialist Party

I was invited by students at the Jame'ah Girls Academy in Leicester to talk about disability rights and discrimination at an event called "Years of Struggle". Seventy students aged from eleven to 16 attended on 1 October.

First we talked about people's perceptions and stereotypes - the things that come to mind upon hearing the word "disabled". Most admitted to visualising wheelchairs, when in fact less than 8% of disabled people use them.

We talked about the Equality Act and the Disability Discrimination Act: the rights that exist due to legislation, but also the problems that are faced when these rights aren't recognised.

One student gave an example of a Leicester resident who was turned away and labelled as a "fire hazard" upon turning up for his disability benefit assessment. He was informed at reception that the interview building was not equipped for people in wheelchairs!

This led on to a discussion on work capability assessments. In February a protest took place outside the Atos offices in Leicester as part of a national day of action.

We agreed that it was a sig-

nificant victory when Atos - a huge company with a £7.1 billion yearly revenue - decided to end its contract with the government. This was a direct result of protests and negative publicity.

But we also agreed the test should be scrapped altogether, not just handed to another company. Anyone who cannot work due to sickness or disability should have a right to an income they can live on without enduring humiliating additional tests.

We also talked about problems caused by cuts to vital local services. Free, publicly owned health and social care is vital. Cameron's "Big Society" is using children and relatives as a substitute for professionals.

Students felt inspired by local demonstrations, and several expressed an interest in future Socialist Party campaigns.

There was general agreement that the point is to change society, and remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in life in the way that everybody else can. Cuts to vital services have turned back the clock as far as equality is concerned.

Disabled people are a minority in society. Only by uniting, fighting back and struggling together for a fair and equal society can we look forward to a future that's free from all discrimination.

Ice cream, you scream, we all scream for £10 Now!

Steve German

Somerset Socialist Party

Shop window posters boldly proclaiming "A Half-Price Mr Whippy Ice Cream - Happy Hour" provided part of the backdrop. On 27 September, four Socialist party members held a street stall in Weymouth, Dorset - the first for a number of years.

Half-price ice cream might have been unthinkable in a bustling seaside town like Weymouth before the financial crash of 2008. Now the posters serve as a permanent visual reminder of just how badly the local economy has been ravaged by continuing recession.

This was confirmed by the hundreds who visited our stall. All had something to say about how their lives are more difficult with every week that passes.

The young and not-so-young alike patiently formed queues to sign our "£10 Now" petition. Many explained that raising the minimum wage to £10 an hour wasn't simply a 'nice idea', but an actual burning necessity.

One such person, Mary, tearfully explained that she and her husband work full-time in a shop. They recently had to make their first ever visit to a food bank to feed their three teenage children.



Mary's despair gave way to anger within just a few minutes as she explained her total contempt for the career politicians from all of the parties who talk about so called 'tough choices' and 'difficult decisions'. "What would they know about having to make the real, heart breaking, 'difficult' decision of either paying your rent or feeding your children? Nothing!"

She bought a copy of the Socialist and made a donation to the Socialist Party.

A passer-by in his eighties shouted "I don't want anything to do with you lot - I'm a socialist!"

He then insisted we sell him a paper, saying "I'm so sorry - I thought you were the local Labour

Party."

Another person applied to join the party after approaching the stall and telling us that his work in the merchant navy had allowed him to attend a meeting in New Orleans. He was hugely impressed by the main speaker, Kshama Sawant.

As soon as he discovered that Kshama is a member of our co-thinkers in the USA, he agreed to join on the spot and is looking forward to attending our annual national event, Socialism 2014, next month.

Four people applied to join, 28 papers were sold and £25 fighting fund was raised - after which the team packed up and went for a well deserved half price ice cream!

Middle East: Repel IS and Western imperialism

Fight for democratic workers' defence and Kurdish self-determination

Paula Mitchell

The plight of ordinary Kurds and others living in Kobane in the Kurdish area of Syria, surrounded and besieged by the Islamic State (IS), fills everyone who sees the brutal methods of IS, including mass executions, beheadings, torture and rape, with horror. 150,000 refugees have fled. The resistance put up by Kurdish fighting forces in Syria, a third who are women, is extremely courageous.

Kurds are a stateless nation, divided across Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey since the 1921 post-war agreement between imperialist powers to carve up the Middle East. As instability swept the Middle East as a result of western imperialism's wars, Kurds have been able to develop autonomous areas in both Iraq and Syria.

Rojava

The three Kurdish enclaves in northern Syria are known as Rojava (West Kurdistan). In a region dominated by repressive regimes including suppression of women, Rojava is something of a beacon to Kurds, with its attempts to involve people of all faiths and nationalities in secular cantons. Its standing has grown further in comparison with the corrupt capitalist regime of Barzani in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq.

The dominant organisation in Rojava is the PYD (Democratic Union Party), linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a guerrilla or-

ganisation with mass support based in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. It was the PKK that entered Iraqi Kurdish areas when the Yazidi (Christian) community were under attack and played a large part in repelling IS from Sinjar.

The population of Kobane faces the possibility of a massacre. Many Kurdish organisations have, in desperation, called for action by Western powers, in particular for heavy armoury to back up the bombings.

Imperialism

But any involvement of the US, UK and other Western capitalist powers will only ever be in pursuit of their own interests. Western imperialism has a long record of standing by while populations are slaughtered - including Kurds themselves - and intervening to inflict their own carnage when it has served their interests.

Western powers want the involvement of Turkey, and the Turkish government has now agreed to join the campaign against IS. However it does this for its own reasons. It is suspected of having colluded with IS against the Kurds in Syria. It has allowed jihadists to cross its border in big numbers. The Turkish government now fears it has created a monster - or in fact two: IS itself, which now threatens Turkish borders, but also an armed and roused Kurdish population.

A 'peace process' is meant to be in place between the PKK and Turkish state but depending on how events develop, they will fear the Kurdish population in Turkey could sweep that aside. Appallingly, the Turk-



Kurdish resistance forces in Syria

ish state has mobilised troops and teargas against Kurds and Turks gathering on the border wanting to get through to join the resistance. Turkish aims in Syria include setting up a buffer zone in Rojava and replacing Kurdish fighters with their own forces.

Armed resistance should be under the control of democratically-elected, non-sectarian defence committees

The Socialist Party has offered our support to a statement by Turkish and Kurdish community organisation Day-Mer, which stands clearly against western imperialist intervention and correctly says:

"The crocodile tears of Western imperialist countries, led by the USA, in an attempt to appear to be bombing IS, should not deceive anybody. The blood bath in the region is their creation.

"For this reason, the way forward to get rid of IS barbarism is not a new imperialist intervention that provokes conflicts between different beliefs and peoples to plunder the region's natural resources; on the contrary, it is only possible through termination of these countries' interventions in the region and the realisation of regional people's right to self-determination of their future."

Democratic control

The Socialist Party supports the right to armed resistance by people who face the possibility of slaughter. This should be under the control of democratically-elected, non-sectarian defence committees, which would enable the mass of ordinary people to take an active role, includ-

ing in deciding the course of action. We support the right of Kurdish people to self-determination.

Both IS and imperialism can be repelled in the Middle East. Because of the ethnic and national divides in the Middle East this would have to take the form of a non-sectarian workers' defence force with democratic controls.

It would require an appeal to workers and poor people across the region, including in Turkey, across Iraq and Syria and beyond, with a programme to defend the democratic rights and national aspirations of all peoples. It would mean campaigning for the vast wealth of the region to be owned and controlled democratically in order to provide a secure standard of living for all working and poor people.

A voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East would enable all peoples to freely and democratically decide their own fates.

See www.socialistworld.net for more analysis

Coordinated attacks on Hong Kong movement

As we go to press the official leaders of the mass movement in Hong Kong seem to have mistakenly called for the protests to end. Below is an update from last week's article in the Socialist and extract of an article available at www.chinaworker.info (where you can also find updates on the situation as it develops).

Dikang

Socialist Action (CWI Hong Kong)

On 3 October, the mass democracy movement suffered what were evidently coordinated attacks on several fronts. In the working class district of Mong Kok, where Socialist Action members have been very active in the 'Umbrella Movement' protests, criminal gangs and crowds mobilised by 'Caring Hong Kong Power' (a racist right-wing pro-regime group) attacked the occupation violently, tearing down tents and barricades and assaulting pro-democracy protesters while police largely stood back.

A simultaneous and identical at-



Sally, a member of Socialist Action, addresses a rally of 100,000 photo Socialist Action

tack, was mounted against the occupation in Causeway Bay, on Hong Kong Island, which provided a pretext for police to move in and clear barricades and tents, in an attempt to close down the occupation there.

Two days earlier, another attack had been carried out by a pro-regime rural organisation (Heung Yee Kuk) against a campaign stall

run by the pro-democracy Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU). Around 10,000 members of the HKCTU - in sectors such as transport, education and services - have been on strike since 29 September as part of the current protest movement.

At the main Admiralty protest site the police asked the occupiers to

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

clear a corridor to allow in an ambulance for a sick policeman, only to use this to drive in truckloads of tear gas, rubber bullets, and other weaponry.

The violence against the protest movement makes the issue of democratic organisation extremely urgent.

This can only be solved by setting up action committees in every occupation, to coordinate mobilisation and especially to organise self-defence, with similar democratic bodies established in

schools and workplaces to build the strike movement.

These committees must decide tactics and which political responses are needed through open and democratic discussions. Only a fully democratic movement is capable of defeating the government.

Socialist Action and the CWI fights for:

- Down with CY Leung! (Hong Kong chief executive)
- No more fake deals and negotiations: Full democracy now!
- Support and extend the 'Umbrella Revolution' - build democratic action committees to decide the next steps and organise self-defence against government orchestrated violence!
- Continue and build the schools strike! For a fighting independent school student union!
- Down with one-party CCP dictatorship! Down with the capitalist tycoons that enjoy its protection!
- The democracy struggle is also a class struggle - We need a mass workers' party to fight for socialism!

Andrew Price (1949-2014)

Fighter, teacher, party campaigner

Dave Reid

Socialist Party Wales

It is with great sadness that Socialist Party members and trade unionists across South Wales heard the news that Andrew Price had passed away following a serious chest infection. Our heartfelt condolences go to Enid, his wife, children Rachel, Philip and Michael, and grandchildren Josh, Sam, Jack and Liam.

Andrew was an inspirational figure who overcame chronic ill health to keep playing a leading role as one of the South Wales labour movement's most militant leaders. He was a great orator, a tenacious fighter and a stalwart of the Socialist Party and its predecessor, Militant.

As such he was hated by the right wing of the labour movement who responded with relentless and often spiteful attacks. But Andrew rose above those attacks, reinforced by an unwavering conviction in the correctness of Marxist ideas and the eventual victory of the working class.

Young Socialists

Andrew was born in Pontypridd, one of four sons, and brought up in Cardiff and Pontypridd. He joined the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS), beginning nearly 50 years labour movement activity. In 1968 he was convinced of Marxist ideas and joined Militant, at that time a small tendency within the Labour Party.

In 1969 he was one of the first Militant supporters to be elected onto the National Committee (NC) of the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) and contributed in no small measure to the success in 1970 of Militant gaining a majority on the LPYS NC.

It was at an LPYS meeting in Cardiff in 1968 that Andrew met Enid Phillips. At that meeting Andrew and Enid were in different political trends - Enid was a supporter of Tribune, the left reformist paper of the Labour Party - but they still fell for each other.

It was the beginning of a life-long partnership of deep mutual love

and dedication. In later years the Price household, the most political in Tremorfa, appeared from the outside to be the least politicised as Andrew and Enid agreed to display neither Labour nor Socialist Party posters in their window!

Andrew was an inspirational figure who overcame chronic ill health to keep playing a leading role as one of the South Wales labour movement's most militant leaders

In 1971 Rachel their daughter was born, followed three years later by twins Michael and Philip. Andrew was a devoted father, and later grandfather, combining dedication to his family with his commitment to the struggle to change society.

The 1970s was a period of heightened class struggle. The election of a Labour government in 1974 was viewed with great expectation by the working class, but it was led by the right wing who attempted to balance support from the trade union movement with carrying out the dictates of big business.

Labour Party clashes

Andrew clashed in the Cardiff South East constituency Labour Party with a leader of the party, Jim Callaghan, who became Prime Minister. Led by the Tory press, the right wing began a campaign against "Trotskyist infiltration" in Cardiff South East Labour Party. Andrew and other Militant supporters fought tooth and nail many attempts to expel him from the Labour Party, all of which failed until Andrew was struck down with a stroke in 1988.

Andrew also fought every attempt to get him off Callaghan's General Management Committee (GMC).



Andrew Price: sorely missed and never forgotten photos SP Wales

After the right wing mobilised at Splott ward's AGM to vote Andrew off the GMC, Andrew remembered that the Socialist Education Association (SEA), of which he was a member, was affiliated to Cardiff South East Labour Party and so got delegated from the SEA.

His right wing opponents were furious as Andrew took his seat at the next GMC meeting. When the right wing responded by mobilising from all across Cardiff to join the SEA in an attempt to unseat him, Andrew responded by signing up left wingers.

The normally sleepy SEA was surprised to see its Cardiff branch mushroom into the biggest in the country! Under Andrew's leadership the Cardiff SEA became not just a

battleground with the right wing but one of the best venues in Cardiff for socialist discussion and debate.

The campaign against Militant supporters in Cardiff South East was very personal and occasionally violent, but he never once faltered, maintaining a principled support for Militant and Marxist ideas and refusing to stoop to the personal and petty levels of his opponents. And the attacks did not prevent Andrew from winning wide support from the labour movement in South Wales.

Once he even managed to be elected as delegate from Cardiff South East CLP to Labour Party national conference and took great delight in reporting back how he voted at conference to the right wing at the GMC. He was short-listed as Labour parliamentary candidate in three constituencies, only missing out in Cardiff Central by a handful of votes in 1982.

Ill health

In 1988 Andrew suffered a serious stroke that partially paralysed his left side. His disability made movement very difficult, but aided by Enid, he insisted on returning to work and continuing his political activity in the struggle against the poll tax.

For the rest of his life Andrew refused to let his disability prevent him playing a full role in the labour movement and as a teacher. This would not have been possible without the huge day-to-day and moral support he received from Enid for the remaining 26 years of his life.

Andrew had begun teaching sociology at Rumney Tech in 1971 and for the next 38 years was an inspiring teacher to thousands of further education students. Many times he would be sought out on street stalls by former students who were grateful for his dedication and patience.

Andrew was also a great union



Andrew was a tireless campaigner

organiser in the lecturers' union, Natfhe (now part of UCU), serving on its national executive. Over the years he was an uncompromising negotiator and elected as a Wales negotiator with the Welsh college employers. Welsh FE lecturers led by Andrew secured the best pay and employment deals in Britain including pay parity with teachers.

Even after retiring Andrew continued to play an important role at the Cardiff Trades Union Council, UCU branch and at the Wales TUC conference. Andrew was a tremendous orator, always speaking clearly and was able to speak colourfully but directly, telling it like it is.

Inspiration

Despite being one of the oldest Socialist Party members in Wales Andrew had a special relationship with its youngest members - he was never too busy to explain ideas. One young member insisted in remaining in Andrew's branch even though she didn't live in the area, so that she could hear his contributions in the political discussion.

After leaving the Labour Party Andrew dedicated himself to arguing the need for a new mass workers' party. He understood that this was the main political task for the trade union movement.

He also recognised that finance was vital and was an inspiring and determined finance organiser. For three years anyone who attended an anti cuts meeting or a trades council meeting was gently "persuaded" to sponsor Andrew on his annual bike ride, raising over £1,000 in two rides. This year Andrew will not be here to repeat his ride, but some sponsor money has already been collected and Socialist Party Wales is setting up an Andrew Price Memorial Fund.

For decades Andrew inspired enormous respect and affection, even from opponents, because Andrew had absolute integrity. He was dedicated to changing society and convinced that the working class, the ideas of Marxism and the methods of the Socialist Party and CWI are the only way to achieve that.

His example is an inspiration to generations of socialists and although he has passed away, his memory lives on in the minds of generations of socialists, who are proud to have known Andrew and shared in his battles. He will be sorely missed and never forgotten.

► A fuller version of this tribute can be found on the Socialist Party website. There will also be a Facebook group where socialists and trade union activists can leave their memories, tributes and donation pledges.



Andrew addressing fellow UCU members at a rally

Ebola crisis: Support frontline health workers



Striking health workers in Liberia demanding increased pay and better protection against the Ebola virus

Andy Ford
Unite health sector

News that the United States is to send 3,000 troops to Liberia to build isolation hospitals, while Sierra Leone has implemented a national lock-down to try to contain the rapidly spreading Ebola virus, underlines how serious the epidemic in West Africa has become. It's predicted that there will be more than 1.4 million cases by January 2015.

With no actual cure, survival seems to be a function of the quality of medical and nursing care of the symptoms, mainly fluid and electrolyte replacement. New Scientist quoted the mortality rates as 74% in Guinea, 54% in Liberia and 42% in Sierra Leone.

Health workers

A huge problem is that without rigorous precautions, it is precisely those providing the care who are

most at risk of infection. This only goes to show the heroism of the health workers of the West African nations, and some western volunteers, trying their level best to contain the virus.

Reuters described a nurse in Sierra Leone working for hours at

Nurses in Liberia took strike action to demand better pay and equipment to protect them from the Ebola virus

a stretch in full protective gear in tropical heat, as she and others worked to raise the odds in favour of her patients' survival.

Sadly, she had to give a false name, such is the fear generated by the virus. There have been reports

from Liberia of landlords refusing to rent to nurses, and in Guinea health workers have been attacked and even killed, wrongly suspected of helping spread the virus. Yet without the efforts of these workers, and of the charity Medecins Sans Frontieres, the virus would already have spread far and wide.

In September nurses at John F Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, took strike action to demand better pay and equipment to protect them from the Ebola virus.

Previously, in July, 20,000 health workers in Liberia went on strike to demand an increase in the \$150 a month pay they were getting. Some had not been paid for three months. Trade unionists in this country should stand in solidarity with those workers taking action.

●Both the London and North-West regional NHS Committees of Unite the union have passed a motion in solidarity with frontline health workers in the affected countries.

Stop corporate plunder in Bangladesh

Pete Mason

Despite huge protests and three deaths (reported in the Socialist, 8 December 2010), UK based Global Coal Management Resources (GCM) is still pressing ahead with a massive open-cast coal mining operation in Phulbari, north-west Bangladesh. It will displace up to 200,000 people, destroy over 14,660 acres of agricultural land and devastate the water resources of another 220,000 people. 94% of the revenue generated by the planned mine will be taken by GCM, campaigners say.

A recent meeting in Tower Hamlets, east London, heard the secretary of the Committee to Protect Oil Gas and Natural Resources in Bangladesh, professor Anu Mohammad, who was visiting the UK, condemn the corporate plunder of Bangladesh by companies like GCM.

Despite brief attempts to drown out his speech by rowdy Bangladesh government supporters in an adjoining room, Anu Mohammad explained the role of the multinational corporations in the ruination of Bangladesh.



Anu Mohammad photo SP

In the mid-1990s the World Bank promoted the privatisation of gas, oil and other natural resources in Bangladesh falsely promising that it would bring 'cheap gas and save huge amounts of money for the public exchequer'.

\$5 billion is owed by US and Canadian corporations in unpaid compensation for accidents and Chevron effectively pays "nothing

in tax but claims to be the number one taxpayer"... "Every penny Chevron pays in tax is refunded through Petrobangla, the government owned company." "Who is running the country?" professor Mohammad asked.

I spoke as a representative of the Socialist Party and emphasised our demand for public ownership of the UK energy industry, including GCM. I also called for an ecologically-minded, democratically drawn up, socialist plan of production to end the madness of capitalist exploitation of the planet and the dangerous global warming that has resulted.

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Scotland: Workers need a new mass party

SNP is another austerity party

Ian Leech
Socialist Party Scotland,

Labour's treacherous role in fronting the successful 'No' campaign in the independence referendum has made trade union members eager to hit Labour in the pocket.

Scottish trade union branches have recently had members asking whether they're paying money into the Labour Party via the unions' affiliated political fund. Glasgow Unison branch received many calls from members.

Some insisted they wanted to switch their donation from Labour to the Scottish National Party (SNP) despite Unison rules not allowing this. Others demanded to be able to switch from the Affiliated Fund to the General (Campaigning) Fund, vital to the union's ability to publicly campaign on issues.

The anger at Labour is so great that people are questioning whether Labour will continue for much longer in Scotland! Other unions who backed a no vote reported huge losses in membership including Usdaw, losing 8,000 members in the few days after the referendum.

Glasgow Unison was able to explain to members that despite the national trade union's formal affiliation, Glasgow branch's official policy is to call for disaffiliation from Labour. It believes the party no longer represents the interests of working class people.

To stem the tide of threatened resignations the branch placed this information in a public forum on the website and on Facebook. This seems to have succeeded and appeared as an article in the Herald newspaper.

The SNP, which reportedly gained 75,000 new members, have been the main beneficiaries of the anger expressed by those 1.6 million 'Yes' voters. However

the SNP government in Holyrood will now carry through £2 billion cuts in public spending, held back until after the referendum.

This will place the trade unions' struggle against austerity at the centre of events; and with the general election looming it will be vital to put forward an independent working class alternative to the electorate.

●In an act of vindictiveness against working class Yes voters, many of Scotland's 32 councils (mainly run by the SNP, Labour and Lib Dems, often in coalition) were using the updated electoral registers from the referendum to pursue poll tax arrears despite the iniquitous Thatcherite tax being abolished in 1993. Hundreds of thousands of extra electors registered to vote in the referendum. Many had previously left the electoral register at the time of the poll tax.

It is estimated that a quarter of the outstanding arrears are from non-payers who have died since then.

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, as well as the Socialist Party and other left and anti-cuts groups and individuals.
www.tusc.org.uk

Thatcher's enemies within



Thatcher - Hater of socialists

The revelations about Thatcher's speech written for Tory Conference 1984 but abandoned after the IRA Brighton bombing confirm her demented view of the world. She characterised anybody who stood up to her manic policies of privatisation and attacks on workers' living standards as "the enemy within". Significantly she named the striking miners' leaders and Liverpool's socialist council, elected in 1983.

Her crazed 'free market' policies ultimately resulted in the capitalist economic meltdown of 2008 for which millions of workers are currently picking up the tab.

Appallingly, the bunch of mendacious Bullingdon bullies currently putting social provision to the sword are even more extreme than her in their unrelenting attacks on workers, while enriching their already obscenely wealthy friends.

I'm sure she would have been delighted with the current Liverpool Labour-run council in carrying through the highest level of cuts in the city's history, as well as employing people on the loathed zero-hour contracts.

The important lesson is: the ruling class don't reward you for grovelling compliance; they always return for more cuts. That lesson is completely lost on Liverpool's Mayor Anderson and his council.

Tony Mulhearn

Fed up with fairy tales?

WE NEED IDEAS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

Socialist Party national organiser

And once the budget deficit was wiped out, everyone lived happily ever after. Only in a Disney film, right?

Don't be surprised if Tory ogre George Osborne gets a cameo role as a hero in some sickly sweet Disney flick. After all, since 2007, the British government has handed Disney almost £170 million to make films here.

This is symptomatic of the Tories' penchant for corporate welfare. The bailout of the banks, after they triggered the economic crash, has been followed by a bailout of big business.

Corporate welfare comes in many forms. Privatisation legisla-

tion so blood-sucking, out-sourcing companies can squeeze profits from our public services. The selling off of publicly owned land at bargain basement prices. Or the more straightforward wheelbarrows full of cash being carted round from the treasury to the HQs of the super-rich 1%.

Guardian columnist Aditya Chakraborty reports on a new review of government generosity when it comes to big business. Audit author Kevin Farnsworth estimates that corporate welfare costs almost £85 billion a year. But it's the £5 billion paid out that year in income-based jobseeker's allowance that gets the headlines. Here's a story: last year, Amazon, the multi-millioned tax-dodging book-monger, received more in government grants than it paid in

corporation tax!

Is this a comedy? Or a tragedy? Piled on these figures, as Chakraborty points out, is the £25 billion that was paid to workers whose bosses don't pay enough to sustain the life they squeeze our labour from. Tax credits, housing benefit, council tax benefit... And the Tories plan to cut those still further.

No happy ending?

Left in the hands of the capitalists and the politicians who defend their interests, this story has no happy ending for workers and young people. Indicative of this is a government plan to scrap £347 million of crisis funds to families facing homelessness and starvation in April. So is the

£8 minimum wage whimper from Labour's Ed Miliband - by 2020. These pro-big business parties have no solutions to the problems faced by the 99% and only seek to further enrich themselves at our expense.

But across the world the working class and the youth are re-writing the script. Witness the democratic uprising in Scotland that brought Cameron to his knees as he contemplated the end of the union and his own political career. And the pro-democracy students in Hong Kong. And the fast food workers in the US who are dreaming (and fighting for) a new 'American dream' of a living wage and affordable homes.

Socialism 2014 will be a weekend to debate ideas to change the world. Not just to expose the cor-

porate greed and inequality that exists, which must be done - but to discuss alternatives and strategies for achieving them.

Don't miss it!

SOCIALISM2014

Ideas to change the world

8 & 9 November
in central London

See page 2 for details



What we stand for

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

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

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in 45 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

NEW MASS 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 mass 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!