



City Link redundancies:

BANKERS GET BONUSES... ...WORKERS GET THE BOOT

Dan Crowter
Coventry Socialist Party

It was a happy new year for City banking bosses. With their bonuses, 121 members of Goldman Sachs were paid an average of £3 million each last year. It was not such a happy new year for everyone however.

Over 3,000 City Link workers received an unwelcome present when the haulage firm's bankruptcy was announced on Christmas Day. The courier workers were then given their redundancy notices by administrators on New Year's Eve.

The RMT transport workers' union has rightly described the decision as "disgraceful" and "brutal".

But the bosses of the company's owners, private equity firm Bet-

ter Capital, won't be suffering. Its founder, millionaire Jon Moulton, has so much cash to spare he's been able to make big donations to both the Tories and Ukip.

When the banks faced collapse in 2008 they were bailed out - which we're now paying for through the destruction of public services, with 60% of the cuts still to come. But the government has barely lifted a finger for City Link's collapse.

All right for some

The investment bankers who were bailed out are doing all right for themselves though. In 2014 they raked in £54 billion in fees on company mergers and takeovers - a seven year high!

One estate agent reported a surge in investment bankers registering to

buy apartments valued at £2 million to £5 million in London. While the City Link sackings are another example of how working class people are still suffering in this so-called 'recovery', the rich are getting even richer.

Courier firms like City Link should be nationalised, along with the recently sold-off Royal Mail, as part of a fully integrated, publicly owned postal service run under workers' control, to provide a service, not make profits.

Any system that leads to thousands of workers losing their jobs at Christmas - or any other time - is not fit for purpose and should be consigned to the dustbin of history.

A democratic socialist society is the only way to end capitalist exploitation. If you agree, join the Socialist Party today.



See page 4 for more on City Link photo Coventry SP



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'Election fever' – working class alternative needed

Come to the TUSC conference, 24 January

TUSC supporters

Yet again the Labour Party leadership has reaffirmed its commitment to Tory austerity should it come to power in May.

Shadow chancellor Ed Balls stressed that he cannot promise to reverse the 1% public sector pay limit or the massing of local council services. He said that just because Labour figures criticise certain cuts, doesn't mean they wouldn't make them themselves!

It couldn't be any clearer that there's no difference between the big parties. The need has never been so great for a party of our own – working class people standing in elections for themselves.

That's what the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) allows us to do. And the TUSC 2015 challenge, with an ambitious target of standing in 1,000 local election and 100 parliamentary seats, is growing.

Along with the seven parliamentary candidates agreed so far by the

Scottish TUSC steering committee, there are now 32 TUSC candidates in place for May.

TUSC parliamentary candidates approved in December included Tony Mulhearn, standing in Liverpool's Riverside constituency. Tony, one of the Liverpool 47 Labour councillors who defied the Thatcher government in the 1980s, polled 4,792 votes for TUSC in Liverpool's mayoral election in 2012, coming in ahead of both the Tories and Ukip.

Also contesting a Liverpool parliamentary seat for TUSC is the Unite union convenor for the city council, Dave Walsh, standing in Liverpool Wavertree.

Trade union members

There are two trade union national executive committee members on the new candidates' list, with the National Union of Teachers' (NUT) executive member Anne Lemon contesting Bristol North West, and Unison NEC member Jacqui Berry standing in Gillingham and Rainham.

This north Kent constituency

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

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

is next door to the Rochester and Strood seat of Ukip MP Mark Reckless - in May he will be challenged on behalf of TUSC by the local transport union RMT young members officer, Dan Burn, who joins four other RMT members already approved.

To prepare for this, our biggest



TUSC chair Dave Nellist at last year's conference photo Paul Mattsson

ever election challenge, TUSC is holding a one-day conference on 24 January. If we reach the targets, TUSC should qualify for what the BBC calls 'balanced media coverage' in the election period.

The conference will discuss TUSC's election platform, the core policies - for both the general election and the local elections - which prospective candidates must endorse if they wish to stand under the TUSC name.

Could you be one of the TUSC

candidates? Come along to the conference and meet other prospective candidates and TUSC supporters who are building an alternative to the austerity parties in their areas.

TUSC 2015 elections conference
Student Central (formerly ULU),
Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY
Saturday 24 January, 11am to 4.30pm
Registration fee: £10 waged and £2 unwaged/low-waged
Capped pooled fare of £10

TUSC contacting Labour candidates

TUSC has been organising trade unionists around the country to write to Labour Party prospective parliamentary candidates asking to send a delegation to meet with them. This is to discuss their position on a number of key issues, including trade union rights, reversing ConDem cuts, the living wage and nationalisation, as part of the considerations as to where TUSC candidates stand in May's general election. Here are two reports of this process:

Margaret Hodge

Leading activists in a number of trade unions, including RMT, Unite, Unison, PCS and NUT signed the letter to Margaret Hodge MP. Hodge is a member of the Oppenheimer family, whose steel business, Stemcor, announced a turnover of £5 billion in 2012.

After receiving no reply, it was agreed by the local TUSC committee that Hodge should face a challenge from Joseph Manbuliya, a low-paid London Underground cleaner and RMT member who was inspired by late RMT general secretary Bob Crow (a founding member of TUSC) to take an active part in the struggle for higher wages.

Tristram Hunt

The request we sent to Tristram Hunt MP was supported by 21 local trade union and community activists. These included a Unite health branch secretary, the North Staffs RMT branch secretary, Unite Community branch secretary, and PCS North Staffs DWP branch chair.

Tristram told us: "I am always more than happy to meet with trade unionists in Stoke-on-Trent to hear their views and I will continue to do so through the official channels."

"I do not see the benefit of meeting with TUSC - a rival political party - to discuss policy so that you can decide whether to stand a candidate against me or not. It is no different to the Liberal Democrats asking me to meet so that they can decide whether to stand against me or not."

The reality is that Hunt has met, and will continue to meet with Tory, Lib Dem and other MP's at Westminster who will definitely 'stand against' his party at election time.

But meet with ordinary working class trade union and community activists from his own constituency who are prepared to fight the endless cuts of the establishment parties? It appears that he doesn't want to know about such things.

So TUSC will provide a serious anti-austerity alternative at the ballot box in Stoke-on-Trent and around the country in May.

Scotland: more of the same after Labour leadership election

Philip Stott
 Socialist Party Scotland

Jim Murphy's election as Labour's new Scottish leader has underlined the need for the affiliated trade unions to break from Labour and help build a new party to represent working class people.

Murphy, who has a long history in the right-wing, Blairite faction of the party and who was heavily promoted in the capitalist press, polled just over 55% of the vote. He won almost 70% support among Labour parliamentarians and 60% backing from party members.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Labour was a workers' party at its base, many constituency Labour parties were strongholds for the left. Today, 30 constituency Labour Parties nominated Murphy as leader, as did the youth and student wing of the party. This is a crushing indication of how far to the right the Labour Party has moved.

The left

A majority of trade unionists did back the left candidate, Neil Findlay. However, reflecting the lack of involvement by trade unionists in the party, it's estimated that fewer than 10% of eligible trade union members actually voted.

A former president of the National Union of Students, Murphy was instrumental in forcing through a change dropping NUS opposition to the abolition of the student grant. In 1997 the newly elected Blair government scrapped the grant alongside



Jim Murphy

the introduction of tuition fees.

Murphy's election will cement Labour's position as a pro-big business, pro-austerity party. As such it will remain incapable of rebuilding its largely shattered base of support among the working class in Scotland.

A recent opinion poll put the Scottish National Party on 47%, fully 20% ahead of Labour. This would leave Labour with just seven seats in Scotland, a loss of 34 MPs.

Break the link

Socialist Party Scotland, like our sister party in England and Wales, campaigns for the affiliated trade unions to break from Labour and help launch a new mass workers' party. Socialist Party Scotland plays an active role in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Scottish TUSC commented fol-

lowing Murphy's election: "TUSC believes that Murphy's election will lead to an exodus of members from an already beleaguered party facing collapsing support after the independence referendum.

"It will also further weaken public support for the Labour Party in Scotland. Murphy is well known as an arch Blairite, a supporter of the Iraq war, an advocate of a new generation of Trident and backs further austerity cuts.

"As such, under his leadership, there is now clearly no possibility of Labour moving to the left and advocating fighting socialist and anti-austerity policies.

"We appeal to trade unionists and Labour Party members who see the need for a fighting anti-cuts and socialist alternative to join with TUSC and help us build that alternative."

www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

NHS crisis Government cuts to blame - not patients



photo Paul Mattsson

Simon Carter

The ongoing crisis in the National Health Service (NHS) has become the latest general election battleground for the establishment parties - with Labour, Tories, Lib Dems and Ukip all pledging to make it work.

However, the pro-austerity, pro-privatisation policies of these parties are the problem, not the solution. They are responsible for the systematic undermining of the NHS as part of their pro-big business agendas and their private health-care connections.

The latest manifestations of the

NHS crisis is the temporary closure of several hospitals' Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments in England and the worst patient waiting times in A&E on record - due to staff shortages and high demand.

The health authorities and government ministers point the finger of blame for this crisis at the patients, disingenuously arguing that many shouldn't be accessing A&E at all.

However, firstly, many patients find it nigh on impossible to get a GP appointment. Secondly, the acute shortage of permanent health staff due to cuts in the numbers of nurses being trained and budget cuts have led to long A&E waiting

times. Thirdly, funding cuts to local authorities have led to a shortage of care and nursing home places for many elderly patients who occupy hospital beds thereby blocking the throughput of patients.

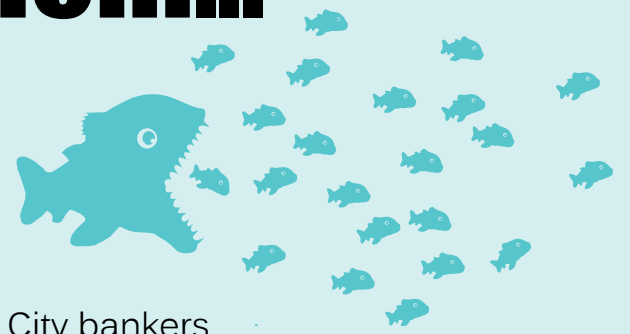
And, finally, there have been widespread closures of A&E departments in hospitals throughout England (and the 'downgrading' of A&Es in Wales). These closures are, on the one hand, the result of cost-cutting health trusts under pressure to carry out £20-£30 billion of government driven 'efficiency savings' and, on the other hand, by health trusts driven into bankruptcy as a result of servicing PFI privatisation contracts pushed by successive Labour and Tory/Lib Dem governments.

The fragmentation of the NHS as hospitals shift to Foundation Trust status - where hospitals become self-governing entities competing with one another for NHS and private patients to generate income - can only exacerbate the current public health crisis.

The Socialist Party, working with its trade union allies in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, will continue to fight the spending cuts and the scrapping of PFI contracts; and to demand that privatised services are reintegrated into a fully funded and democratically run public NHS.

This could be paid for by nationalising the tax-avoiding giant corporations, including the parasitic 'big pharma' drug companies, and imposing a wealth tax on the income and assets of the super-rich. Then, people's health could come first instead of private profit.

Them...



Fat cat City bankers were paid an average of £1.3 million last year, making their pay packages worth almost 50 times the average annual wage in the UK

and he also gets some help paying the bills from his pals - for instance Timur Kuulibayev, son-in-law of the Kazakhstan dictator Nazarbayev. Timur generously paid £15 million for Andy's old country pile in Sunninghill Park - £3 million above the asking price.

Smoking gun

Air pollution from motor vehicle emissions and industry is a major killer, causing 400,000 premature deaths in Europe - 29,000 in the UK alone.

Prime Minister David Cameron's shameless promotion of big business profits ahead of people's health has already landed the UK government in the European Court of Justice for exceeding air pollution limits. However, it seemed that the PM received an early Christmas present when it was revealed in late December that the European Commission had, after lobbying by the capitalist 'Business Europe' association, secretly agreed to ditch a new, tougher, air quality bill.

Rotten boroughs

Over 635,000 homes lie empty across the country, 259,000 of which have been vacant for over six months, while the number of homeless people and those on housing waiting lists continue to soar. Councils can charge 150% council tax on properties that have been empty for two years but many have yet to enforce this policy - and at a maximum levy of £1,000 for even the largest homes it is of little deterrent for the top end of the market. Meanwhile, some £350 million worth of rotting mansions are sitting vacant on just one street - 'billionaire's row' - in north London, mainly owned by overseas investors.

Austerity tax

Government cuts will mean a further two million low-income families will face higher council tax bills in April. This is in addition to 2.4 million low-income households who have seen their council tax support cut in the last two years. They too will have to pay more as local councils (many Labour run) simply pass on the Tory cuts.

By 2018 there will be one million fewer affordable homes in the UK than there were in 1980, when the population was seven million less than today

Andy's pals

Meeting residential costs isn't a problem for scandal hit prince Andrew - who was living in a £22,000 a week luxury Swiss chalet when the media storm broke. Andy receives £249,000 a year from

Profit subsidies

Cameron's environmental credentials - 'get rid of all the green crap' - are looking even more threadbare after Greenpeace pointed out that the government has provided £1.7 billion to 'big oil' to finance fossil fuel projects around the world.

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!
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 text 0776 1818 206 @Socialist_party /CWSocialistParty

Benefit sanctions ruin lives

The target driven use of punitive benefit sanctions on poor people by this government of millionaires is a national disgrace. Even establishment figures like the Archbishop of Canterbury have complained that the sanctions regime and lengthy delays in paying benefits are forcing families to rely on charitable food banks in order to feed themselves.

The Trussell Trust, which campaigns against poverty, reckons that over 500,000 families have had to use food banks over the last year - a number that is expected to rise due to the new vicious austerity measures of this government, and for that matter, whichever mainstream party or parties form the next government in May.

This sanctions policy, which can be applied to claimants for minor infringements such as being late for an interview, has even led to at least 60 suicides.

The letter opposite, received just before Christmas, underscores the unfairness of the Department for Work and Pensions in hounding claimants.



"The job centre in Huddersfield told my son that his Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claim will be cancelled. He will have to make a fresh claim taking weeks to process. His crime was to take a sick day while working on a voluntary basis for Poundland in Huddersfield.

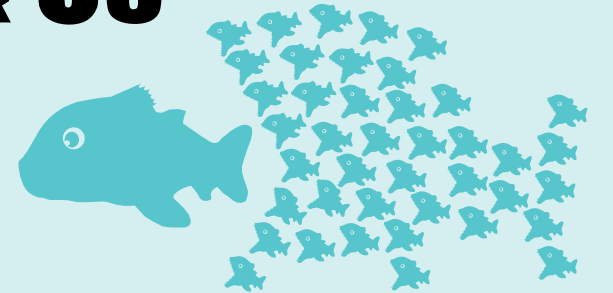
Sean was working 30 hours a week for no money in the vain hope that it might lead to him getting a job at Poundland. Apparently he'd had more than two sick days during the year so was subject to this cruel benefit sanction.

He has no possessions as these were pawned after a previous benefit sanction when his JSA was suspended for two months for being late to an appointment at the local job centre. During his last sanction my son went days without eating as he used the meagre food supplies he had to feed his dog.

My son has been sanctioned four times by the local job centre which is victimisation and harassment. How is he supposed to survive over the Christmas period with no income? His family will give him money and food to survive or he would starve."

Dylan Murphy

...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk



The Case for Socialism - Why You Should Join

This short pamphlet outlines what the Socialist Party stands for, and how we think socialism can be achieved. If you agree - join us!

£1.20 including postage
 Socialist Books,
 PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. 020 8988 8789

Renationalise mail distribution

Save the jobs of City Link workers

Rob Williams

National Shop Stewards Network chair

Over 3,000 City Link workers are now facing the New Year dole queue with the company put into administration.

Because the firm is bankrupt, the 2,400 directly employed workers will only receive statutory payments of a maximum of nearly £14,000 for decades of service, with most getting far less.

But City Link's 1,000 "self-employed" contractors will get no redundancy pay at all and become "unsecured" creditors of what is likely to be a bankrupt company.

This comes a year after the privatisation of Royal Mail and is further proof of how the postal and delivery sector is becoming ever more dog eat dog, with bosses trying to push down workers' wages and terms and conditions, and increasing zero-hour contracts and subcontracting.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) supports the call of RMT union general secretary Mick Cash for City Link to be nationalised to save these jobs - as also does the Socialist Party.

Public interest

Mick Cash told the BBC: "If the government can nationalise the bankers then they can nationalise City Link, which is clearly in the public interest."

This call should be linked to the trade unions demanding the renationalisation of Royal Mail - where

universal national equality of prices and service is now under threat on the altar of profits - and the rest of the companies in this sector.

A nationalised distribution service, run under democratic control, could provide both a unified delivery system and decent wages and conditions for its staff.

This demand can unite workers,

'If the government can nationalise the bankers then they can nationalise City Link'

both directly and indirectly employed, across the industry and cut across the bosses' divide and rule tactics.

Scandalously, the Labour Party ruled out renationalising Royal Mail despite this being unanimously supported at last year's Labour Party conference.

The whole of the trade union movement should support these workers and any action they take. In 2009, 600 sacked workers at bankrupt Visteon occupied their plants, and while not able to keep their jobs, they won enhanced redundancy payments.

CWU members have just been on strike against job losses and the threat of compulsory redundancies for workers handling, collecting and distributing cash across the Post Office network.

Solidarity to the City Link workers!



City Link workers and trade unionists protesting outside the Coventry City Link headquarters photo Coventry SP

Outraged workers demonstrate

Coventry Socialist Party

"Nationalise City Link, put the bosses in the clink!" shouted dozens of protesters outside the haulage company's headquarters on New Year's Day.

RMT members, Socialist Party activists, TUSC supporters and City Link workers from Coventry and across Britain joined the demonstration, including a group from Scotland.

One of them, Mick, worked at City Link with his son and daughter. All three now face redundancy.

"Management spoke to us two weeks before Christmas and said everything was fine and the rumours about the business were untrue," he said. "Then they wished us a happy Christmas and New Year.

They just kept lying to us."

When asked what he thought City Link workers should do now, his answer was clear: "Fight. What else can we do? Either we fight, or we lay down and die."

Many workers are being told they won't be paid for any overtime worked in the weeks before Christmas - some were working 12-hour days, seven days a week! Not only are these workers threatened with redundancy, their bosses are refusing to pay them!

The books should be opened and investigated by City Link workers and trade unions, to see where the money has gone.

On 2 January, 15 workers burnt their City Link uniforms in a protest outside the firm's Rotherham depot

"Bosses seem to have planned for this for weeks before telling workers.

The company appears to have been meeting with insolvency advisors since November, and on 9 December three current City Link directors established a new firm - City Link B2B. This has led the transport union, RMT, to claim these directors could be preparing to buy back assets from administrators 'at a knockdown price'."

Dave Nellist, former Coventry MP and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition chair



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www.shopstewards.net

London bus drivers vote for action

London bus drivers in the Unite union have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action in demand of a standard contract across the capital's bus network.

At the moment there are different pay rates, terms and conditions across the different private bus companies. But it's the same job - we all want the same deal!

Bus drivers are concerned that the constant attacks on their pay, terms and conditions will ultimately drive down pay to minimum wage levels and see drivers working 12 hour days as a norm.

A strike ballot was held before Christmas with the result announced in the first week of the New Year: 86% voted for industrial action.

We have begun a long struggle, but one we are prepared to win.
A London bus driver

Four week strike begins at Barbour's Gateshead

Elaine Brunskill

After a six day strike in the run up to Christmas, workers in Barbour's Gateshead warehouse began another four weeks of strike action from 5 January.

Barbour jackets, alongside being favourites of the hunting, shooting set, are worn by the likes of Kate Moss and Lily Allen.

The company reportedly made a profit of £18 million last year, but now wants to turn the screws on its workforce.

Barbour is attempting to impose new shift conditions. One of the strikers commented: "They are expecting us to start at 6.30am, until 11pm, but this is a really isolated place."

Another striker went on to say that transport links to the industrial estate were poor and the new shift patterns would make it impossible for people who relied on public transport.

Many of the strikers have worked at Barbour in excess of 20 years.



photo Elaine Brunskill

In brief

RMT executive

Socialist Party member John Reid has been elected as the London Transport member for the RMT union's council of executives. John received 1,512 votes - 59% of the total ballots cast.

Lambeth College

As we go to press, UCU members at Lambeth College, south London, are set to take two more days of strike action on 7 and 9 January as college management has refused to back down in the ongoing dispute over contract changes. An indefinite strike is set to start on 19 January if the dispute is not resolved.

Website

For more reports on trade union and workplace issues see the Socialist Party's website: www.socialistparty.org.uk



Syriza leader, Tsipras

At the end of last year a constitutional crisis arose in austerity-ridden Greece with the failure to elect a president. This triggered an early general election to be called for 25 January. Much to the panic of the capitalist class internationally, Syriza (a left party) leads the polls, largely because it is seen as the best chance of hitting back against austerity.

The Socialist spoke to **Andros Payiatsos** from Xekinima (CWI in Greece) on 6 January

Why are elections taking place?

The given reason is because of the presidential elections. The president in Greece is elected by a two thirds majority in Parliament. There is a clause in the constitution that if the Parliament cannot vote for a president then there has to be a general election and then the president is elected by 50% of parliament. The government could not get the two thirds majority.

The essential reason is that the austerity policies of the government have come up against a brick wall. Society is rejecting these policies – that's translated into parliament where Pasok (the traditional social democracy party) and New Democracy (right-wing capitalist party) have lost their majority. A big section of MPs from New Democracy and Pasok left their parties in the

past year and are now independent – these people didn't vote.

What is the likely outcome of the election?

Most likely is a Syriza victory.

There is a big campaign of fear by the capitalist class, both in Greece and internationally, to try and prevent this. It's the usual campaign that we expected, claiming that if Syriza is elected then Greece will be out of the Euro and that would be an absolute nightmare and all hell will break loose, etc. The Prime Minister said yesterday that if Syriza wins then Greece will become like North Korea – so this is a fear campaign reaching ridiculous levels.

But it's not having the same effect on the population as it did in 2012. People are now angry enough to vote for Syriza despite the fear campaign. There are already signs that the establishment is quite panicked about the outcome of these elections – particularly New Democracy.

But it's not clear cut. Papandreou

(the previous prime minister) is creating a split in Pasok and forming a new party. This is presenting itself as a left wing split – accusing the leadership of Pasok of abandoning the party's socialist principles. That's despite the fact that Papandreou was the prime minister who put the Troika into Greece and Greece into the memorandum (deal signed between the Greek government and the IMF). But it's unclear how much support this new party could receive.

The problem is that Syriza's lead on New Democracy is only around 3-4%. The most probable development is a victory for Syriza. Although it's a question of how big a victory it will be and whether Syriza will be able to have a majority or a minority government. The latter would have to depend on the votes of Pasok and forces like Democratic Left, which are really forces of the establishment.

How do you think Syriza will act in government?

In some ways Syriza would prefer to win without an overall majority so that it can blame relying on the votes of others for having to pursue less radical policies.

This would be an excuse. The Syriza leadership has been moving clearly to the right since the elections of 2012. In the rest of Europe Syriza is presented as a very left, radical, even far-left party. But in Greece there is great suspicion and lack of enthusiasm in the masses because they see that the leadership of Syriza is doing everything possible to come to an understanding with the forces of the market – the Troika, the EU, and the national establishment.

It's not ruled out that Syriza could move enough to the right to stay within the Eurozone and become the new government implementing austerity. But things will not be black and white in the next period in Greece, because we shall also have the interventions of the

mass movements.

The problems in society are so major, millions of people are in an absolutely desperate situation. They will have to fight, and they will fight, attempting to push a Syriza government to the left. So, despite the fact that the Syriza leadership is moving to the right and looking for a compromise with the forces of the markets internationally, it is possible that they will be pushed to the left under the pressure of the mass movement.

How does Xekinima think the campaign of fear about the Euro etc should be answered?

We think that it's impossible to have a pro-working class programme – to abandon the memoranda, to get out of the present crisis of the economy by using the public sector as a steam engine for the economy to grow and in general to say no to the neoliberal policies of the EU – and at the same time to stay within the Eurozone as it is today.

There are only two possibilities. One is that there will be a mass, internationalist appeal by Syriza to the working classes of Europe and to the developing left forces to fight for major changes in a socialist direction across the continent as part of a new socialist Europe. If this does not happen, or doesn't have sufficient time to develop, then the country will have a national currency, outside of the capitalist Eurozone.

We think a return to the national currency would not necessarily be a disaster – if it is accompanied by socialist policies in Greece by a government of the left. Under a socialist government initially using a national currency, the internationalist appeal would have to continue, aiming at bringing forward major socialist changes across Europe. We believe that this approach has to be put openly to the Greek working class to prepare it for the battles that are looming ahead.

Unfortunately the leadership of Syriza is not doing either of the

two and it just creates an artificial optimism – 'don't worry, nothing will happen, we guarantee that the country will stay in the Eurozone.' This is a major mistake.

How should the struggle be organised?

There has to be a very conscious attempt at coordinating the struggles because no isolated struggle can win in the present context. These struggles must try to link with the left rank and file of Syriza to push the party to the left. They have to attempt to create democratic structures within society and within the movements so that the rank and file has the decisive say.

To get rid of the Troika and the present government, these struggles should be in the hands of the whole of the left, a united left. Unfortunately the left is split. Part of the blame for this is that the leadership of Syriza does not try to genuinely build a united front.

But society and the working class will move in their great masses to vote for Syriza. Xekinima is part of this movement. We're calling for a vote for Syriza, we're in negotiations with Syriza to have a number of candidates in some of the main constituencies in Athens, Salonika and Volos.

The final factor is that the struggles must aim to a socialist programme – nationalise the banks, nationalise the commanding heights of the economy, plan the economy. All of this has to be under democratic control and management by the workers, otherwise we shall have the corruption that we had in the state sector in the past. On this basis struggles can be victorious and can provide huge inspiration to the working masses in the rest of Europe.

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



Xekinima members are participating in the elections and other struggles

Perspectives for 2015

THE DEEPENING CAPITALIST CRISIS MUST BE MET WITH A DETERMINED WORKING CLASS FIGHTBACK

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, looks at the prospects for capitalism, politics and socialist ideas in the year to come.

All the political and economic ingredients which made 2014 such a volatile year will be carried over and deepened in 2015. In Britain, a crucial general election - with possible long-term consequences for politics - will add to the brew.

We can predict that the strategists of capitalism will have just as little clue as in 2014 on how to overcome the evident 'deficiencies', more like catastrophic consequences, of their crisis-ridden system. They have characterised this as a 'great recession' - carefully avoiding the term 'depression' due to its association with the 1930s.

This did not prevent some of their spokespersons, like Martin Wolf of the Financial Times, from describing the current situation as a 'managed depression'. Now, however, they speak of the 'great frustration'.

This at least has the merit of summing up the inability of capitalist economists to prescribe solutions to the present crisis.

Six years after 2008 and despite the colossal stimulus worldwide of over



Labour will match the Tories' spending cuts photo Paul Mattsson

\$6 trillion - equal to one third of US gross domestic product - only the US of the major economic blocs is in 'recovery' mode. And even that is more of an illusion than a reality because, up to now, this has been largely 'joyless' for the millions of jobless and the army of poverty-stricken Americans. Figures for the growth of 'in-work poverty' are staggering.

And this is despite the unexpected bonus from the US shale 'revolution'. This, it is estimated, has generated two million extra US jobs and a bonus for motorists of \$160 billion through the falling oil prices - equivalent to a big 'tax cut' that does not have to go through Congress! Yet even in the US this has not produced the hoped-for economic and political stability.

The turnout in the midterm elections was the lowest since 1942! Those who supported Obama in the last presidential election - the youth and minorities - deserted him as he had deserted them, shattering their hopes and aspirations.

The same poverty and racial discrimination as in the past, indicated by Ferguson and elsewhere, scars US society. This inequality and conflict is mirrored throughout the world as the continued carnage in the Middle East, an undeclared bloody war in Ukraine and ratcheted-up tensions worldwide show.

Poverty

In Britain, the Cameron government is besieged by one damning report after another reflecting the scale and depth of poverty, a direct product of the system that their millionaires' government protects.

The time when the Church of England was described as the 'Tory party at prayer' has long gone. But the findings of a report on poverty by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Church of England make for damning reading indeed. Volunteers, it says, have been "courageously fighting" a "social Dunkirk".

Yet there are still a million British people using food banks and behind the bald figures is a picture of the truly terrible plight of the poor: "An unemployed woman from Birkenhead was taken to hospital with malnutrition after not eating for five days because she had no money to buy food."

This is my home town, long associated with poverty, even in the post-1945 boom. But it never led in the 1950s, 60s or 70s to the appearance of actual malnutrition!

In 1932, riots were provoked by the same fear of hunger that stalks Britain today. One of the themes of the hugely popular 'Hunger Games' is how hunger and oppression prepare the ground for revolution.

It is no accident that films like this are produced at this time. A similar trend in film, music and art preceded the revolutionary storms of the 1960s and 70s: "the wind blows the tops of the trees first".

We recently witnessed how the big stores were besieged on 'Black Friday' for cheap goods. This is just one step removed, given the social situation in Britain to similar 'raids' in some countries for food!

Moreover, Guardian journalist Suzanne Moore, in commenting on the scandalous state of the housing stock in Britain, indicated that negligent slum landlords were turning a blind eye to ceilings falling and causing in-

Like the Geddes report of the 1920s - which led to the 1926 general strike - this programme is for endless austerity, as the Socialist has predicted from the outset. It means a slashing of the state "to the levels of the 1930s"

jury to renters. I had first-hand experience of this in Birkenhead in the 1960s when a ceiling collapsed on me in a bedroom of our family home, leaving me with a lifelong scar.

This 'modern' poverty is much more widespread as this recent report shows: "A heavily pregnant woman and her partner found living, without food, in a child's tent in a wealthy Berkshire town in the middle of winter; and a man from Wirral crushed to death after a refuse lorry picked up the bin in which he was scavenging for food."

Welby said that he was more shocked by poverty in Britain than he was on a recent trip to Africa because "it was so unexpected".

He must have led a sheltered life, particularly when today you can literally trip over the destitute when walking in all the big cities of Britain.

The rising poverty in Britain is di-



Many workers, in order to stop the hemorrhaging of living standards, have no option but to take militant industrial action photo Paul Mattsson

rectly related to the cold cruelty of Osborne and Cameron, not to say Duncan Smith for imposing a system which punishes the poor and cuts their benefits with the futile intention of driving them to seek out non-existent jobs. The Guardian reported that since October 2012, almost 850,000 individuals have received benefit sanctions.

Yet these Tory and Liberal Democrat creatures pretend to be shocked when they come in for criticism.

'Iron Chancellor'

Osborne particularly furiously protested when BBC commentators - acting on this occasion more as a semi-opposition to the government than Labour and Miliband - claimed that his proposed cuts would take Britain back to the 1930s and "the bleak living conditions" depicted in George Orwell's 'Road to Wigan Pier'. The BBC was just telling the truth... for once.

This episode illustrates that Osborne miscalculated. His attempt to present himself once more as the 'Iron Chancellor', ready to inflict further punishment on the British people, completely blew up in his face. After five years of austerity - in reality planned poverty - the British people are in no mood to accept more of the same, "colossal cuts" in the words of his own friends, the Institute for Fiscal Studies. They pointed out that only £35 billion of the £90 billion cuts required from Whitehall departments have already been implemented.

Like the Geddes report of the 1920s - which led to the 1926 general strike - this programme is for endless austerity, as the Socialist has predicted from the outset. It means a slashing of the state "to the levels of

the 1930s as a proportion of GDP. That is an extraordinary concept - reading like a book of doom", as BBC reporter Norman Smith correctly commented. He was roundly condemned for his "hyperbole" by Osborne.

Quite clearly, the government through Osborne has given notice of further attacks on top of what have already been made. He unsuccessfully tried to soften the effect by making concessions on Stamp Duty for house purchases.

But the government was exposed as having no policy for the mass of the population other than axing jobs and services in the public sector and living standards generally.

The assumption of Osborne's plans was that any future spending leading to growth will not come from increased wages and

income of the working class.

The government's Office for Budget Responsibility openly refers to "subdued earnings", government/bosses-speak for big wage and income cuts which have already taken place.

This, in turn, has automatically led to a drop in government tax revenue, necessitating further cuts in government expenditure in order to maintain even present government spending.

The Observer commented: "By the end of the next Parliament. The country will have experienced 18 years of lost wage growth, while the top 5% will have become even richer."

Rising inequality

An explosion of inequality is taking place in Britain and worldwide. The gap between rich and poor is now so great that the Chair of the US Federal Reserve, Janet Yellen, says that it is actually against the US Constitution and

the aims of the 'founding fathers'. Oxfam revealed that if the world's richest man, Carlos Slim, of Mexico, spent his fortune - accumulated through privatisations in the main and, therefore, from theft of public property - at \$1 million a day, it would take 200 years to run out!

Oxfam revealed that if the world's richest man, Carlos Slim, of Mexico, spent his fortune - accumulated through privatisations in the main and, therefore, from theft of public property - at \$1 million a day, it would take 200 years to run out!

Therefore, in Britain any increased expenditure capable of generating 'demand' growth, the government clearly expects, will be built from an explosion of household debt.

This is predicted to reach a "staggering 184% of household incomes by 2020. In 2010, at 170% it was high. Many of us don't earn enough, so we continue to borrow - a tightrope for the clumsy footed, unbalanced as soon as interest rates rise" (Observer, 7 December 2014).

Presented with an open goal, it should be possible to envisage that even New Labour and Miliband would not miss an opportunity to attack the government's perspective for dead-end austerity, even advancing, for instance, a reformist alternative for a crash public works building programme.

Yet their reaction to Osborne's statement has shown that they are not even skilful reformists. In fact, they are reformists without reforms, indeed counter-reforms are the real axis of their policies.

Our programme for beginning to solve the crisis in the interests of the majority, working people, is outlined regularly in this paper. We stand for a socialist alternative, including serious reforms and increased living standards through socialist policies. We call for the immediate renationalisation of

privatised failing industries, particularly the utilities.

In the case of the East Coast railway that collapsed on the basis of private ownership, it was then restored to a healthy financial position through state ownership. Once put back on its feet and 'fattened up', it was then handed back by the coalition to the private sector.

This is just one aspect of the 'corporate welfare' policies of this millionaires' government that we don't hear much about. In fact, according to Aditya Chakraborty of the Guardian: "British businesses take £85 billion a year from the public in grants, subsidies, insurance schemes, preferential creditors and government services."

The basis of our policies is for the taking over of the commanding heights of the economy including the democratic nationalisation of the monopolies and state control of the banks and finance houses. This, in turn, will allow all the financial incomings and outgoings which take place to be in the hands of working people and their organisations.

These and many other measures which we have outlined many times would allow the labour movement and the working class to take hold of the real levers of economic power.

Through a democratic plan of production we would guarantee a big increase in resources which would benefit the working class and the middle class, the overwhelming majority of the population.

'Miliband'

But nothing of this character has been offered in the aftermath of Osborne's statements. "Me too," is the unchanging mantra of Balls and Miliband: "A New Labour government will cut unprotected departmental spending every year until the deficit is cleared, the party has said, toughening its stance on borrowing." [Financial Times]

Ed Miliband also stated: "There is no path to growth and prosperity for working people which does not tackle the deficit."

To Shadow Cabinet ministers he declared: "You should be planning on the basis that your departmental budget will be cut not only in 2015-16, but each year until we have achieved our promises to balance the books."

Also targeted for cuts are 'difficult' decisions about scrapping the winter fuel allowance for rich pensioners - which could then become a benchmark for ending the allowance completely for the poor as well, some of whom could actually die because they have inadequate protection from a harsh winter.

It is impossible to say what the actual outcome will be but there is still a real possibility of a hung Parliament, with no party having an overall majority. This, in turn, could mean a coalition but no certainty as to which parties would constitute the government that would result from this deadlock. This prospect itself is a crushing condemnation of Miliband, New Labour and those who prop up this rotting corpse of a party.



Osborne's slashing of services is a return to 1930s-style austerity

Only the NHS, in the main, will be exempted from direct cuts by a Labour government. However, even this 'promise' is no guarantee. The last Labour government opened the door to its penetration by the private sector which, under the present Tory/Lib Dem coalition, now accounts for one third of NHS services.

Such is the political volatility in Britain today that it is virtually impossible to say who will come out of May's general election as the victor or even if there will be one party with a clear lead.

In December, polls first put Labour and the Tories neck and neck at around 30%. Then they gave Labour a 7% lead with a safe majority of 80 or more seats. The number of Liberal Democrat MPs could shrink from their present 57 to fewer than 20!

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continued on page 8...

Perspectives for 2015

Determined working class struggle needed to fight the capitalist crisis

...continued from pages 6&7

New Labour is faced with the biggest crisis in its history. It seems destined to cling to the tattered ideological rags of discredited 'social democracy', sinking in the future into relative obscurity, like the 'socialist' parties Pasok in Greece and PSOE in Spain.

Even Germany's labour minister, social democrat Andrea Nahles, is introducing anti-union laws against small unions on behalf of the government coalition with Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats.

This is a further international example of the rottenness of social democracy.

There is no basis for lasting reforms, and therefore of social democracy, in crisis-ravaged 'modern' capitalism. Even some of its longest standing supporters, like the well-known novelist Margaret Drabble, have joined the almost five million workers who have abandoned the discredited New Labour ship.

The pathetic bleating of Polly Toynbee in the Guardian for her to stay - "ignore the flaws" - says it all about the character of those who still inhabit New Labour.

It is not just "flawed" but beyond redemption, a hollowed-out shell, with socialist workers and youth abandoning it not just in Scotland but throughout England and Wales as well.

Even the newly-elected Scottish Labour leader, the unreconstructed Blairite Jim Murphy, has said that New Labour in the referendum did not receive just one punch but were bashed over the head by a powerful electoral hammer! In his first act, he also desperately sought to distance himself from Miliband.

They are about to receive even further blows in Scotland in the general election, with the SNP likely to capture a swathe of formerly safe Labour seats.

Election

Depending on how well Labour does in England and Wales, this could even deny Labour a working majority at Westminster, thereby curbing its ability to carry through its legislative programme, if it emerges in May as the victor.

Former SNP leader Alex Salmond is likely to be elected to Westminster, leading to the development of an 'independent' bloc. He will demand a high price from New Labour for more concessions for Scotland,



An enthusiastic audience at the main rally of Socialism 2014 - hosted by the Socialist Party photo Paul Mattsson

possibly even a new referendum, and may even enter a Labour-led coalition, in an attempt to secure the long-term aim of independence.

Britain does not now face a two-party system, as in the immediate post-war period when 95% of voters were behind Labour or the Tories. From the mid-1970s a three-party system developed with the Liberals offering a home for 'protest votes' from the other two main parties.

But now, with the rise of UKIP and the Greens - themselves on 7% in opinion polls - Britain effectively has a five-party system, without including Scotland and Wales.

This is just one indication that the present institutions are dysfunctional and no longer represent the will of the people in elections. A democratic form of proportional representation is now required.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the capitalists in Britain were enthusiastic for PR. They saw that the Labour Party had swung towards the left, with the rise of the Tony Benn left and the Militant Tendency - now the Socialist Party.

With the example of Chile in mind, they were fearful that a radical Labour party in Britain could come to power with a minority of votes but

a majority of seats, because of the first-past-the-post electoral system.

They wished to prevent this at any cost and therefore seriously considered introducing proportional representation for Westminster, and actually implemented it in Scotland and Wales for their parliaments.

But with the expulsion of Militant and the complete neutering of the Left within the Labour Party, combined with the rise of neoliberalism typified by Tony Blair, changing the electoral system was put into cold storage. When considering electoral reform, the strategists of capital always approach this from their own class standpoint.

For the same reasons - what system is best for the left and working-class interests at each stage - we now favour a form of democratic proportional representation as the best means of expressing the will of the most radical sections of the working class.

If we had in Britain a similar electoral system as Ireland or the Scottish parliament, we would probably have as many MPs as the Socialist Party in Ireland does, with an enhanced politically powerful effect.

Convulsions

The stored up opposition, even hatred, towards the Con-Dem government would in 'normal' times probably lead to a Labour victory.

But this is not a 'normal' time. These ingredients were present in the Scottish referendum and in the strikes and upheavals which are taking place throughout Europe.

The masses are seeking to throw off the chains of the old order. This was shown in the mass demonstrations and civil disobedience taking place in Ireland on water charges, to the general strikes in Belgium, as well as the current political upheavals in Greece, which has led to a new general election and the potential coming to power of Syriza.

There are also the convulsions in Spain, with the formation in 2014 of Podemos, a new left party, already gathering 1.6 million votes in the European elections.

Even though Syriza has recently moved politically towards the right, the Greek ruling class is extremely uneasy about the possibility of it coming to power (see page 5).

The masses as a whole do not study the fine print of programmes. Syriza coming into government, even if in a coalition, could open the floodgates of the stored-up bitterness and class anger, leading to the massively oppressed Greek working class pressing forward their demands.

Occupations in the factories, schools and workplaces could take place as a means of taking back what was lost in the previous period. A similar scenario could open up in Spain if Podemos was pushed into power.

Italy saw a massively supported general strike in December against the Renzi government.

So explosive is the underlying situation that even the British ruling class is not at all certain about

Miliband coming to power. He has made occasional populist radical flourishes on electricity prices, on a living wage, on housing, etc.

Therefore, they worry that mass pressure could develop in Britain in the event of a Miliband government, which could go further than he intends. This is why the coffers of the Tory party are overflowing with £78 million of donations from big business!


Therefore, the social and political theme of 2015 for Britain and the world will be an increased and worsening crisis of capitalism. It is vital to organise and continue the struggle on the industrial plane.

But it is just as necessary in this pre-election period to ensure that a viable electoral alternative is also in place with the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) gathering together the forces that can offer this.

No matter what the outcome of Britain's general election, the formation of a new mass workers' party is posed. We must seize all the opportunities for building the Socialist Party and the labour movement in this coming year.



A new general election in Greece could propel Syriza into power



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Stealing school fields? It's child's play

Ronnie Job
Swansea Socialist Party

School playing fields are not "surplus land". So said close to 100 concerned parents and local residents at Parkland Primary School, Swansea, in December. The meeting discussed how to fight council plans to sell off a large part of the school's playing fields.

Members of the action committee showed how the council rushed proposals, failed to consult properly, and apparently ignored guidelines on play space required per pupil.

Swansea council is the first in Wales to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet the Council hasn't asked the opinion of school pupils at all on these detrimental changes to their environment.

The rushing of these proposals is directly due to Labour's acceptance of Con-Dem government cuts. Despite Labour leading the Welsh Government and half the councils in Wales, it has simply

been a conveyor belt for Westminster cuts.

Labour hopes and expects to lead the next government after the general election in May. But councils around the country, including Swansea, are making plans for the cuts to continue. Swansea council's cabinet is proposing to cut funding for our children's education by 15%.

Not "surplus"

Some Labour councillors have tried to portray the playing field sale as disposing of "surplus land" to fund school building improvements. The place where my child plays, learns and develops is not "surplus land"!

If councillors thought this would be a soft target, they are very much mistaken. Parents, pupils and local residents will fight them all the way.

Watch the "Save Parkland playing field" video at <http://goo.gl/OfXpvm>



Swansea Labour says children's playing fields are surplus to requirement

Appeal to readers: cash needed to fight the cuts

Naomi Byron
Socialist Party finance department

The Socialist Party launched its general election appeal before Christmas. We are aiming to raise £50,000 over the next few weeks to help pay for the leaflets, posters and other material essential to our campaign.

As part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see page 2) we are preparing to stand hundreds of anti-cuts candidates throughout England and Wales. TUSC aims to stand in over 1,000 council seats and 100 parliamentar-

itary seats to help us get an election broadcast - and campaign for fair coverage from the media.

Donate

To do this we need your help. The Socialist Party has no rich backers. We are appealing to members and supporters to donate in support of the trade unionists, socialists and anti-cuts campaigners who are prepared to be candidates. If you want the chance to vote for a working class alternative, help us raise the money to stand as widely as possible.

You can donate online at socialistparty.org.uk/donate, by phone on 020 8988 8777, or by cheque (made out to "Socialist Party") to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Please mark your donation for "Election Appeal 2015".

Thanks to Kevin Pattison, Leeds, who has donated £300; Jeremy Short, Sheffield South (£250); Chris Bingham, Rotherham (£150); and Sheffield South branch, who raised £132 with a raffle.

Join the Socialists to fight for rent control



Private rental is a racket

"Almost nobody in the UK is opposed to rent controls for housing" read the Independent headline. A new Survation poll found 59% support the introduction of rent controls. Unsurprisingly 77% of private sector renters back caps - but so do a majority of homeowners. Around a third of people were unsure but not against the measures, and only 7% were in opposition.

'Almost nobody' happens to include all the capitalist parties standing for election in a few months' time. They support the status quo - fat cat landlords getting rich while the housing crisis metes out appall-

ing misery.

Regular readers of the Socialist will know that this paper and the Socialist Party have long campaigned for rent control and the building of quality council housing to solve the homes crisis. We need you to build the necessary mass workers' struggle for rent control and other measures that could improve all our lives. Join the Socialist Party today.

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join, email join@socialistparty.org.uk, text 0776 1818 206 or call 020 8988 8777.

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Socialist Party national organiser

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ received	£ target	October to December 2014	End-of-quarter totals
North West	2,673	1,200		223%
South East	1,454	750		194%
East Midlands	2,948	1,600		184%
Northern	1,093	600		182%
West Midlands	3,805	2,100		181%
Wales	3,339	2,300		145%
Eastern	1,612	1,200		134%
South West	1,819	1,400		130%
Southern	1,494	1,200		125%
Yorkshire	3,550	2,900		122%
London	6,831	6,100		112%
England and Wales	3,858	3,650		106%
TOTAL	34,475	25,000		138%

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Socialist Students

Socialist Students is a democratic campaigning organisation with groups in universities and colleges throughout the country.

Read more at socialiststudents.org.uk.

Cops off campus!

Students in Warwick campaigning for free education were brutally attacked by police in December. Officers stormed their occupation with CS gas and Tasers, beating everyone in reach, and dragging one student across the room by her hair.

Manchester Socialist Students called a protest in response. Our vibrant, enthusiastic march from the students' union to the local police station sent a clear message that police violence has no place on campus. We didn't come across a single person who thought police actions were justifiable.

Profit destroys lives

The violence at Warwick University was just part of ongoing attempts to undermine the right to protest. Attacks on democratic rights go hand in hand with austerity, and are designed to repress attempts to fight back.

So on 10 December, students at Leicester University gathered to show solidarity with Warwick students.

The event was also a vigil for Professor Stefan Grimm, the Imperial College London researcher who died last month, apparently by suicide. Stefan was attacked by bosses for failing to attract commercial inter-

est in his pioneering work on an "anti-cancer gene".

In a final email, he wrote: "What these guys don't know is that they destroy lives. Well, they certainly destroyed mine. This is not a university anymore but a business, with a very few, up in the hierarchy, profiteering, and the rest of us milked for money."

The two events are connected. Escalating tuition fees and deteriorating working conditions are both results of marketising education.

Caroline Vincent, Leicester

Rally against racism

Chants of "Hands up - don't shoot!" and "No justice, no peace" were heard loud and clear in Huddersfield in December. Thirty university and college students gathered in the pouring rain to protest US police killings of Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

Incensed by the justice system's failure to indict the officers responsible for these brutal murders, Socialist Students from Huddersfield University and Greenhead College organised a solidarity protest and vigil.

Darren Wilson's lack of remorse on national television, stating that he would do it all again, is not only disgusting but points to an overarching problem with the system. Victims of police killings disproportionately look like Michael Brown and not like Darren Wilson.

This is not a problem just for America. In Britain today, despite the mainstream media trying to convince us otherwise, we are eight times more likely to be killed by a

police officer than a terrorist. In both Britain and the US, despite significant differences in the justice system, you are more likely to be killed by the police if you are black.

Students in Huddersfield increasingly realise the law enforcement and judicial system can't solve the problem of embedded racism. Organisation and independent action are the keys to change.

Lily Green, Huddersfield



the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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



Spiders' privatisation web

Browsing the internet I came across a company offering training courses. Thornfields "specialises in providing high quality, relevant and interactive training to managers and staff in the primary care sector."

In 2012 Thornfields became part of First Practice Management Group, a division of ERS Medical. ERS Medical "provides a range of specialist patient transport and courier services to the NHS and the wider healthcare sector." ERS is part of SRCL Limited. This company, specialising in hazardous waste disposal, has a number of NHS contracts to provide non-emergency ambulance transport, such as Plymouth and surrounding parts of Devon. And SRCL is part of Stericycle - a large US-based corporation. In 2013 its income grew to \$2.14 billion, with over \$530 million profit.

Behind the many different private companies now working in the NHS, huge corporations are sucking up more and more business. Decisions made in a US boardroom will affect NHS patients and workers. But those decisions will be made in shareholders' interests.

Jon Dale

We could be heroes

When someone asked candidates in Plymouth TUSC's general election candidates' hustings meeting: "Who inspired you to become a socialist?", it set me thinking.

I immediately came up with figures like



photo S Gardiner

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, James Connolly, John McLean, Che Guevara, Malcolm X. Then I looked around the room and I thought everybody there was a hero because they are in the vanguard of a movement destined to sweep away capitalism. Their example will inspire further layers into the movement.

Who inspired me to get involved? I came across Janet Gibson in Hull in the early nineties. She was then a mother of two young boys and, supported by her husband Keith, made the decision to go to jail rather than pay the poll tax. The Tory poll tax and Labour's capitulation to it, contrasted with the example of people like Janet, persuaded me to join what was then the Militant in November 1992. I've been a member ever since. My only regret is that I didn't come across our party earlier in my life.

Rob Rooney



Thin gruel

When hearing that poor people were rioting as they had no bread, Marie Antoinette wittily remarked, "Why don't they eat cake?" Baroness Jenkin didn't get where she is today by being witty. When she claimed the problem with the working classes was that they went to food banks because they didn't know how to cook, she was trying to show compassionate Conservatism at work.

She claimed she could make porridge for 4p that was quite good enough for the working classes to eat. Her porridge has no milk, no salt and is unheated as these things take money. Whatever thin gruel Lady Muck wants to feed us, God help anyone asking for more! This compassionate Conservatism is on a par with IDS claiming he knew all about poverty because he had been unemployed. Like all the unemployed he went to live in daddy's house and the servants brought him three meals a day. It probably wasn't porridge.

The vicious application of harsh benefit rules means families have to go to food banks or starve. While Baroness Jenkins lives in luxury, better people than her go without.

So would being guillotined be a bit harsh for Baroness Jenkin and her ilk? She knows better than anyone that you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

Derek McMillan

Why I'm backing TUSC

Elaine Smith

Lincolnshire National Pensioners Convention representative (personal capacity)

I come from a strong Labour background. My uncle, Walter Harrison, was Labour MP for Wakefield and deputy chief whip in the Wilson and Callaghan governments. His obituaries said he would go to any lengths to delay the onslaught of a Thatcher government that would erode workers' rights and demolish working class communities.

I left the Labour Party in 1984, aged 32, disheartened by Labour's lack of direct support for the miners. I later worked as a social worker in ex-mining communities. My conviction was reinforced when I saw first-hand the destruction and poverty following the pit closures.

The Tories' goals are to continue where the Thatcher government finished by creating greater wealth for themselves. They want to dismantle the welfare state, the NHS, diminishing public services through privatisation and outsourcing.

Cuts always affect the vulnerable and low-paid the most. Politicians have not been affected by the cuts or cost of living rises (they gave themselves an 11% pay rise). Some politicians benefited from the crisis created by greed, the city and the banks.

They stigmatise immigrants, the disabled, sick, unemployed, homeless, poor and hungry people, while peers in the Lords moan that they could not cope with a cut in the quality of champagne. It sounds like something from Blackadder, but it is sadly the reality of a society that caters for the 1% not the 99%.

The ruling classes fear the power of the working class when they unite and fight back. So the ruling powers will go to great lengths to deliberately promote tactics that create divisions within our class.

Diverting anger towards the poor, the vulnerable, the ill, welfare recipients and immigrants has been a sig-



TUSC opposes all cuts - unlike Labour photo Coventry TUSC

nificant tactic since the 1980s. UKIP is a product of this and should definitely not be seen as the alternative!

Real problems

The real problems are not immigrants claiming benefits or older people living longer (recent statistics now show a future decline in longevity). The problems are wealth disparity, tax evasion, zero hour contracts, benefit sanctions, the need for food banks, soaring rent prices, soaring energy prices, lack of appropriate social housing, erosion of civil liberties, workers' rights and job security.

Must we put up with this in the 21st century? Labour seems to believe we should settle for anything just to get them back in power. The working class needs a voice that represents them, not more of the same.

Labour intends to keep on cutting

spending and services, with further pay restraints and benefit freezes. They are failing to relate to people's anger and misery. I and many others feel disenfranchised. We should vote, but there does need to be a party representing our interests.

Whichever establishment party or combination of parties wins May's general election, they will continue with policies favouring the rich, with austerity for the rest of us. So I will be campaigning for TUSC, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition. They are prepared to organise a fight back against these cuts and are building grassroots community resistance against 'the powerful'.

In May 2015 TUSC will stand candidates in both the general election and local council elections, to make sure establishment politicians are not left unchallenged and to prepare the basis for a party that truly represents the working classes, and ordinary people like me and you.

Defending working class history in Manchester and Salford

Tony Mulhearn

The People's History Museum in Manchester has launched a campaign to plug a £200,000 funding shortfall when it loses central government funding in April. This museum charts the history of working-class battles.

Prominently displayed are the Peterloo massacre, the fight for trade unionism in early industrial Manchester, the young lives sacrificed in the Spanish Civil War, the mighty struggles of Chartism, the struggle for women's suffrage, as well as the later titanic struggle of the miners in the 1980s and the successful Militant-led defeat of Thatcher's poll tax.

The museum spans four centuries of the often blood-stained journey to democracy in Britain, and its collections are a treasure trove of working class struggle.

Funding cuts also plague the Working Class Movement Library in neighbouring Salford. The library hosts an extensive archive of texts on the development of the working class and sits near to the pub where Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are said to have regularly met in the 1840s.

With the support of a few celebrity

friends, the Library hosted a radical readings' fundraiser with actors Maxine Peake and Sheila Hancock and the Smiths ex-drummer Mike Joyce. The event promised to be "an afternoon of prose, poetry and drama telling the story of radicalism and revolution and the history of the original 'dirty old town'".

Courage

The exhibitions confirm the courage displayed by workers in fighting capitalist oppression and injustice. "It's one of the most important buildings in the country. It's an exceptional collection of left-wing and working-class history," Peake says.

"The event is extremely important, but it's a sorry state of affairs when this has to happen," she said. "The library is full of our history - the things that we have fought for. When I was at school I learned about the civil war - the Roundheads and the Cavaliers, but I didn't learn about the Diggers and the Levellers. I learned about them through the library."

Peake says the Conservative councillors have long opposed funding and "betray an attitude towards working people...It's the Tory

way - keeping the working class down - just as it has been throughout history."

But the supreme irony, and the contrast of the present with the past, is that these cuts are being carried

'The library is an exceptional collection of left-wing and working-class history'

through with ruthless efficiency by Labour councils without a single Labour councillor voting against.

While support from celebrities is welcomed in defence of any working class facility, it throws into sharp relief the supine character of today's Labour councillors and Labour Party who are doing the bidding of the Con-Dem government without any shred of organised opposition.

What is confirmed is the incapacity of the Labour Party to even think of organising a fightback. A new party of the working class is posed as a matter of urgency.

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Image above by Juan Pedro Flores Gonzales

Art is too often put out of ordinary people's reach by extortionate prices and a snobbish social elite. So why is big art such big business? And what does that mean for working class artists? **Rob MacDonald** - a resident artist at La Fundicio del Poblenou in Barcelona, and member of Socialismo Revolucionario (the Socialist Party's sister party in Spain) - comments on the problem.

In 2007 we were at the beginning of a crisis that has since engulfed the world, prompting harsh austerity measures and much suffering. In the same year Damien Hirst presented his platinum skull encrusted with 8,500 diamonds, "For the Love of God", with a £50 million price tag. This contrast was not a coincidence, but a symptom of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

Art is big business. Huge revenue is drawn from film, music and visual art, among many other forms. In the last few years, international art sales alone averaged £40 billion a year. That's equal to Ikea's international sales and the American tobacco industry combined.

In 2013, Francis Bacon's triptych "Three Studies of Lucian Freud" was auctioned for a record £142 million. These massive sales are double or treble what was reached in the early 2000s. Aside from a minor blip in 2009, profits in the arts industry have grown continually during the economic crisis.

Most of this business is centred on auction houses, elite galleries and art fairs. Big players like Sotheby's and Christie's dominate. These are the playgrounds of the super-rich. The UK and USA together account for 65-70% of top-end art imports and exports. China, with its burgeoning wealthy elite, is a major growth market.

Luxuries

The leap in art sales is not built, in the main, on sections of the middle class using expendable income on luxuries. It is better explained by the growing wealth of the super-rich over a whole historical period that has now reached sickening proportions.

But this growth in the arts industry during an economic crisis also represents something else. Art is a safer place to invest capital when traditional investment is not returning high profits. In reality it shows the weakness of the whole capitalist system that something as subjective as art, and particularly unproven contemporary art, is a safe market.

The market is led by the world's billionaires. In particular the art billionaires - like Francois Pinault and Nasser Khalili, who have a billion dollars of arts assets each. Worst of

all, the super-dealers and billionaire art collectors dictate taste and direction for mainstream art. It is likely this period of art will be known for the rampantly commercialistic styles this has resulted in.

But how has this flood of cash affected the arts scene? You might think some of this vast new wealth would trickle down to ordinary people.

Most people interact with art in public museums or galleries. For most publicly owned art institutions there has been a huge squeeze in funding. They are forced to look beyond the public purse to continue.

Cuts

The People's History Museum in Manchester faces a £200,000 cut (see page 9), which will hinder heavily its ability to tell the story of ordinary people's enormous role in history. Government funding for the arts has been slashed year on year.

The arts are always first on the list for local councils to cut. Included in this is a wholesale attack on pub-

Artists are natural allies in the fight against capitalism

lic libraries, youth services and arts centres in general: all in the name of 'necessary' austerity to 'rebuild' the economy. Yet the economy is booming in the private, high-end art sector; overflowing with hoarded funds in all industries - and swelling the income of the richest 1% across the board.

There has been development of new, contemporary museums. The argument is they regenerate areas, bringing tourism and developing creative industries.

More museums should be a good thing - but their business models are mostly short sighted, led by the super-rich who want the prestige of a wing in their name. They often struggle to compete in a tight market where 20 of the top museums control 95% of assets.

Big-ticket, heavily publicised events only perpetuate the elitism and commercialisation of art, and do less than nothing for the grassroots.

Many of these modern museums are "more building than art", and cost more to run than they help economic development.

Barcelona is an important city for art, and not just because of Gaudi and Picasso: there is a thriving, living grassroots arts scene. There have been growing demonstrations and community protests over super-exploitation of the city centre for tourism. At the same time in nearby areas, artistic spaces situated in old industrial buildings are under threat due to short-sighted planning.

Where does all this leave the artist? The number of artists has hugely expanded in recent years. There is a tiny layer of celebrity artists that dominate like football stars. Another small section just about scrapes a living together from artistic work. But the vast majority struggle to survive at all.

Many people today have some type of art qualification, and millions more consider themselves artists in some form. Committed artists often work in precarious jobs to allow even a small amount of time and 'flexibility' to develop their craft. Most struggle simply for space to perform or create in.

If they do overcome these obstacles, they can still be forced to "pay to play" - fork over cash just for the right to put on their work. This super-exploitation - in an industry which is super-profitable at the top end - super-alienates artists. They are made natural allies in the fight for change, against the capitalist social system.

Fightback

The right to work in and consume all arts needs to be fought for at every level. Artistic expression, in all its hugely varied forms, is key to self-fulfilment and our understanding of the human experience. We must seize it from the hands of the super-rich and capitalism, for in their hands it is nothing more than a commodity for sale or trophy for prestige.

For working people, free art represents our history and our day-to-day struggle for existence. Organising arts workers, and defending art in general, should be intertwined with the wider workers' movement - to fight not only for freedom of artistic expression, but for the socialist society that can free us all.



NO TO ACADEMIES!

The battle for Sedgehill school

James Kerr

Parents, teachers and school students in Lewisham are angry. Labour-run Lewisham council in south London plans to dismiss the governors and headteacher at Sedgehill school and impose an 'interim executive board' (IEB), a precursor to Sedgehill being forced into being an academy.

On 12 December over 400 people, mainly students at schools threatened by 'academisation', joined a noisy lobby of the council.

Teachers are organising too. Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham National Union of Teachers (NUT) secretary and a Socialist Party member, has conducted an indicative ballot of NUT members in the five schools at risk. They voted by 98.4%, on a 73% turnout, to take a programme of strike action - a vital part of fighting academies.

The council claims Sedgehill school is 'failing' as its exam results dropped by 9%. But exam results nationally went down by 7%. Even Ofsted (the government's education inspectors) deems Sedgehill to be improving.

And as year eleven student Omodara said: "It's more than just a school to me now, everyone there is my family. Academies aren't going to accept everyone but Sedgehill does because it is a community school".

Sixth former Siobhan Prince said: "All the opportunities I have derive from being at Sedgehill. Even being out here today speaking on the microphone comes from the confidence Sedgehill gave me."

Lewisham council's attack is all about the break-up of local authority run education and also cutting costs as part of the council's 33% cuts package over four years.

Students at Sedgehill and Pendergast schools echoed Socialist Students' call for student action. They are now discussing how to build a united school students strike if the policies are forced through.

The actions are having an impact already. The council pushed ahead with its plans for an IEB at Sedgehill but when the new term started the old head teacher was still in charge!

Tory education secretary Nicky Morgan has delayed deciding on Lewisham's application. Bethnal Green

Academies and Free Schools are major planks of the Con-Dems' education policy. They are outside local authority democracy and are, effectively, unaccountable private companies. They promise increased funding, but at the expense of the remaining local authority schools. They don't have to follow the national curriculum nor teachers' national pay and working conditions agreements. Also, claims that higher educational standards are achieved by such schools do not hold water.

academy (whose Principal had been named as Lewisham's preferred option as the academy's new executive headmaster), may not have expected to face a mass campaign!

Stop Academies in Lewisham (SAiL) will fight academisation whatever the council or the academy lobby do. Martin Powell-Davies says the NUT will call for strike action if the council carries on with its policies.

The big demonstrations have gained media publicity. When Martin Powell Davies announced he would stand as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in May's general election in Lewisham West and Penge, the South London Press mischievously headlined this: "Elect me, I'll save school."

The fight is on to save Lewisham's schools.



On the lobby of Lewisham council photo M Powell-Davies

Education on the cheap

Tory education minister Nicola Morgan admits that the number of unqualified teachers in academies and free schools rose by 50% last year to 7,900. Overall, some 430,000 children are being taught by unqualified teachers, based on a class size average of 25.3.

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 £10 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage. 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.
- 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!