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# the Socialist

NHS deficit: cancel the PFI debt

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We can end the housing crisis

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Brutal onslaught on Yemen:

workers' unity needed

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# 100% AGAINST AUSTERITY? VOTE TUSC

**“This is a rich country, the fifth richest on the planet. It’s just that the wealth is in the wrong hands - in the hands of a few millionaires and billionaires. TUSC is the only unashamedly socialist party in these elections.”**

These were the words of former Labour MP Dave Nellist at the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition’s manifesto launch on 10 April in London’s banking heartland, Canary Wharf, which Dave described as “the belly of the beast”.

Hugo Pierre, TUSC candidate for the local Poplar and Limehouse constituency,

said: “It’s the biggest casino in the world, these people gamble with our money every day.

## Desperate

“You only have to go half a mile down the road and you see desperate housing conditions - it’s the most overcrowded borough in London.”

Dave, who is TUSC’s national chair, said that whatever mix of parties form the next government, austerity continues. “Only TUSC is 100% against austerity.”

The TUSC five-point pledge shows how it would use society’s wealth.

**TUSC  
AGAINST  
CUTS**

**Read more  
about TUSC**

> Pages 4 and 5  
> [tusc2015.com](http://tusc2015.com)

## The TUSC five-point pledge

- 1 End cuts and austerity. For a democratic socialist society run in the interests of the millions not the billionaires
- 2 Trade union rights to fight low pay. £10 an hour minimum wage now, scrap zero-hour contracts
- 3 A mass council home building programme and immediate introduction of rent controls
- 4 Scrap student fees. Free education as a right for all
- 5 For democratic public ownership of our NHS, railways, public services, utilities and banks

# NHS is collapsing under a mountain of PFI debt

Health service is not safe in Labour or Tory hands

Alison Hill

**W**hen you go into one of the main blocks at St Bartholomew's hospital in central London, it's almost like going into a posh hotel. There's glass stairs, trees inside the building, coffee bars with comfy seats and some of the direction signs even take you to the department you want to get to.

It's a similar story at the Royal London hospital in Whitechapel. Round the back of the old building is a new hospital - somewhere to be proud of as part of the NHS in the 21st century.

But the fact that all the coffee bars are run by a private company and there's loads of building workers wandering around with the names of various multinational building firms on the back of their hi-viz jackets, give clues to the reality of the situation.

Barts Health Trust, (which includes Barts, the Royal London, Whipps Cross and Newham hospitals, the largest health trust in England) has been put into special measures.

Not special measures to make sure there is enough properly paid and trained staff to go with the new buildings. Not special measures to

upgrade the now painfully obviously out of date and unsuitable buildings in Whipps Cross. But special measures because the trust is £93 million in debt.

Barts is being crushed by a 43-year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract through which it will massively overpay a gang of banks and construction companies who have done the building work.

## Rip-off

The Independent on Sunday has calculated that the UK 'owes' more than £222 billion to these PFI companies across 720 PFIs - or about £3,400 for every person in England.

The Independent estimates that by 2049/50 the total PFI bill will be over £310 billion - more than four times the budget deficit.

The Tories invented PFI but Labour enthusiastically adopted this method of funding hospitals, schools, prisons and other projects.

Four of these PFI firms - Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Interserve and Keir made combined profits of over £300 million by selling their shares less than five years into the deals. So they get the pay-off out of the fruit machine before the wheels have even stopped turning.

The sting in the tail of the PFI is not that it's a ridiculously overpriced method of getting important things



cartoon Alan Hardman



**Frankly it's very corrupt...  
no rational government,  
looking at the interests of  
the citizenry as a whole,  
would do this.**

built - but we all end up paying over and over again for the same projects, which might still end up in private hands at the end of the contract.

Jean Shaol of the Manchester Business School says of PFI: "Frankly it's very corrupt... no rational government, looking at the interests of the citizenry as a whole, would do this."

Unfortunately Labour did. But Margaret Hodge, Labour's chair of the Public Accounts Select Committee says: "I'm afraid we got it

wrong... we got seduced by PFI."

But weak apologies just won't cut it. The only possible solution to this mess is to kick the private companies out of the NHS. Cancel all the PFI debts. Nationalise the big pharmaceutical companies under democratic workers' control and management.

That would immediately release enough money to make sure that every hospital has modern, pleasant buildings - but under our control, not the big business sharks.

## Nuclear scrap

Labour and the Tories have been at loggerheads over who can beat a patriotic war drum loudest regarding a replacement to the trident submarine 'nuclear deterrent' system.

Both parties are committed to 'upgrading' Trident with four new nuclear armed submarines costing a staggering £100 billion. Currently Trident is costing £3 billion a year.

In a meaningless gesture the Lib Dems have pledged to build three rather than four submarines.

It's estimated that scrapping Trident and its replacement would save enough to pay for 150,000 nurses or abolishing university tuition fees for the next 30 years!



photo Paul O'Shau/MOD

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## France

### One-day strike against austerity

Workers in both public and private sectors of the economy walked out in France on 9 April against austerity measures of the 'left' Hollande government.

300,000 people took part in demonstrations across the country - more than 100,000 in Paris - against austerity, for wage rises, against the Macron law on workplace deregulation, (including Sunday working, etc).

It was the biggest day of mobilisation and strikes since the 2010 protests against Sarkozy's pension attacks.

There was a large presence of workers from the private sector, especially shop workers, bank and insurance workers and workers in engineering.

From the public sector there were health workers out in force against the 22,000 planned redundancies, dockers, railway workers, postal-workers, and tram workers from several regions.

The Radio France employees, on strike for three weeks, were there, as were the engineers of Sambre and Meuse who are occupying their factories to stop closure.

Gauche Révolutionnaire (the Socialist Party's French counterpart) says it is now necessary to launch discussions in the unions, workplaces, and neighbourhoods for a new day of action and strikes, which are even bigger and more combative.

**More on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**

**Have you got news for us?** DEADLINE: Friday before publication date, urgent news: Monday

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# Low pay STOP SUBSIDISING THE BOSSES

Simon Carter

Low-paid workers, typically employed in fast-food outlets and high street shops, have been the focus of trade unions and activists in the global day of action on 15 April.

Socialist Party members have been campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage now (compared to the current £6.50 an hour legal minimum), an end to zero-hour contracts, and for trade union workplace organisation.

The Labour Party has said it will increase the minimum to £8 an hour but only by October 2019 - a measly 30p an hour annual increase.

The Greens, who are projecting themselves as the anti-austerity alternative in the general election, echo the demand of the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in calling for a £10 an hour minimum wage rate - but not until 2020.

## Seattle

Successful action to drive up the minimum wage above the federal rate in the USA has progressed in cities such as Seattle, where Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant successfully moved a resolution committing employers to pay \$15 an hour - which came into effect earlier this month.

Meanwhile, Citizens UK charity has pointed out that supermarket workers paid the minimum wage are forced to claim top up benefits amounting to £11 billion a year in total.

In effect, these highly profitable, but low-paying, supermarkets are being subsidised £11 billion by public finances.



Seattle's Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant (above) spearheaded the city's drive to achieve more than a doubling of the US federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour



## Public sector wage restraint - myth and reality

James Kerr

In 2012 Policy Exchange, the Tories favourite think tank, produced a paper - 'Local pay, local growth' - which argued that holding down public sector wages and pensions and bringing them into line with 'equivalent' jobs in the private sector would save £6.3 billion a year.

It continued by saying the money could be better spent on tackling local unemployment and used to create hundreds of thousands of private or public sector jobs. This argument was a central plank of the coalition government's austerity agenda ie, public sector workers must tighten their belts for the good of the country as a whole. It was even bought by some in the trade union movement who hoped that by accepting attacks on pay and conditions, jobs could be saved.



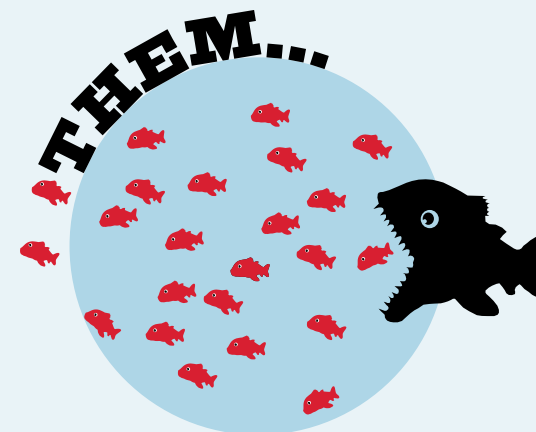
photo Senan

It's an argument which needs to be examined in light of Unison's recent special conference, and other public sector unions, discussing pay claims ahead of a new government, and the TUC's 'Britain needs a pay rise' campaign.

Trade unionists in the public sector need to be ready to counter the claims that cuts in the public sector mean improvements elsewhere.

However, in the last three years we haven't seen a surge in the number of nurses or teachers or high quality private sector jobs. Instead, there have been savage cuts, zero-hour contracts and an exodus from the teaching profession where I work.

We need to stand firm in saying that public sector workers demanding decent pay is not just a narrow, selfish demand but also part of stopping the rot, stopping the race to the bottom, and fighting for decent jobs on decent pay for all.



### Mr Big

A £47 billion takeover bid by oil giant Shell for smaller rival BG Group will net 'Norway's Mr Oil' - Helge Lund - a cool £25 million, for just two months' work! Lund, the former boss of Norwegian oil player Statoil, was appointed head of BG only in February. A minimum wage worker in Britain would have to work over 1,900 years to earn the equivalent of Mr Oil's payoff.

"an independent link between [benefit] sanctions or austerity and the number of emergency food assistance-seekers."

### Passing on wealth

Having cut the top rate on income tax and the rate of corporation tax to one of the lowest in the western world, the Tories have now pledged to reduce inheritance tax.

Currently, inheritance tax kicks in on properties worth £650,000 or more for couples. Under the Tories' pledge the tax will only apply on estates worth more than £1 million. As an earlier leaked Treasury document reported, raising the threshold would "most likely benefit high income and wealthier households".

### US bonanza

**\$1,000,000,000,000**

- the expected pay-out to US corporate shareholders in dividends and buybacks this year.

### Shock findings

The growth of food banks is causally linked to welfare cuts. This no-brainer is now scientific fact after research from Oxford and Liverpool universities and the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Using data from 2006-7 to 2013-14, researchers found that in a local authority which made no budget cuts in the previous two years there was a one-in-eight chance of a food bank opening. But where there had been cuts then that likelihood increased to greater than one-in-two.

And contrary to Tory assertions that more food parcels are being handed out simply because there are more food banks, researchers instead found

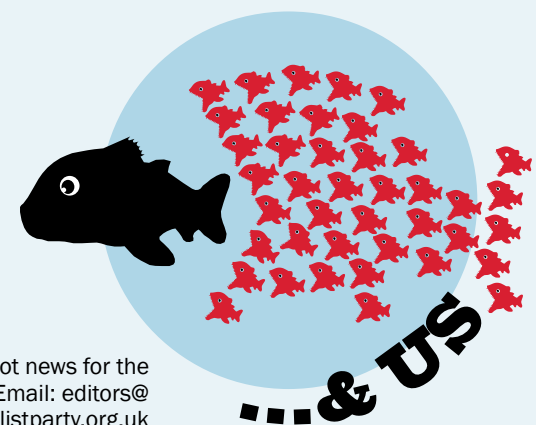
### Buy-to-profit

**1,400%**

- return on investments made by buy-to-let property landlords in the UK since 1996.

### Tax injustice

Ed Miliband has said that Labour, if elected, will target wealthy tax avoiders and evaders to realise an extra £7.5 billion a year for the public purse. But tax justice campaigners point out that this figure is just a fraction of the estimated £120 billion which goes missing in avoided, evaded and uncollected taxes mainly from the super-rich and giant corporations.



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





## WHY I'M STANDING: FIGHTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS

TUSC Croydon Central constituency candidate **April Ashley** is a Unison national executive member and assistant branch secretary for Southwark Unison local government (standing for TUSC in a personal capacity). April spoke to the Socialist.

**Why are you standing for TUSC?**  
I'm standing because of the cuts in local government and how it affects our members, especially around the questions of job losses and pay. I represent low paid school teaching assistants who haven't had a decent pay rise for quite a few years. Most of them have two jobs. Many have to get pay day loans to get by. Many could have been Labour vot-



April is a Unison NEC member  
photo Paul Mattsson

“  
I represent low paid school teaching assistants who haven't had a decent pay rise in years

ers, but Labour in local government has cut jobs and services. Around 600 posts have gone in Labour-controlled Southwark.

The local government association is Labour-led, yet they want us to only have a 1% pay rise following years of pay freezes.

We know that Labour's going to stick to the Tory spending cuts - we don't think anything will change under a Labour government. I'm standing to show an alternative - to fight austerity.

**How have the cuts affected your work?**  
I work in adult social care. That's

been basically ripped apart. The cuts have been massive. When we commission new services we have to try to get it at a cheaper and cheaper rate. That has an impact on people employed in the service and on the service users.

It will continue to get hit in the years to come - the council is likely to stop some services and they'll be looking at how many people qualify for those that remain.

They've only set a budget for the next year so we don't know what's going to happen in the following years. There's going to be more cuts whoever gets in to government.

The council says it is going to implement the ethical care charter - including having slots longer than

15 minutes, being paid for travel time, and no zero-hour contracts - but how will they do that at the same time as making more cuts? We say bring all care back in house - but Labour won't.

**How does standing as a TUSC candidate relate to your position on the Unison executive as a black members' representative?**

Unison has done studies which have shown that cuts have disproportionately affected black women, for example, cuts to children's services and social care.

Surveys have shown that redundancies have mostly affected black women. I've highlighted that - and that the only way to fight this is by fighting all of the cuts.

## ‘LIVERPOOL 47’ COUNCILLORS IN TUSC CHALLENGE

**John Marston**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

This year's TUSC parliamentary and local election challenge in Liverpool will be spearheaded by former members of the 1983-87 Labour Council who defied Margaret Thatcher's government, built 5,000 homes and created thousands of jobs and apprenticeships in the city.

Tony Mulhearn, former councillor and president of Liverpool District Labour Party, will stand in Liverpool Riverside constituency in opposition to the austerity policies of sitting Labour MP Louise Ellman.

Also standing in local ward seats will be former 'Liverpool 47' councillors Harry Smith and Alan Fogg, who will provide inspiration to fresh new layers of candidates standing for the first time in this election

### Enough is enough

In Liverpool, TUSC supporters are contending the majority of the local ward seats and three out of the six parliamentary seats. TUSC candidates are also standing in Knowsley, St Helens, Halton, and the Wirral. In Warrington South, former Labour councillor Kevin Bennett will stand for TUSC as Parliamentary candidate.

After five years of austerity budgets from Labour councils on Merseyside, the time has come to say "enough is enough". The recent announcement of the financial crisis at Liverpool Women's Hospital, highlighted the previous Labour government's NHS privatisation and PFI policies.

Merseyside TUSC supporters will now play a leading role in the "Save



Candidates at a protest at Liverpool Women's Hospital

the Women's Hospital" campaign and have been involved in campaigns against library and Sure Start centre closures over the past few months.

The tradition of socialist councillors in Liverpool who took on a Tory government in the Eighties, and built a campaign which mobilised 50,000 on the streets, is now being continued with today's generation of fighters.

The policies of the Liverpool 47 are just as relevant today as they were in the eighties: to defend working class people against brutal cuts and put forward socialist ideas which offer hope for all working class people.



Available from Left Books - see page 2  
Usual price £11.99, special offer for readers of the Socialist £10 including p&p



Liverpool councillors (including Tony Mulhearn - third from left) lead a demonstration to the High Court photo Militant

### Warrington Labour's 'time limit on democracy'

TUSC councillor and Warrington South parliamentary candidate Kevin Bennett has expressed disgust at the Labour Party council voting to "put a time limit on democracy".

Kevin said: "The Labour Party in Warrington South has now put a time limit on democracy, which is apparently 30 minutes. As an elected member, it is my duty to challenge poor decisions by the council."

"Yet when I formally moved that we should extend the time allowed for questions at the meeting to 60 minutes, the leader just stared at the ceiling and the Labour Group voted me down. This makes a mockery of the pledge by Labour that they are 'open and transparent'."

22 questions were put to the meeting, nine of them from Kevin Bennett. But there was only time for seven to be asked: six from the ruling Labour administration and one from Kevin.

Kevin said: "Instead of getting answers to serious topics about vital services, we got half an hour of Labour patting their own backs and promoting their vanity projects. This is nothing more than a form of 'gagging' by Warrington Borough Council."



TUSC councillor Kevin Bennett photo Senan

“  
The financial crisis at Liverpool Women's Hospital highlights the privatisation policies of the previous Labour government

## WHY I'M STANDING: WE NEED A £10 AN HOUR MINIMUM WAGE

Rail worker and RMT transport union member **Ted Woodley** is standing for TUSC in the Birmingham Erdington seat.

**What do people think of a co-worker standing for parliament?**  
My workmates are very supportive and I had overwhelming support from my brothers and sisters in my RMT branch, resulting in a substantial donation towards my election campaign.

**What issues are you bringing to the fore in your campaigning?**  
People in Erdington face the same problems as in most other inner city areas of the country: a lack of decent quality and affordable housing and a lack of jobs and services for young people.

Low pay is endemic and we campaign for a £10 minimum wage and



**I have had overwhelming support from my brothers and sisters in my RMT branch**

for an end to zero-hour contracts - as we do all year round when it isn't election time.

**What makes you different to the other candidates standing for Erdington?**

The fact that I would reject the full MP's salary is a key part of our programme. The majority of people of all political persuasions see MPs as greedy and on the take so the Socialist Party's worker's wage policy has never been so important.



RMT member and TUSC candidate Ted Woodley

## 'The largest party you've never heard of'

**Ronnie Job**  
TUSC Swansea West parliamentary candidate

The radio this morning keeps talking about the seven largest parties contesting seats in Parliament. There's one party missing from that list - TUSC.

It is this lack of media coverage that led political blogger, Alex Woolley of 50for15.com, to describe TUSC as "the largest party that you've never heard of."

TUSC has 135 parliamentary candidates standing alongside 619

council candidates. TUSC is contesting 12 of the 40 parliamentary constituencies in Wales (30%), 113 of the 533 seats in England (21%), and 10 of the 59 Scottish constituencies (17%).

### Donate

We can't expect large donations like the £1.5 million that Unite the Union has given to Labour to fight the election, but we have successfully inspired thousands of ordinary people to make donations large or small because they would not otherwise have anybody to vote for in this election.

Workers, trade unionists and working class people need our own party - the bosses already have them in a number of party colours, including Labour red.

50for15 has identified 50 'marginal' seats in the election and is visiting each of them to get a flavour of campaigning. This includes Swansea where Alex, on behalf of 50for15, visited TUSC supporters campaigning on a Saturday.

**See the blog report on TUSC at 50for15.com/2015/04/01/tusc-the-largest-political-party-that-youve-never-heard-of**

“  
Workers, trade unionists and working class people need our own party - the bosses already have them in a number of party colours

### Getting into god's chamber

**Mike Barker**

I emailed the Diocese of Leicester to ask why TUSC had not been invited to its five-way debate.

They initially responded by saying, they "had to restrict ourselves to inviting representatives of the major national political parties, to be members of our panel"; adding that to invite more people would simply have been unmanageable.

I questioned the logic of this decision as there are only six political parties standing parliamentary candidates across Leicester. I also pointed out given that all candidates from all parties must by law be invited to participate in public hustings events, or else they have to be included in attending candidates' election expenses.

The Diocese of Leicester has now invited TUSC to participate in its hustings.

Don't miss the TUSC election broadcast on 17 April on BBC2 at 5.55pm, ITV at 6.25pm, BBC1 at 6.55pm, and Channel 4 at 7.55pm

See the BBC's report of the TUSC manifesto launch at [bbc.co.uk/news/election-2015-32254035](http://bbc.co.uk/news/election-2015-32254035)

New website for the 2015 campaign: [www.tusc2015.com](http://www.tusc2015.com)

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance involving the RMT transport union, the Socialist Party, other socialist groups and leading members of other trade unions. This May TUSC is standing 135 candidates in the general election and 619 in the local elections.

**TUSC AGAINST CUTS**  
Visit the TUSC website [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)





# Labour - party of cuts

## Oppose the 'logic of capitalism'

Election polls continue to show Labour and the Tories running neck and neck. This is an indictment of Labour: After five years of the most vicious attacks on the working class, of wage cuts, job losses and cuts in public services etc, they cannot decisively pull ahead of the Tory toffs, those braying millionaire MPs so clearly serving their own class interests - cheering budget after budget that attack the living standards of the working class and transfer wealth to the rich.

There is growing anger at the manifest unfairness of ordinary people paying for austerity while the bankers continue to get their bonuses, ever rising boardroom pay, and the rich getting richer.

Labour has been pushed to acknowledge this - hurriedly bringing in the phasing out of 'non-dom' status for tax-dodging millionaires, gaining a bit in the polls as a result. The Tories are panicking too. When Labour announced some limited extra funding for the NHS, the Tories rushed out their own pledge, but were unable to explain where the money was going to come from!

We understand that many working class people will vote for the 'lesser evil' of a Labour government to get the Tories out. Others will vote for parties such as the Scottish National Party (SNP) or Greens to protest, or simply abstain.

### Manifesto

However, Labour remains a capitalist party committed to austerity and sticking to Tory spending limits. Shadow welfare minister Rachel Reeves has promised to be tougher on welfare than the Con-Dems.

In its manifesto released on 13 April, Labour pledged to cut the deficit every year it's in power. In an attempt to portray itself as "fiscally responsible", Labour aims to bring current government spending into surplus "as early as possible in the next parliament."

At the manifesto launch, Miliband said: "I am going into an election doing what no other Labour leader has done, which is saying outside protected areas - the NHS, education, international development - spending is going to fall until the books are

balanced. I couldn't be clearer."

But even in the 'protected areas' of health and education they will not put in the money needed to maintain levels of service.

Labour will not reverse privatisation. For example, while pledging to repeal Lansley's 2012 Health and Social Care Act (England) it puts forward no solution to the funding crisis in the NHS, caused in particular by money haemorrhaging into the private sector through PFI contracts (see page 2) and private service providers. Labour will also implement the massive cuts in local government proposed in Osborne's budget.

Many workers will vote Labour because they will see them as the only choice to get rid of the Con-Dem government but what will be the reality of life under a Labour government?

It will be the continuation of cuts to local services and the public sector as a whole. Trade union leaders, who call for a Labour vote, will have to explain to their members why they are still losing their jobs under a Labour government and in many cases Labour councils.

### Education

There may be a reduction in university tuition fees but students will still leave university under a huge burden of debt, facing an uncertain future of low wages and insecure jobs and housing. Schools will have to find annual savings of more than £1 billion (equivalent to 20,000 full-time teacher posts), whichever capitalist party or combination of parties wins the election.

Austerity is the logic of capitalism, and therefore of all parties that seek to stay within the constraints of capitalism - a profit system based on exploitation of the 99% by the 1%. The capitalists seek to maintain those profits at all times, at the cost of the living standards of the working class and sections of the middle class.

All policies are measured by what is necessary for 'the markets' but what are the markets? They are big business - the spivs and speculators, the bankers and the hedge fund owners, the super-rich. If the markets call for cuts, then cuts are necessary.

But socialists base themselves on the working class



Dave Nellist and other candidates launch the TUSC manifesto at Canary Wharf in London photo Paul Mattsson

and what is necessary for the majority in society and for humanity as a whole. We reject the logic of big business. What use is a system that guarantees unimaginable wealth for a few at the expense of the majority, where soon the richest 1% will own more wealth than everyone else?

Why can't all that wealth be used for the benefit of all, of society as a whole? Why can't profits be ploughed back into society, rather than being salted away into the tax havens that around the world hold anything up to £20 trillion; or the £850 billion lying idle in the coffers of big business in Britain? Surely that would be the rational approach?

### Nationalisation

That is why the Socialist Party calls for the nationalisation of the banks and the big companies. This would be a first step to democratically controlling those resources and using them to provide what is needed. Houses are needed - then they should be built; hospitals, doctors and nurses are needed - they should be trained and employed. Young people are the future of society - they should have access to free education, training, decent jobs and housing.

The parties that do seem to present an alternative, that say they are opposed to austerity, like the Greens, the SNP and Plaid Cymru, are all growing in popularity as a result.

But ultimately it is what they are actually prepared to do that counts. Where they are in power, at both local and national level, they are implementing cuts. They are not prepared to challenge capitalism.

Just like Labour, these parties will bend to the demands of big business and the banks. It is significant that, given the chance in the first leaders' debate, none of these parties mentioned public ownership.

That's why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and the question of working class political representation is so important. Guardian readers replying to a survey asking what policies Labour should have, came up with TUSC policies!

And voters in England saying they would vote for the SNP because of their anti-austerity rhetoric, also shows the potential support for the TUSC programme. But few workers know our policies because of the lack of cover-

age in the media and because of the silence of the pro-Labour trade union leaders.

A workers' party, basing itself on socialist policies - like Clause 4 (which called for public ownership) that was expunged from Labour's constitution by Tony Blair - and backed by the might of the trade unions and the working class would get enormous popular support to challenge the powers that be and turn the tide against austerity.

Whatever the result of the election, the next government will continue to attack working class living standards. We will need to build that working class alternative, and the stand of TUSC in these elections is part of that process.



We close at 3pm so most staff have other jobs or claim in-work benefits to make ends meet



## My life as a day centre worker

A Cardiff day care worker, and member of Unison, explains the demands of their important job, against a background of austerity cuts.

Of all the many cuts inflicted by local authorities over the past few years, the elderly have arguably been the victims of the cruellest, yet least protested, closures - those of day centres.

I consider myself lucky that our centre has escaped the axe so far and is currently undergoing something of a revamp, albeit in 'partnership' with outside charities and non-profit making organisations. This doesn't exactly give you a sense of job security, but at least it means the future of the service users is safe for the time being.

However, understaffing also

means that we close at 3pm so most staff have other jobs or, as with myself, have to claim in-work benefits to make ends meet for their own family.

On a typical day the attendees start arriving at 9am and gradually the centre fills up over the course of the next hour. We really are a lifeline for a lot of our clients, who have a mixture of cognitive and mobility issues. Many have no family living nearby or support network.

We provide them with baths, haircuts, social interaction and a hot meal.

If we weren't there for them, they would be totally isolated. We have new projects planned over the coming year such as "reminiscence pods" - little pop-up rooms with nostalgic themes - and we have even just got signed up to Spotify so that we can do more music therapy for those with dementia.

As well as this, I have to cover reception throughout the day, plus coordinate the meals on wheels deliveries as we also cook and deliver these from the centre.

We have had to take on more and more extra tasks over the recent period, as other centres have closed. But we only have a capacity for 25 clients a day.

I truly love my job, I love the people we look after and the difference we make to their lives. However, it's not a "statutory service", and with the austerity cuts we always wonder if this year will be our last.

The government is always telling us that we have an ageing population to justify raising the pension age. But when it comes to providing the funding to ensure that services like ours are not just kept open but are developed and expanded to meet the growing need, it is conspicuously silent.

## Meeting/Event Details

■ **These are just some of the Socialist Party branch meetings taking place this week. If your area isn't listed, or for future meetings, see [www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson) or get in touch with your regional organiser:**

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London: 020 8988 8786  
North East: 0191 421 6230  
North West: 07769 611 320  
South East: 020 8988 8777  
South West: 07759 796 478  
Southern: 07833 681910  
Wales: 07935 391 947  
West Mids: 02476 555 620  
Yorkshire: 0114 264 6551

■ **Bristol North East**  
Why voting Ukip is a dangerous way forward

working people  
7.30pm, 21 April, Cheltenham Road Library, Cheltenham Road, BS6 5QX

■ **Bristol South**  
What does the Green Party stand for?  
7.45pm, 16 April, Bedminster Library, Bedminster Road, BS3 4AQ

■ **Chesterfield**  
The Greens - A real alternative or more of the same?  
7.30pm, 20 April, upstairs in the Chesterfield Alehouse, 37 West Bars, S40 1AG

■ **Hackney**  
Do the Greens offer an

alternative?  
7.30pm, 22 April, Star Pub upstairs room, 35 Queensdown Road (where it meets Cricketfield Road), E5 8JQ (10 minute walk from Hackney Downs station)

■ **Huddersfield**  
A socialist view on immigration  
7.15pm, 23 April, the Irish centre, Fitzwilliam St, HD1 5BB

■ **Leeds**  
Do socialists support a 'universal basic income'?  
7.15pm, 20 April, West Riding Pub, Wellington St, Leeds, LS1 2DE

■ **Salford**  
Are the Greens an electoral

alternative?  
7pm, 29 April, White Swan PH

■ **Southwark**  
Housing Crisis - what's the solution?  
7.30pm, 16 April, Albert Arms, 1 Gladstone Street, London SE1 6EY

■ **Waltham Forest**  
Ukip - who are they and how can we beat them?  
7.30pm, 16 April, William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Road, London E17 6QQ

■ **York**  
Rosa Luxemburg  
7.15pm, 16 April, The New York Club, Blossom Street



## Why you should join the Socialist Party

7pm, 21 April, Briton's Protection pub, 50 Great Bridgewater Street, Manchester, M1 5LE

Hosted by Manchester and Trafford Socialist Party. Come along to find out more about the Socialist Party and ask any questions you have



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# WE CAN END THE HOUSING CRISIS

Paul Kershaw  
Unite LE1111 housing branch

All the indicators of homelessness are on the rise. The number of children living in temporary accommodation has risen by nearly 10,000 in the last 12 months. One in 25 children in London are now homeless. Most councils believe this trend is set to continue. But homelessness statistics show just the tip of an iceberg of misery and insecurity as people struggle to find somewhere decent to live and to pay for it.

A series of grassroots housing campaigns against social cleansing and in defence of decent rented housing have caught people's imagination – for example the campaign of the residents of the New Era estate in Hackney, east London. They give a glimpse of the growing anger at the housing crisis and the potential for housing campaigns based on action by working class people.

The mainstream parties have to respond to this anger and talk about housing but they have no solutions – their commitment to cuts and big business policies make that impossible.

The housing workers branch of Unite the Union has produced a short housing manifesto summarising Unite policy. It starts with opposition to the cuts and points to a real solution, including building council homes, capping rents and nationalising the banks.

The branch is encouraging its members to challenge election candidates to support it. TUSC has endorsed the manifesto. Unfortunately – despite Unite's massive funding of Labour nationally – these demands are a long way from Labour's policy. At a local level Unite conference policy pledges to support Labour councillors who oppose cuts – sadly most act as little more than a transmission belt for government cuts.

Far too few new homes are being built. One of the first actions of the Con-Dem coalition government was a 60% cut in the social housing grant. None of the major parties calls for reversing this cut.

It is estimated that at least 240,000 new homes per year are needed just to keep pace with the growth of new households, let alone dealing with the backlog. Labour has set the aim of building just 200,000 homes per year by the fifth year of a new government.

So even if this was achieved, the housing shortage would still be getting worse after five years. Members



43% income on average spent on rent by private renters

Lindsey Garrett, one of the New Era estate campaigners  
photo Paul Mattsson

of the Lyons commission – set up to by Labour to advise on its housing policy – have been reported as doubting whether even this is possible in the context of austerity.

Scandalously, rather than supporting more genuinely affordable and secure housing, Labour councils have been behind 'regeneration' schemes which result in reductions of social housing.

Time and time again this 'regeneration' is carried out without proper consultation and in a way designed not to benefit local working class people but to drive them out of areas they have inhabited for generations. Most of the anti 'social cleansing' campaigns have had to fight Labour councils – a grim warning of what to expect from a Labour government.

## Nothing to offer

If there was any doubt, a host of Labour luminaries contributed to the recent IPPR think tank's report 'City Villages' which advocates working with property developers to redevelop inner city estates. The report ignores the question of what homes Londoners can actually afford.

The recent 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' demonstrated that 52% of households in housing need cannot afford market rate homes – Labour has nothing to offer them.

Unite – and TUSC – policy of supporting a massive programme of council house building is essential.

The 'big four' property developers are sitting on enough land to immediately build 1.4 million homes. Their profits have risen by 557% since 2010. The wealth, including land, of the super-rich 1% should be nationalised and used for common good such as social housing, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

As increasing numbers are forced to live in the private rented sector permanently, rather than a temporary staging post, affordability and security are more important.

Homelessness due to the end of 'short hold' tenancies (the most common private renting tenancy) is on the rise, now accounting for 30% of all homeless 'acceptances.' That is an increase of 26% since the end of 2013. As an immediate measure, we need rent control in the private sector.

People need homes – and that means people will fight for them. There have been occupations and demonstrations by angry tenants and strikes by angry workers. Those campaigners need a voice at the ballot box.

If a mass party campaigned on policies to change things in favour of the 99% rather than supporting big business, banks and property developers, it would get a massive echo. This May only TUSC can be a platform for what working class people are fighting for on estates and outside town halls across the country.

39% of new builds sold in 2013 were to live in, the rest for investment

1m empty homes in England

Children living in bad housing are more than twice as likely to suffer poor health and almost twice as likely to leave school without any GCSEs



Left: Laura and her daughter in their 'temporary' home; top: Sandra at the street meeting where she met Nancy; above: Sandra at one of the protests about her case

## "WE'RE REALLY STRUGGLING"

Nancy Taaffe  
TUSC parliamentary candidate for Walthamstow

The stories of Sandra and Laura Sharpe sum up the effect of the housing crisis on every generation.

I first met Sandra in 2013. She's a disabled woman living in Leytonstone, east London. When the Con-Dems announced the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' – cutting the housing benefit of social housing tenants deemed to have too many bedrooms – the Socialist Party sprang into action on Sandra's estate.

## History

She told me about her family's history of fighting to hang on to their homes – she remembers her mum barricading them in against the bailiffs when Sandra was young. That spirit had stuck with her and she was prepared to do the same and refuse to move.

Sandra was always willing to move to a smaller house which was more suitable for her needs, but was desperate not to leave her community and the support network of friends and family it contained. Then the council started threaten-

ing her with eviction because of the arrears she'd accrued by refusing to pay the shortfall on her rent created by the bedroom tax.

We've been with Sandra from the start and never given up. I've gone to the housing office with her numerous times, we've organised protests for her and made sure she's been at meetings where she can challenge local politicians. After all this campaigning, she's now in a nice new flat close to her old estate and the arrears are not being chased.

I also put her in touch with Wally Kennedy, the TUSC candidate for Ruislip Northwood & Pinner. Wally helped get Sandra re-categorised for council tax benefit and now she doesn't have to pay any for a year.

## Eviction

Recently, Sandra introduced me to her daughter Laura. Laura now lives in Ilford, with her partner and four year old daughter. In January 2014 she started a new part time job in Westminster. Her partner was working full time.

Because of cuts to her housing benefit, she had fallen into rent ar-

rears on her privately rented home in Walthamstow and was evicted in July. She had to take time off work to take documents to the council and to move house. Because of this time off while still on probation at the new job, Laura was sacked.

Laura said: "even before I lost the job and got evicted we were struggling. My daughter was entitled to 15 hours of free childcare but

“ “ “  
The stories of Sandra and Laura Sharpe sum up the effect of the housing crisis on every generation

that wasn't enough. I had to find a nursery around the corner from my mum's. I would drop her at mum's in the morning, my mum would take her to nursery at 1, pick her up at 4 and then I'd pick her up after work. If it wasn't for my mum, what would I have done?"

## Fighting exploitation at universities

In universities up and down the country one issue is coming to the fore among the myriad of problems facing students – finding adequate housing.

Spend a day at any university asking students about their experiences when it comes to housing, I can say with confidence that they can produce a multitude of horror stories either for themselves or friends. Students are seen as walking pound signs by unscrupulous landlords and rogue letting agencies.

However students are getting organised and fighting back. Student groups at Birmingham and Edinburgh universities have set up housing cooperatives to create a fairer alternative.

At Coventry University our housing campaign is calling for a student union-run letting agency (which York Socialist Students has already won), a mandatory accreditation scheme for all housing providers and a student-run tenants union. The campaign, led by Socialist Students, has been a pole of attraction for students looking for a platform



to voice their grievances and students attracted to socialist ideas.

All students, like everyone else, need a roof over their heads. Tenants unions, housing cooperatives and advocacy groups empower tenants to take action. If coordinated action is organised on the campuses we could see landlord exploitation of students and others being overturned.

Kristian O'Sullivan  
Coventry Socialist Students

have come about as Laura's housing benefit was calculated at £190 a week – enough to cover all her rent.

"We're really struggling, especially with me not working. We've had to borrow money from friends to try and get by. Now the landlord's put the rent up.

"When I first went to the council they said they could help me get a part rent-part buy place.

How's that going to happen when I don't have money for a deposit, I'm not working and they don't accept housing benefit? And I can't afford to go back to private renting – if I could then I wouldn't have lost the one bedroom place I had before. We need a council house."

## Urgent action

The Socialist Party will do our best to highlight Laura's case and help her like we did her mum. But what about all those people who don't have our help? We need urgent action to provide enough decent, affordable homes for all those who need them. That's part of what TUSC is fighting for in these elections.

## Vote for decent homes

The local election platform of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see pages 4 and 5) includes pledges that candidates will:

■ Use councils' powers to compulsorily register private landlords and set-up council-run lettings agencies, as the means to tackle repair standards, high rents, over-occupancy, extortionate letting fees etc for private rented homes.

■ Build council homes now. By using councils' borrowing powers for capital spending to build council homes, while campaigning for the government to divert its subsidy for private developers to finance a mass programme of public housing.



## The Socialist Party demands:

■ Rent control now! Democratic rent councils to decide fair levels in each area

■ A mass programme of council house building and renovation to meet demand

■ Hands off our homes! Bring all ex-council housing association stock and housing services back in-house

■ Housing benefits that reflect the real cost of renting

■ Councils should use their compulsory purchase powers on long term empty properties and use them as council housing

■ A new mass workers' party to fight for affordable housing for all. Support TUSC's candidates in May's general and local elections to fight for these policies

■ Nationalise the banks and biggest corporations. For a democratic socialist society that puts the needs of the majority, including decent, affordable housing, before the profits of the tiny minority



## BROMLEY COUNCIL WORKERS

# Showing how to fight the Tories

A Bromley Unite member

Unite members working at Bromley council have begun a fight to defend public services from privatisation, oppose cuts to pay and conditions and defend the right of workers to be organised in a trade union.

The Tory-led council has begun a mass privatisation programme. The aim is to become a ‘commissioning’ council, so it will no longer directly provide services (apart from where it has a statutory obligation) and will instead manage contracts. The effect is the end of local authorities as we know them.

Local authority privatisation has led to a race to the bottom for workers’ pay and conditions. This is still the case when services are handed over to so-called charities or social enterprises. Last year, Unite members at homelessness charity St Mungo’s Broadway took sustained strike action to defend pay and conditions.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) is a ‘not-for-profit’ social enterprise which took over the running of libraries from Greenwich Council. It wasted no time in cutting staff and using zero-hour contracts. Again, strike action from Unite members won a victory with GLL agreeing to fill all vacant posts with permanent staff and reduce zero-hour contracts. These two victories are important.



photo Rob Williams

Bromley is another council putting forward not-for-profit companies and charities as a soft option or ‘privatisation lite’. The reality for staff and service users however is the same result - cuts to pay and a poorer service.

### Libraries

A big focus of the campaign in Bromley has been the attack on the library service. The council’s consultation gave only two options: priva-

tisation or volunteering.

In response, Bromley Unite took to the streets and undertook its own consultation, including the option of public services with public service staff. We explained that we have no problem in principle with volunteers - what we oppose is volunteers replacing the jobs of paid, professional staff. The result was massive backing for the Unite campaign to reject volunteering and privatisation.

It is no coincidence that the council is also withdrawing all facility time arrangements from the Unite and Unison union branch secretaries. The council is proposing cuts to car allowances.

It was against this background that Unite members voted by a majority of 86% to take strike action. The union called out specific groups on strike on 7-8 April - including libraries, adult services, passenger transport and parks. The response was incredible.

### Strike days

The employer accepted defeat on the strike days by closing services. The mood on picket lines was one of great confidence.

Bromley Unite is now preparing for further strike action - the stewards will be meeting in the next few days and make an announcement about further dates for strike action. Bromley Unison has also requested a ballot from the union leadership.

But Unite members in Bromley also pointed out again and again on the picket line: what we need is a united, coordinated fightback, with strike action led by the trade unions at a national level against austerity and privatisation.

**Please send donations to the strike fund. Send cheques (payable to Bromley Unite) to Kathy Smith, Unite Office, Bromley Council, Civic Centre, Stockwell close, Bromley BR1 3UH**

## Lift workers strike over unreliable ‘spy in the cab’

Elaine Brunskill

Engineering service workers from lift firm Kone voted by 81% for strike action. The workers are now holding regular Monday strikes in a dispute over tracking devices in their vehicles which are unreliable.

The Unite rep from Gateshead’s site on the Team Valley Trading Estate explained how the company is intent on installing these devices without an agreed framework document.

He said: “We don’t have a problem with tracking for health and safety, etc. However, we do object strongly to unreliable data. In one case an engineer was supposed to have driven over 1,000 miles in one day without refuelling!”

There is clear anger among the strikers that Kone intends to cross reference Unite members’ timesheets and use the tracking device as a disciplinary tool.

The rep explained: “We already have a benchmark agreement in place which clearly states that new technology cannot be used to substantiate our timesheet entries.”

The mood at the Gateshead site



photo Northern SP

is rock solid and if no agreement is made with Kone there are further strikes on the cards over the next 12 weeks.

The workers have also implemented an overtime ban.

The other main Kone sites are at Chertsey, Glasgow, Keighley and Warrington.

**Get the weekly National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) bulletin for regular union news - sign up at: bit.ly/16sZJxm**  
**Come to the NSSN national conference** Saturday 4 July, 11am-4.30pm, Conway Hall, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL. Put the date in your diary now! Speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and BFAUW general secretary Ronnie Draper  
**www.shopstewards.net**

## STRIKING GLASGOW HOMELESSNESS CASEWORKERS



Empty chairs at the negotiating table  
photo Socialist Party Scotland

## ‘We’re all in it to win it!’

North East Community Homeless Caseworkers in Glasgow, Lesley and Mary (see inset picture), who are on an indefinite strike over pay and conditions, spoke to the Socialist on 8 April.

### How are you feeling about the strike after nine days?

**Mary:** I’m feeling elated with the support we are getting from the public and that our pickets are 100%, we are all in it to win it! But I’m angry and disappointed with the Labour council who can’t even be bothered talking to us.

**Lesley:** I’m delighted by the support from our own colleagues who aren’t involved in the dispute but are being pressured by management into taking our work covering our duties under duress. They were threatened with suspension without pay. And the admin staff.

**Mary:** My friends and family are also in total support, saying keep out on strike.

**Lesley:** It’s a sacrifice as we are both



single parents. I’ve explained it to my 15-year-old daughter about how we will have less money but she’s well up for the fight.

**Mary:** I’ve been putting mine through university so it’s a strain. It’s a commitment but we all have to be united. It’s about parity with other workers and trade union

principles. On our wage I struggle to pay the bills.

### How important is it for workers to support each other in struggle?

**Lesley:** Fellow strikers Jennifer and Allan spoke at the porters’ rally in Dundee. I’m going to speak in Brighton at an NHS Unison meeting. It’s been a big boost to have had all the messages of support from trade unionists and workers across the country - keep them coming! And we want to know about their disputes. We aren’t on our own.

It’s disgraceful the way bosses treat low paid workers. The majority of the workforce are women. I think it’s really important women are fully involved, it’s one of the reasons the strike is really strong.

## ‘This strike is about austerity’

Interview with **Chris**, Unison Steward of North East team, on 8 April.

### You have been out for nine days. How is the strike going?

We have had fantastic support from the public and the picket lines across the city are solid. We have been rallying outside the council on Thursdays and marching round social management’s offices making a lot of racket. It’s visible to the public and also gives a message to management we are here and we aren’t going anywhere.

Last week we made so much noise they could hear us inside the full council meeting. Bizarrely one of the Labour councillors thanked us for the work we do! But they won’t talk to the union.

This week we brought a negotiating table outside the council city chambers saying: if you won’t come

to the negotiating table we will bring it to you. This indefinite strike is a last resort as it’s vulnerable people we are working with.

### Was the response of the Labour council expected?

We never expected them to concede on day one, but you would have thought they might be concerned enough about the welfare of service users to at least talk.

Their official position is a contradiction. They are insisting we should be on the current grade but they acknowledge we do tasks that should be carried out by the grade above. We even got that out of the council committee we presented our case to, basically saying: ‘yes you do these tasks but you can’t be

paid for them.’

Ultimately that comes down to the austerity agenda they have committed to. Social work and mental health service cuts have made the situation worse. Provision for desperate people, the most destitute, is being decimated.

### What’s the strategy of the union going forward?

We have a strike committee that’s organised picket lines which remain 100% solid. All those on strike are playing a role.

We are learning as activists. We have been discussing how we are up against it with the anti-trade union legislation! We are an example of how to fight collectively and industrially against the cuts.



[News in brief]

### Unison health

**STOP PRESS:** Unison health conference has backed a motion from Mid Yorkshire branch calling for a £10 an hour minimum wage. The conference also saw the union’s general secretary Dave Prentis say that members would be balloted if NHS enhanced unsocial working hours pay was removed. But such a battle would need a serious strike strategy. Earlier this year NHS strike action over pay was called off after little was gained. See more from the conference in next week’s Socialist.

### Defending check-off

The PCS civil service union has lodged papers with the high court seeking a declaration that PCS members in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have a contractual right to pay their union subs by the check-off method (paid directly from salaries). In response, the DWP has agreed to delay ending check-off by one month, until the end of April, to allow the case to be heard by the courts.

The attack on check-off is a union-busting move pushed by the ConDem government. But PCS in DWP already has over 75% of its current members signed over to pay their subs by direct debit instead. Fran Heathcote, DWP group president and Socialist Party member, said: “We are confident that our legal position is strong. Whilst this is a significant step in our campaign against the government’s removal of check-off and a welcome extension to the time that our members have to switch their payments over to direct debit, it would be a massive mistake to rely on the courts and take our foot off the pedal. “We are continuing to pull out all of the stops to encourage all of our members to sign up to direct debit, whatever the outcome of the court case. The attack is clearly politically motivated and the best response is to sign everybody up to show that PCS won’t be defeated by these bullying tactics.”

**Blacklisted: The Secret War Between Big Business and Unions Activists**

by **Dave Smith and Phil Chamberlain**  
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## The Socialist Inbox

### Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

### ■ Anti-worker Ukip

Last year Unions Together helped promote a campaign to highlight Ukip's regressive ideas. They showed some of Ukip's lesser known policies, put forward in their Small Business Manifesto, including a desire to scrap workers' rights to paid holiday, maternity leave and sick pay.

Arthur Seldon is one author who inspires many Ukip politicians in their 'libertarian' views on trade unions. He founded the Thatcherite think-tank the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), whose current chairman was proudly educated at Eton. It is not surprising that such union-hating groups as the IEA get massive funding from ultra-right-wing funders like the Earhart Foundation to lobby for the rich in opposition to improving the rights of workers.

**Mike Barker, Leicester**



### ■ Proud sellers

We would like to congratulate all comrades associated with the production of the brilliant, new Socialist. We like the layout, printface and especially the breaking up of articles into smaller, easy to read segments. We can now feel even prouder to sell our paper, with the election period upon us, armed with our paper we can go forward with confidence.

**Val and Terry Pearce, Bracknell**

We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number.

Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

# Standing in line, hoping for work

### Graham Lewis

GMB and TUSC candidate, Arboretum Ward

Hoping to get some work, I recently joined 200 other people queuing before 5.30am at Flower World in Derby. We were on short term zero-hour contracts and told to turn up as there may be some work on the day shortly before the Mothers' Day rush. But I was told to go home as there was not enough.

Standing in line hoping to get work for the day is what the dockers had to endure many years ago when workers would climb over each other's backs hoping to be chosen on the day. These desperate workers were struggling to survive. Workers face these conditions again today under the Con-Dem government.

Flower World have a

number of full time staff but most are agency workers. Flowers arrive ready to be packaged from all over the world. Thai, Kenyan, Dutch, Bangladeshi blooms arrive before shift, straight from the airport.

Before supermarket chain Morrisons took over Flower World in Derby, the majority of 400 workers voted at a mass meeting to return to union recognition. But many are migrant workers and gangmasters who hired them are alleged to have threatened that their families back home would be harmed.

The agency workers went back home rather than see this happen. This ended, for now at least, the campaign to get union recognition. The trade union movement must campaign to stop this threat to workers' rights!

As for myself, I had a few days at Flower World but I am now again struggling to find work.

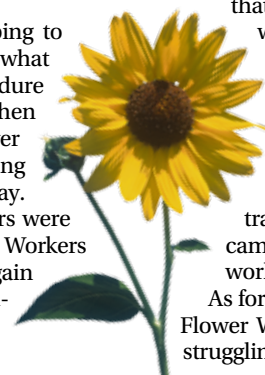


photo David Whitehall/Creative Commons

# BOOK REVIEW Gods of Gold

Iain Dalton reviews Gods of Gold by Chris Nickson, Severn House £18.50

**G**ods of Gold is a mystery fiction. Its title comes from the words of Leeds socialist Tom Maguire's 'A New Nursery Rhyme'. Its backdrop is the 1890 Leeds Gas Workers strike which shook the city and in which Maguire was a key leader.

The novel follows a young detective inspector, Tom Harper, examining the case of a young missing girl from a troubled family, when the whole police force is mobilised to 'keep order' during the strike. As the dispute goes on and the conflict between gas workers and the council intensifies, the murder of a scab has suspicious links to the girl's disappearance.

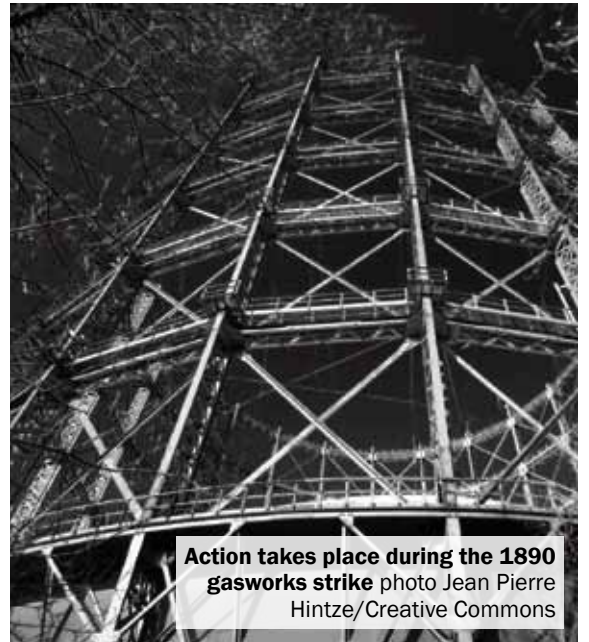
Chris Nickson does a great job in recreating the strike's atmosphere. He shows the huge confrontation as scabs are escorted under armed guard from the city centre to a gasworks. He also shows the duplicity of the council's gas committee in lying to these scabs as to what they were there for.

Nickson skilfully captures what 19th century Leeds must have been like, with its slum housing and courts and the city's domination by the tailoring trades at this time. The plot toys with the tensions between Harper's sympathy with the strikes and his role in the police - there to protect the better-off classes.

### Working class

Harper's working class background leads to natural sympathies with the strikers, which clashes with his superiors in the police force, in particular his antipathy towards the scabs. On the other hand, there is a distance between Harper and many ordinary people he comes into contact with.

At one point Harper is instructed to find out if a union man killed the scab, when he intimates to Maguire



Action takes place during the 1890 gasworks strike photo Jean Pierre Hintze/Creative Commons

“When does the press ever treat the working man fairly?”

that workers physically attempting to stop scabs entering the gas works may look bad in the press, Maguire responds: "Come on Inspector. When does the press ever treat the working man fairly? We're already scum to them..."

Further interesting moments include a suspect dying in police custody after being roughed up by one of Harper's colleagues. Whilst the officer isn't ultimately responsible for the death, we see the police sweeping the issue under the carpet. This is not the only issue around questions of policing that the book attempts to tackle that wouldn't look out of place in a novel set in 2015.

The intrigue and corruption elements create a story that is much more topical than perhaps the author thought when he was writing. To say more would ruin the shocking conclusion, which I would rather leave for the reader to discover themselves.

# REMEMBERING A LOST GENERATION

### Bradford Socialists

Artist and Socialist Party member Peter Robson has been commissioned by Bradford Cathedral's arts space (which is funded by the arts council) to provide paintings at an exhibition in May 2016. The exhibition marks the centenary of the Bradford Pals regiment. It will be moving for the city, and a poignant reminder of what the capitalist war machine can do if left unchallenged.

The Bradford Pals regiment, along with many others, were almost totally annihilated at the battle of the Somme in 1916. These working class men from the Bradford district

“The ruling elite had portrayed the war as a 'jolly'”

were clearly being used by the ruling elite, who had previously portrayed the war as a 'jolly'.

As the first mustard gas canister cracked open in the trenches this myth was dispelled forever. Of the 1,394 men in the regiment who 'went over the top', 1,017 were killed.

We can only imagine the horror for the families back home to lose men from many towns in the United Kingdom. Literally a generation of young men were left in the fields of Flanders, with massive social implications.

Peter says: "This commission is a great honour and the paintings will commemorate the working class men and women affected on a mass scale by this conflict."



# Putting socialism back in LGBT politics



photo Iain Dalton

**Jack Chadwick**

York University Students' Union  
LGBTQ Officer

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) is once again on the frontline of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) politics.

After 30 years of obscurity, the group was brought to a mass audience last year. Its efforts to assist the miners in their 1984-5 strike against the Thatcher government were the subject of cinema hit "Pride".

At the time, homophobia and anti-worker vitriol went hand in glove for the government. Pro-capitalist publications like the Sun covered LGSM's involvement in the strike by spitting headlines like "Perverts support the pits".

Despite hostility, the London branch alone managed to raise the equivalent of £50,000 in today's money. In fact, they did this partly by shrewdly capitalising on the negative headlines with a sell-out "Pits and Perverts" rave.

## Solidarity

The film's themes of working class solidarity and resistance have proved incredibly popular with teary-eyed audiences everywhere. It led to a re-founding of LGSM by bringing together thirty or so of the 'original cast' of activists.

Its members make no bones about their socialist politics, unlike their big-screen counterparts.

Two speakers recently opened the National Union of Students LGBT

conference. They gave speeches that prepared the ground for the success of a Socialist Students motion shortly afterwards.

At a recent event in York, another LGSM speaker endorsed the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to a lecture hall of LGBT locals.

And working with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), LGSM has bolstered public support for the Kellingley and Hatfield pits facing imminent closure.

## Pride

The group is set to lead several pride marches this summer, including London. The 1985 march was led by the NUM out of gratitude for LGSM's work, but these days has become a sickening pro-business festival. LGSM wants the union contingents back at the front with them and the Tredegar Miners' Band.

The popularity of LGSM is a growing counterweight to the dominance of corporate interests in LGBT politics. Accounts firm PwC has invited the group to address a corporate gala later this year. This is the same company which confiscated and never returned the NUM's strike fund in 1984! Activists' first thought is to attend and demand immediate reimbursement.

The Socialist Party welcomes LGSM's work in demonstrating the importance and popularity of a socialist approach to LGBT politics. We look forward to continuing work with them in the fight to end class, gender and sexual oppression.



**A Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners speaker endorsed TUSC**

## Build TUSC with this paper

**Alison Hill**

The Socialist circulation department

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has been granted its first ever election broadcast. This gives us a fantastic opportunity to get out and explain the details of our alternative to austerity.

One of the best ways of showing people what TUSC and the Socialist Party stand for is selling the Socialist. Every week there's extensive coverage of TUSC campaigning. We also carry clear explanations of the socialist alternative to the never-ending diet of cuts and privatisation dished out by the main parties.

Where else would you find extensive figures for where all the money would come from to defend - and expand - the NHS? The Tories boast they will spend more on the NHS by launching more savage cuts on benefits and services. Labour has little better to offer.

But the Socialist suggests nationalising the big pharmaceutical companies, ending privatisation and clawing back the profits leached off the NHS. We've run the numbers and we have a strategy to win.

Every week leading up to the election the Socialist will carry a detailed explanation of TUSC's alternative to cuts and privatisation. In education,

health and all public services - we don't have to continue bearing cut after cut.

We can end unemployment, poverty wages and the scourge of zero-hour contracts. We can defend trade union rights. And we can provide decent, affordable housing for all.

Everybody interested in what TUSC stands for should be sold a copy of the Socialist and asked to subscribe. After the election, where better to read analysis of the results from a workers' point of view than in the pages of the Socialist?

Use the new subscription leaflet to promote the special election offer of six issues for £5 (see below). Use the collectors' cards which have just been distributed to keep track of your sales and donations. And tell us about how you are selling the Socialist on election activities, in your neighbourhood, at work, at school and college.

**Send us your pictures and success stories!**

■ Email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

### Special election offer

**Six issues for £5!**

Or by Direct Debit: special discount until the end of June. **£3.30 per month** (reverts to usual rate of £4 per month on 1 July).

**Call 020 8988 8777**

## Socialism Today The Socialist Party's magazine

### The April issue includes:

- **SNP** Does the SNP pose a real threat to the Westminster establishment? *by Philip Stott*
- **Varoufakis** Why 'erratic Marxism' is not the answer for Greece *by Peter Taaffe*
- **Oil and the economy** New risks for world capitalism *by Lynn Walsh*



Subscribe for £18 a year at [www.socialismtoday.org](http://www.socialismtoday.org) / £2.50 including postage: **Socialism Today** PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.

## ELECTION APPEAL UPDATE

"Too little, too late" could sum up the Labour Party manifesto.

An £8-an-hour minimum wage in five years when we need £10 now. And instead of renationalising the railways, Labour pledges to freeze fares for one year.

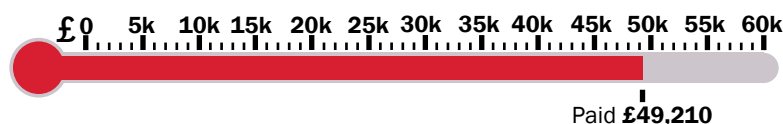
Do you want MPs who will fight for the 99% - not make cuts to protect the 1%? Then vote TUSC, join the Socialist Party and donate to support the socialist election challenge.

Thanks to all who have sent donations, including school student Tom Maddison £2.50, Michael Barker

£250, Rosie O'Brien £25, Josh Asker £350, Megan Sherman £20, Tom Hunt £200, Mark Mason £100, Lynn Wadding £20, Arti Dillon £20, Fiona Harkin £30, Alan Manley £40, Italo Savastio £100 and Jean Walker £250.

You can donate at [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate), call 020 8988 8777 with your card payment, or post a cheque payable to "Socialist Party" to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Please mark all donations "Election Appeal 2015" and send by 30 April 2015.

**Naomi Byron**  
**Socialist Party finance team**







**US: Kshama Sawant on Democracy Now**  
Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the CWI in the US) member and Seattle City Councillor Kshama Sawant took part in a debate about the presidential candidacy of Hilary Clinton on Democracy Now. The video can be viewed at [www.democracynow.org/2015/4/13/debate\\_hillary\\_clinton\\_sounds\\_populist\\_tone](http://www.democracynow.org/2015/4/13/debate_hillary_clinton_sounds_populist_tone)



**China: feminists released**  
Five feminist activists who were arrested last month by the Chinese authorities have been released after a global movement involving many CWI sections. See article on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net) for more



**Canada: first national meeting**  
On 4-5 April Socialist Alternative (CWI Canada) held their first ever national meeting

# BRUTAL ONSLAUGHT ON YEMEN

## For unity of workers and poor against imperialism and sectarianism

**Judy Beishon**  
Socialist Party executive committee

Over 500 people in Yemen were killed and terrible devastation inflicted in the first two weeks of Saudi Arabia-led air strikes. The bombardment has escalated the suffering of civilians who were already caught up in one or more of several bloody conflicts that have been raging across the country.

Food, water, medical and fuel supplies are being greatly disrupted. Even the option of fleeing has been cut off for many, as the Saudi-led coalition has blockaded the air, sea and land exit routes.

Just as the Socialist Party and CWI condemned the bloody foreign interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Gaza, we also condemn this brutal onslaught on Yemen, which will only cause greater catastrophe for ordinary people.

### Sectarian dimension

The Saudi rulers assembled an unprecedented coalition of nine Sunni Muslim Arab regimes, backed by US and British imperialism, among others, to bombard the predominantly Zaydi Shia-variant Houthi forces in Yemen. This intervention has ratcheted up a Sunni-Shia sectarian dimension of the conflict, a dangerously growing feature across the Middle East.

The declared aim of the coalition is to re-install Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power. Hadi was engineered into

Yemen's presidency by the Gulf elites, US and the EU, in a 2012 election that was boycotted by substantial sections of the population and in which Hadi was the only candidate.

The 'Arab Spring' uprisings in 2011 included protests of hundreds of thousands in Yemen that caused the fall of the 33-year regime of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. However, like in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, workers and the poor in Yemen were not able at that stage to seize the initiative in an organised way against the pro-capitalist leaders, with the result that Hadi was able to form a government.

### No relief

But now Hadi has been forced out of office by the advancing Houthis, who captured the capital, Sanaa, six months ago. Hadi has fled to Riyadh and the state military forces have fractured.

Saleh, enraged by his removal from power in 2012, allied himself temporarily with the Houthis and aided their advances using parts of the armed forces that remained under his influence.

There are several reasons behind the Saudi onslaught, with none of them being to bring any relief or benefit to the Yemeni people. The media globally emphasises the House of Saud's determination to counter developing Iranian influence in the region - manifested in Iran's links with the regime in Baghdad, Assad in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and in Yemen's case, the Houthis. The Gulf autocrats were furious



ous when western powers recently reached a preliminary agreement with Iran on its nuclear programme, which might possibly lead to Iran having sanctions removed.

The Iranian theocracy has been reported to have flown weapons to the Houthis (while denying this) and recently moved two naval ships to waters near Yemen. But what sickening hypocrisy it is for the Gulf elites and their western backers to condemn Iranian intervention and then themselves orchestrate a far greater and more devastating intervention into Yemen.

The Saudi-Iran rivalry and enmity is certainly a key factor in the Saudi action. But other factors are also involved, as touched on by Robert Fisk when he wrote in the Independent: "Perhaps half of the Saudi army is of Yemeni tribal origin. Saudi soldiers are intimately - through their own families - involved in Yemen, and the Yemen revolution is a stab in the guts of the Saudi royal family".

### Saudi motivations

For sure the Saudi rulers fear the rising instability on their doorstep - they share a long border with Yemen, there is a Shia minority in Saudi Arabia of around 3 million and they are concerned about a spillover of the al-Qa'ida and Islamic State (IS)-linked forces in Yemen. Most of all they fear a future uprising in Saudi Arabia to overthrow their rule - an inevitable fate for the brutally repressive and autocratic Saudi monarchy.

One key issue at stake for the recently anointed Saudi King Salman



is his elite's prestige, influence and ability to defend its own interests in the region independently of the US.

The sea trade route connecting the Indian Ocean with the Red Sea, which narrows near Yemen's coast, is of massive importance to the Gulf states and the West for transport of oil and other goods. But all the interventions in the area by the regional and world powers have only served to increase instability and risk to trade, as this latest onslaught on Yemen will do also.

Obama's heralded 'counter-terrorism' operations against al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen lie in ruins. The US last month even evacuated its embassy and military personnel from Yemen. The regular and ongoing US drone strikes aimed at AQAP have hit many civilians, resulting in fury on the part of many Yemenis towards the US. These drones and the present Saudi-led bombings serve as recruitment agents for AQAP, IS, and the Houthis.

Rather than being pushed back, AQAP has extended its reach and undertaken more offensives. IS claimed responsibility for four suicide bombings on 20 March in Sanaa that killed at least 142 people, an indication of the horrific barbarity Yemenis can suffer from such organisations if they develop further.

Further deep trouble for US for-

eign policy in Yemen is seen in the vast quantity of western-supplied weaponry to former Yemeni regimes that is now in the hands of deemed enemies of the western powers. However despite this the US has now stepped up its supplies of weapons to the Saudi-led coalition. Britain and France are also major suppliers of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Around 150,000 Saudi troops are reported as being on the Saudi-Yemen border. A ground invasion has not been ruled out by the coalition.

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Further deep trouble for US for-

ers at the top of the UN are the imperialist powers who have historically (and today) wreaked division and exploitation on the Yemeni people.

Neither can any support be given to any 'solution' that would divide the spoils of war between the leaders of the main fighting forces in Yemen. The Houthi leaders, based on a minority in the north, are trying to force their rule on other tribes and peoples in the south, including by shooting unarmed demonstrators who oppose them.

### Programme

All the main militia leaders have presided over atrocities and all promote capitalist market relations that can offer no future for the people of that poverty-stricken country, with its 40% unemployment rate and rapidly growing population.

Only by working class people organising independently and adopting socialist demands, can unity of workers, the unemployed, soldiers and the rural poor be achieved across the tribal, religious and other divisions and a path out of war and poverty be taken. Such a programme would need to include taking into public ownership the major national companies and land holdings, in order to lay the basis for developing resources to meet people's needs.

The programme must also guarantee full rights to all minorities and recognise the importance of solidarity with workers' movements as they develop in neighbouring countries - because only on the basis of a voluntary socialist confederation in the region will a peaceful and decent future for all the peoples be secured.

**A longer version of this article is posted on [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)**



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

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

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

### Our demands include:

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, 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.

- 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 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!

**Join the fightback!  
Join the Socialists!**

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# GLASGOW AND DUNDEE ALL-OUT STRIKES DEMAND FAIR PAY

**Matt Dobson and Philip Stott**  
Socialist Party Scotland

**O**ne hundred and seventeen Dundee hospital porters and 70 local government workers in Glasgow are on strike in separate but similar disputes for fair pay and recognition for the job that they do.

In Glasgow, the Unison homeless caseworkers have been on indefinite strike since 31 March over the council's long-standing refusal to award a pay grade that recognises their responsibilities.

Unison steward Chris told the Socialist: "We are not going back until we get fair pay and parity with other social workers. We have had fantastic support from the public and the picket lines across the city are solid."

The Dundee porters at Ninewells and Victoria hospitals are on a band one grading - the lowest in the NHS. They are demanding a re-grading and back pay for being underpaid for over a decade.

Striking porter and Unite senior steward Graham Nelson explained: "We have been lied to and bullied by NHS management for demanding fair pay. Our strike began as a series of four-hour stoppages but they refused to listen. We've been on all-out strike since April 7. The support for the strike is absolutely solid and we're determined to win."

Solidarity is pouring in from trade unionists and working class people across Scotland and beyond.

The porters in Dundee and the council workers in Glasgow are not

asking for the moon and the stars. Not for six-figure salaries like NHS bosses and top council officials. Or the huge salaries paid to MSPs and MPs.

The Scottish National Party's (SNP) health minister should be intervening to ensure the £6 million is made available to resolve the strike. The Scottish government un-



**We have been lied to  
and bullied by NHS  
management for  
demanding fair pay**

derspend last year was £440 million. Why are the "anti-austerity" SNP leaders sitting on their hands when they should be actively intervening to support the demands of the porters?

In Glasgow, the Labour council is putting the boot into its own workers. Yet less than £1 million would meet the workers' demands.

Labour and SNP politicians have implemented the Tory cuts to the penny. They have stood aside and left decent working people with no choice but to strike to defend themselves. Socialist Party Scotland and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) are fully supporting these strikes. We demand that elected politicians stand and fight austerity, not implement it.

**See interviews on page 11**

**On the Ninewells porters' picket line**  
photo Philip Stott



## Solidarity needed

Trade unionists should urgently consider inviting a striker to speak. Financial support is also crucial. Please contact:

**Dundee porters**  
Graham Nelson 07749241470  
Donations to Unite, 110 Blackness Road,

Dundee DD1 5PB (cheques payable to Unite)  
Facebook: Support Ninewells Porters

**Glasgow homeless caseworkers**  
enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk  
Cheques to Glasgow City Unison 84 Bell Street, Glasgow G1 1LQ  
Facebook: Glasgow Homeless Caseworkers Strike

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