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Issue 857

28 May - 3 June 2015



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QUEEN'S SPEECH ATTACK ON WORKING CLASS PEOPLE

STOP TORY WELFARE BUTCHERY

Roger Shriver

The Queen's Speech. A medieval pantomime of costumed caricatures like Black Rod, the royals and 'Rouge Dragon Pursuivant'.

A fitting opening for the pantomime politics of the main parties. Fitting also for the medieval savagery they have in store for the working class.

This arrogant government of Old Etonians and millionaires dearly wants to turn back the clock. To take back what little earnings and hard-won rights we have.

The rich are getting ever richer. Cameron will not really tax them - instead 'saving' money by pulling crucial support from the working class and poor.

Some £12 billion will go from benefits for disabled people, the young and the poorest. Cameron and his super-rich backers will gain from tax breaks. Carers - who give 24-hour support to people with disabilities, for very low wages - will pay for it.

The number of children living in poverty will rocket - from the already horrifying figure of 3.5 million.

Meanwhile, Cameron hollowly denounces a £7,000 salary boost for MPs. But his gravy-train government will do nothing to waylay it. This at a time when millions of workers have suffered years of zero pay rises.

Iain Duncan Smith, the reactionary brute of a work and pensions secretary, is back to carry out so-called 'welfare reform'. But even he is "squeamish" about the barbaric blood-letting to come. He knows these cuts will provoke a fighting response.

The Tories want a return to the dark ages - the pre-war days before the welfare state. Crisis-wracked capitalism is promising us nothing but attacks on jobs, pay, services, homes and rights. Working class people are already responding through struggle - including strike action and community campaigns - to stop these medieval plans.

The Socialist Party fights to build a socialist alternative to the recurring nightmare of capitalism. Join us to fight for a future for all - not a return to horrors of history.



As the economy experiences 'negative inflation'... Are falling prices good for us?

Tom Baldwin

Things are officially getting cheaper! Figures released last week show prices fell in the UK in April. Negative inflation hasn't happened in over 50 years.

Tory Chancellor George Osborne has claimed the 0.1% fall in the Consumer Price Index (CPI - a measure of inflation) is "good news" for us and for the economy.

However, the CPI should carry a 'health warning'. A recent poll by the Mirror showed 87% of its readers didn't feel like prices were falling. In fact rail fares and petrol prices continue to rise and housing costs are rising rapidly.

If inflation goes down then debts also get bigger in real terms and British households have never owed so much.

On the face of it falling prices sounds good but it reflects a weak economy and a squeeze on living standards. A big factor in the latest figures was the collapse in the price of oil last year, itself reflecting the extreme weakness of the world economy.

If deflation persists then it will lead to a vicious circle. People will buy less if they expect goods and services will be cheaper in the future. Companies will try and cut employees' pay and conditions to maintain their profits. If people's



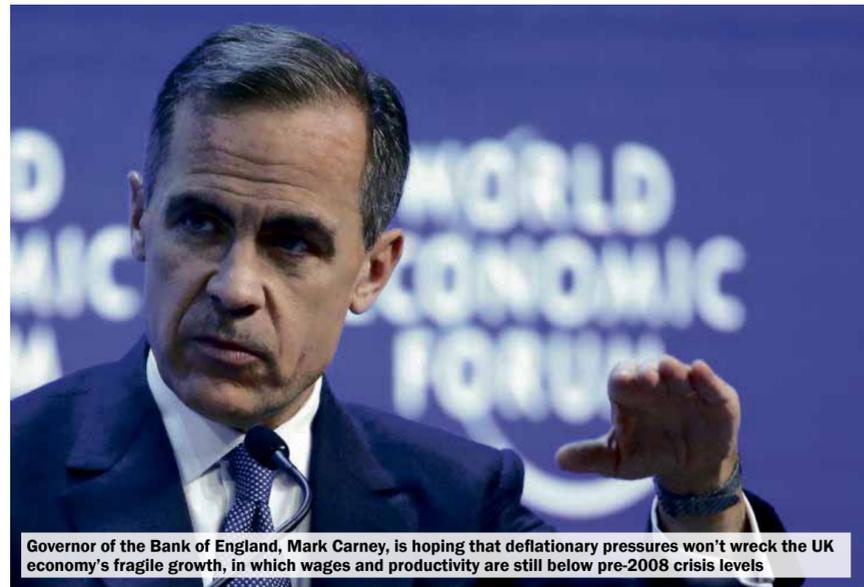
The 2008 world economic crisis revealed the short-sightedness of most capitalist commentators who are willing to believe everything is rosy as long as there are profits to count

pay is squeezed they'll buy even less, prices will continue to fall and the cycle continues.

A deflationary spiral like this is very hard to get out of. Japan was stuck in one for most of this century. Yet a majority of economists are playing down these dangers, saying that the recent fall in prices was merely a 'blip'. However 'core' inflation also fell to a record low level and CPI is expected to hover precariously around zero.

The 2008 world economic crisis revealed the short-sightedness of most capitalist commentators who are willing to believe everything is rosy as long as there are profits to count.

Certainly Osborne doesn't seem to be paying much heed to the warn-



Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, is hoping that deflationary pressures won't wreck the UK economy's fragile growth, in which wages and productivity are still below pre-2008 crisis levels

ing signs. His so-called 'stability budget' in July will cut billions more out of the economy and increase the pressures toward deflation. Potential tools for countering that effect, such as lowering interest rates or printing money, have already been extensively deployed and so are not

available or will be less effective. It seems the Tories will stop at nothing in their mission to rob from us and give to their rich mates. That is the 'greed is good' logic of capitalism where profit comes first, at the expense of people's lives, and even of the stability of the system itself.

Its unplanned, anarchic system of competition means that crises are inevitable.

Only a democratic socialist plan of production can match supply to demand, end the instability and the opposing threats of rising prices or deflationary depression.

'Spiderman' and political lobbying

Becci Heagney



Spiderman

The Guardian newspaper recently won its ten year legal battle to publish the "black spider memos" - letters written in spidery writing between Prince Charles and government ministers under Tony Blair. The letters are wide ranging and show excessive political lobbying by the heir to the throne.

The media impression that Charles is just a passionate old man, concerned with the future of the albatross is a false one. From the letters that have been published it's clear that he was lobbying about the UK's involvement in Iraq and pushing for policies that would benefit himself and those around him.

For example, one letter to the then health secretary John Reid de-

manded redevelopment of a hospital in Sunderland in which Charles' architecture company was involved. Since 2010, Charles has had 87

meetings with government ministers, leaders of opposition parties and government officials. We are unlikely to hear what has been discussed, since the government has now changed the rules on the Freedom of Information Act, allowing an "absolute exemption" on requests relating to the monarchy.

The concern of those opposed to the letters being published is that they will "damage perceptions of political neutrality" of Prince Charles. Surely the problem is not the perception but the fact that he is not politically neutral?

This is not something unique to Charles - the monarchy plays a significant political role in British life. It has to be consulted in detail on any bills which, if they became law, would affect their personal property or interests - these can

then be vetoed before parliament discusses them.

In 1999, the government attempted to shift the power of authorising military action in Iraq from the Queen to Parliament but this was vetoed by the Queen.

It highlights again the undemocratic nature of the monarchy - an unelected head of state which has the power to veto laws by a democratically elected government.

This may not appear to be a problem now - the Tories are unlikely to put forward any radical policies which threaten the interests of the monarchy. But it will be in the future.

A left-wing, socialist government which attempts to carry out political reform, such as nationalising the banks, would be a different story. That shows the need for the monarchy to be abolished.

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WE CAN STOP THE TORIES! Join the Socialists!

NHS trusts heading for bankruptcy

The NHS funding crisis continues to deepen with NHS trusts in England reporting a £822 million deficit for 2014-15. Foundation Trusts (FTs - which are largely unaccountable to the public and operate semi-independently of the NHS) reported a £349 million deficit compared to a planned £10 million deficit. One major factor in the rising deficits was the amount forked out by trusts to buy in contract and agency staff - a consequence of permanent staff shortages. NHS trusts spent a staggering £1.8 billion on temporary workers - double the expected bill.

The lack of permanent staff has also increased waiting times and worsened patient care. FTs were established by the last Labour government and are expected to 'compete' to secure sufficient income. In reality, despite cost-cutting, FTs have been spending their cash reserves but many are now running out of money. The Tory government says it will increase the NHS budget £8 billion a year by 2020. However, NHS England will have to make £22 billion "efficiency savings" ie cuts, by that date.

Privatisation wrecking hospitals

Barts NHS Trust in east London, the largest NHS trust in England, has been criticised as "inadequate" by the Care Quality Commission.

This criticism follows an earlier CQC report which placed Whipps Cross Hospital (one of four acute hospitals run by the trust) into 'special measures'. That CQC report highlighted a culture of bullying management and an over-reliance on agency staff.

Recently, long-serving health worker and trade unionist at Whipps Cross Hospital, Charlotte Munro, was reinstated in her job following a successful employment tribunal. She was sacked in October 2013 by a hostile management who claimed she had "brought the trust into disrepute".

Charlotte, alongside other trade union activists, had questioned the cuts (including the 'downbanding' of staff) being made by the trust.

Cuts

These cuts are a result of a £93 million deficit caused by a rip-off Private Finance Initiative contract to redevelop the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. Socialist Party members at Whipps Cross campaigned for industrial action to defeat the cuts and PFI.



photo Paul Mattsson



A CQC report highlighted a culture of bullying management and an over-reliance on agency staff

This privatisation measure is costing Barts £2 million a week to service, draining it of vitally needed resources. At the same time the PFI contract has, so far, made the private companies involved £150 million in profit.

PFI was first introduced under the Major Tory government but then rapidly expanded by Labour under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Plymouth: Labour and Tories form grand cuts coalition

Ryan Aldred
Plymouth Socialist Party

Labour has revealed how far it's degenerated by agreeing to share power with the Conservatives in Plymouth's hung council.

Labour will no doubt justify this arrangement as a means of shutting the three Ukip councillors out from becoming kingmakers with the Tories, now that Labour has lost its majority on the council. If that is the case then Labour could fall to pieces

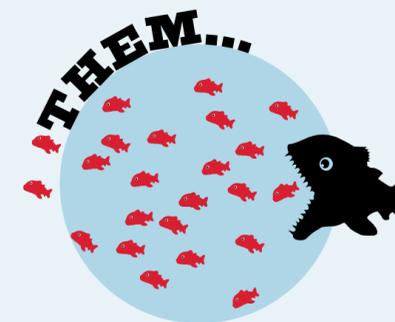
as it is simply siding with what it considers to be the least worst of two bad options.

If Labour had not implemented the eye-watering cuts passed down from national level they would probably never have lost their majority on the council. But this latest move to form a grand cuts coalition will only alienate those who voted Labour to keep the Tories out.

The pro-Labour trade union leaders will now have a very difficult time arguing that Labour is an alternative when the evidence is clearly

showing otherwise. The attacks on jobs, conditions and public services will now come thick and fast and people will be looking for a means of organising to fight back.

People will not need to look far, however, as the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition are campaigning for an end to the cuts, the immediate implementation of a £10 an hour minimum wage, and standing shoulder to shoulder with workers in building a movement to end austerity.



A nice earner

One person not unduly worried about paying their gas bill is Tesco top dog Dave Lewis. In just six months the new head of the faltering retail giant was paid £4.1 million. Meanwhile, most supermarket workers were forced to claim tax credits in order to supplement their meagre wages.

Revolving poverty

Nearly a third of the country's population - some 19.3 million people - suffered poverty (ie under 60% of median income) between 2010 and 2013, according to the Office for National Statistics. That proportion was higher than the EU average of 25%. 'Persistent poverty' in the UK was one of the lowest in Europe in 2013, but its overall poverty rate was ranked 13th out of 28 member states. It seems that while people in the UK had the highest exit rate from poverty it also had one of the highest entry rates, suggesting that many workers are only one pay cheque away from poverty.

Affordable housing

It's only a small ex-council flat but one pied a terre in London is on the property market for a cool £1.15 million. But if your pocket won't stretch that far there's another flat in the same 1960s block on sale for a mere £1 million. There may not be enough room

in the flat to swing a proverbial cat but there is a Stella McCartney boutique downstairs on the high street and you're a stone's throw from the V&A museum.

The only remaining council tenant on the same floor, Annette Greenwood, said: "The houses in this area were built for a purpose. They were for the poorest people, the most vulnerable and the people who we all rely on but can't afford to buy property in central London. Their homes have just turned into a way for people to make more and more money while ordinary people are forced out."

Cost of living

Unaffordable housing, high transport and childcare costs mean that one-third of people living in the capital have insufficient income for a decent standard of living, according to a Loughborough University report. That figure rises to 43% of Londoners with families. Even those living in council or housing association accommodation have experienced a 33% rise in rents since 2008.

Researchers estimate that the minimum income needed for a single person living in a studio flat is £27,100 a year. However, the 'living wage' of £9.15 an hour would only generate just over £19,000 a year. Last year Tory MP Mark Simmonds complained that he couldn't live in London on £120,000 a year.



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'COUNCIL OF WAR' NEEDED TO PREPARE THE FIGHT AGAINST CAMERON'S CUTS



What we think

“Don't despair, organise!” has been the message of many union activists since the Tory victory was confirmed on 8 May. At the union conferences that have already taken place there has been an undoubted desire of delegates to understand how the Tories won, but also to work out how Cameron's new planned cuts offensive and attack on union rights can be resisted and defeated. This is a reflection of countless discussions that will be taking place in workplaces and communities all over the country as working-class people digest the news. It seems that many union branches have had increased attendances and certainly Socialist Party meetings have seen many new people coming along.

The first reaction has, understandably, often been one of shock, particularly in the days just after the election when the result was still raw. But this has quickly turned into a realisation that the movement has to be prepared to fight back, particularly as Cameron and Osborne have announced some details of the Queens Speech on 27 May and the emergency budget on 8 July. The fact that the Labour leadership contest is between an assortment of Blairites has, if anything, added an impulse to the feeling that 'we have to do it ourselves'.



The initial shock has quickly turned into a realisation that the movement has to be prepared to fight back

The Tory plan is 'shock and awe' - to demoralise workers at the prospect of yet another tranche of brutal cuts and the sinister ratcheting up of Thatcher's anti-union laws. Tony Blair approvingly called them the most restrictive labour laws in Western Europe and shamefully he and Brown left them intact during the 13 years of New Labour rule.

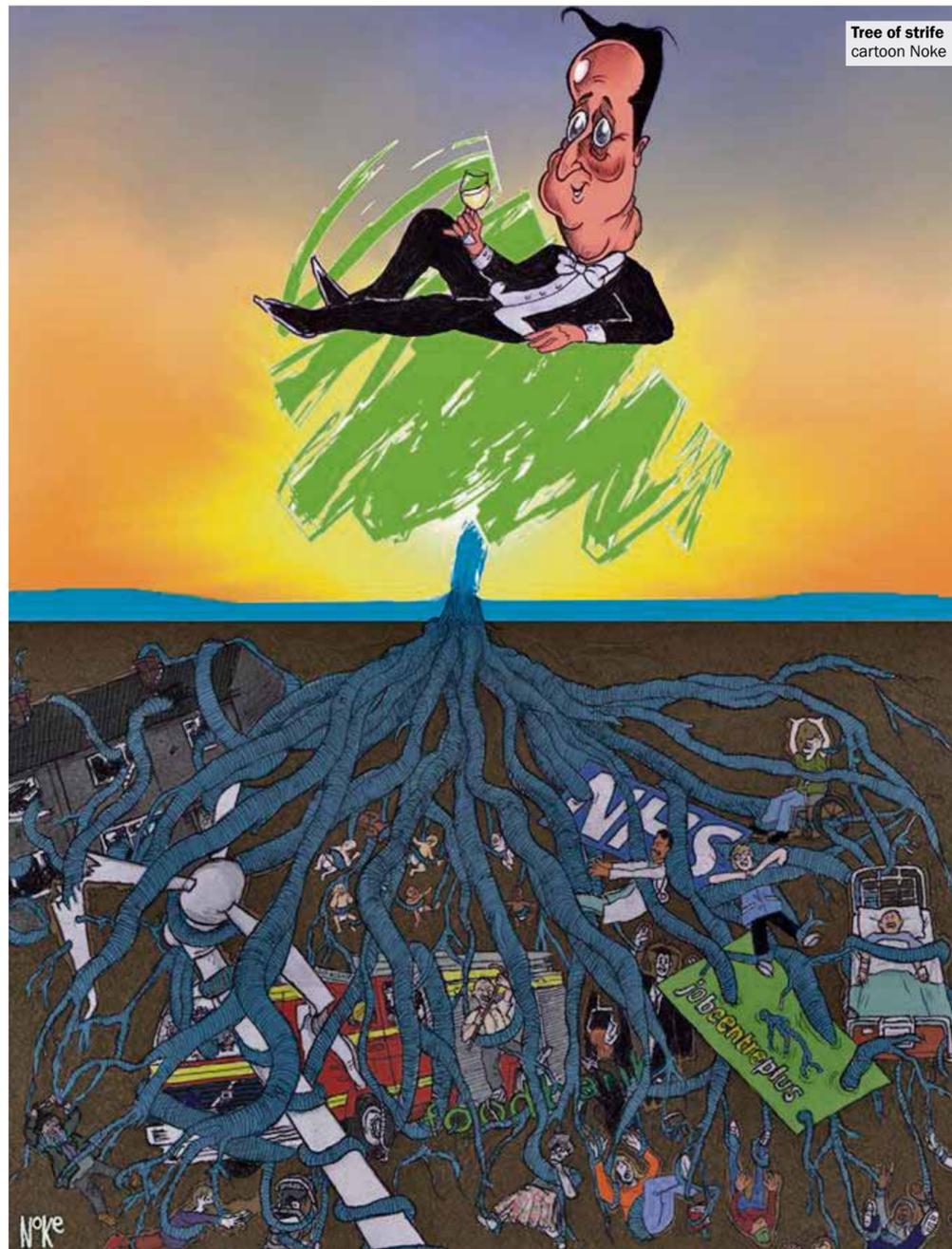
It is no accident that austerity and anti-union laws are two of the main pillars of the new government. From the opposite class view, the Tories often have a much better understanding of the powerful potential of the unions as the organised driving force against their austerity plans than many of the union leaders.

Cameron, like Thatcher before him, looks at the union leaders and complacently believes that he can just push ahead. The 'Iron Lady' came a cropper when, after the Labour and trade union leaders allowed the miners and Liverpool socialist council to be isolated, she wrongly believed that she was invincible and rolled out the poll tax.

Organised opposition

But that defeat wasn't automatic. Resistance was inevitable, but the role of the Socialist Party (then Militant) as the key force in developing an organised opposition through countless anti-poll tax unions ensured that an 18 million strong army of mass non-payment made the poll tax unworkable. Similarly now, rank and file pressure must be exerted on the trade union leaders to call the mass action that is needed to face down the Tories.

The Socialist Party is building for the People's Assembly London demonstration on June 20th, which has the potential to be very big. But the trade unions should not 'subcontract' out the responsibility of leading the struggle when the union movement's fundamental ability to organise and act is on the line. The danger is that the leaders are let off the hook, when they should be preparing members for mass industrial action on the scale of a



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photo Paul Mattsson

24 hour general strike.

So side by side with supporting this march and all other initiatives that are sprouting up - such as the Youth Fight for Jobs 27 May Queen's Speech protests and the incredible 5,000 strong Bristol demonstration called by sixth formers - we urgently have to place demands on the union leaders. The National Shop Stewards Network conference on 4 July is a crucial event, bringing union and anti-cuts activists together to build a real campaign that can build the pressure on the union leaders.

TUC

At the FBU conference, just days after the election, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady announced that there will be a special meeting of the TUC Executive in the aftermath of the Queen's Speech. But if Cameron (elected on 24% of the popular vote!) announces the threatened new laws to bring in 50% turnout thresholds in industrial action ballots and worse for the public sector, this has to be widened out to an emergency TUC General Council.

It should be a 'council of war' to seriously prepare the whole union movement for a 24 hour general strike, as a warning to the Tories. More importantly, it would raise the sights and lift the spirits of millions of workers and all those lined up to be on the receiving end of the Tories' eye-watering £12 billion welfare cuts. The left executives should work out a strategy to put pressure on the TUC. But if the TUC refuses to organise, then the left-led unions should get together to call action.

Already there are hopeful signs that workers and working-class communities have the will to fight. Before, during and after Election Day, there has been a whole number of strikes, disputes and protests continuing or emerging. Many of them are indefinite or at least protracted. Rail workers will decide if the new offer from Network Rail is sufficient to be accepted, but the determined mood reflected in the massive 80% turnout and 60% yes vote in the strike ballot forced management to blink first. This can give many others confidence that it's possible to fight and show that actually Cameron leads a very weak government, with a paper-thin majority, which can be defeated.



Cameron leads a very weak government, with a paper thin majority, which can be defeated

TORIES HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON WITH BLUE COLLAR WORKERS

Charlie Taylor
GMB member

As a 'blue collar factory worker' I won't be fooled by David Cameron's mantra that his new cabinet stands as the "real party for working people".

The truth is that his cabinet will continue to try to drive a wedge between those in work and those on benefits in order to implement another £30 billion public sector cuts and £12 billion in welfare cuts.

The fact that the Tories can even attempt to claim this mantle shows the extent to which the Labour Party has abandoned its origins.

Cameron said "we are on the side of hardworking taxpayers and want to give everyone the chance to get on, with the dignity of a job, the pride of a paycheque and a home of their own".

Those paycheques have fallen - workers are now earning an average of £2,500 less than in 2010. Half the jobs in Britain pay below the living wage. In 2014 workers contributed £32 billion in unpaid overtime to the economy - this is the reality of life under the Tories.

Whether you are in work or not, living standards are being destroyed. Tory work and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith is expected to push the annual household benefit cap down from £26,000

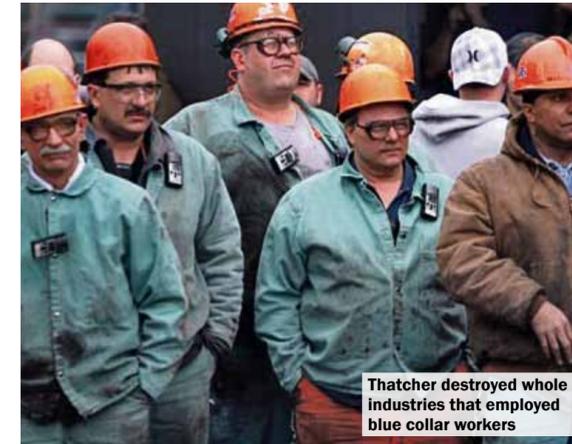
to £23,000, increase the bedroom tax, trim maternity pay and remove financial support for all but the poorest carers.

As a result, he will undoubtedly increase the reliance on food banks. The largest food bank provider - the Trussell Trust - recently reported that over one million people needed emergency food last year. They said: "Many of those were working poor, while half accepted food as a result of welfare system failure."

'Blue collar' is the term used to

describe workers who do manual labour - under Thatcher the de-industrialisation of Britain began with the destruction of whole industries that employed millions of blue collar workers.

Now our welfare state, including the NHS, faces similar destruction. Cameron's party of the rich has nothing in common with blue collar workers. We can't allow the Tories to divide us. A determined struggle led by the trade unions can stop them in their tracks.



Thatcher destroyed whole industries that employed blue collar workers

National Rail strike threat results in new offer

The RMT and TSSA national Network Rail strike, planned for 25-26 May, was postponed following a new pay offer.

Network Rail has now offered a 1% consolidated pay increase for 2015 backdated to January, instead of the £500 one-off lump sum previously on the table.

For 2016, a 1.4% increase is now offered, along with a possible further 0.7% if a 'smart working' agreement is reached - though details of this are yet to be seen. The original offer was a pay increase tied to the Retail Price Index measure of inflation.

If agreed, this would be a two-year deal rather than the four-year deal previously proposed, so pay negotiations would start again in 2017.

A national RMT reps' meeting on 28 May, following feedback from rank and file members, will decide whether to ballot members on this offer or resume action. Network Rail is also threatening a legal challenge to the TSSA's strike ballot, so it is important that the mood for strike action is still strong among RMT members.

While this new offer shows the impact of threatening strike action - Network Rail bosses previously said



If agreed this would be a two-year deal rather than the four-year deal previously proposed

they'd made their 'final offer' - it also shows that more could be won through industrial action, so Socialist Party members think the offer should be rejected.

One rail worker told the Socialist: "At a time when the company are making big profits, my hope is that workers instruct their reps to insist on a decent pay rise, while keeping an assurance on job security and safety. If needed, we should use the strike mandate which was over-

whelmingly voted for and make the bosses listen."

The RMT is also preparing to ballot on London Underground (LU) over night time tube plans and a new pay offer, with other unions likely to do the same. LU is pressuring staff to accept new rosters that would rip up current agreements and lock workers into anti-social hours and appalling working conditions. 24-hour tube running is planned to start in September.



[News in brief]

Lewisham academies

Teaching unions NUT and NASUWT in Lewisham, south London have called further two-day strike action on 3-4 June. This continues the fight against the proposals from Leathersellers' Federation governors to convert the three Prendergast Federation schools into academies. The tremendous campaign to oppose the Prendergast conversion plans has already seen student protests, local demonstrations, rallies and strikes. If governors choose to impose their plans against this level of opposition, it will divide and alienate their own school community, damaging education. On 3 June after the pickets, protesters will be lobbying the medieval Leathersellers' Company in the city of London to hand in a letter calling on the governors to reconsider their proposals. Then in the evening they will lobby Lewisham's mayor and cabinet which will be considering their response to the consultation. Last March, the mayor said that "as things currently stand I would not expect to be able to support the proposal". Join us in the audience to make sure the Mayor knows the strength of opposition to Prendergast's plans. **Lewisham Socialist Party members**

Swansea teachers

Teachers employed in Swansea's 'Education Other Than at School' (EOTAS) service have been forced to take two days' strike action in response to the Labour council's attempt to slash their service in half, leaving some of the city's most vulnerable children without adequate provision. Members of the NASUWT and NUT teaching unions had lively protests outside the council's Civic Centre to highlight the damage these cuts will have, especially on children with mental health problems. Helen John, assistant secretary of Swansea NASUWT, said these cuts were savage and would leave many vulnerable children without the opportunity of a proper education. These cuts are part of the Labour council's £81 million of 'savings' over three years. Education has been butchered to the tune of £5 million cuts a year with the NUT predicting dozens of mainstream teaching redundancies over the next few months. **Alec Thraves**

PCS conference: Coordinated action can stop the Tories

John McNally
PCS national vice-president (personal capacity)

In opening the PCS civil service union conference, both president Janice Godrich and general secretary Mark Serwotka stressed the need to oppose Tory cuts and privatisation, and defend trade union rights, through co-ordinated union action.

During conference the Financial Times announced that chancellor George Osborne intends cutting yet another 100,000 civil service jobs.

Mark Serwotka said the Tories didn't win the election - Labour lost it because it failed to provide an alternative to austerity. He argued the electoral system was broken and called for a step-up in the campaign for proportional representation. Mark also said the unions need common demands, common negotiations and industrial action strategies.

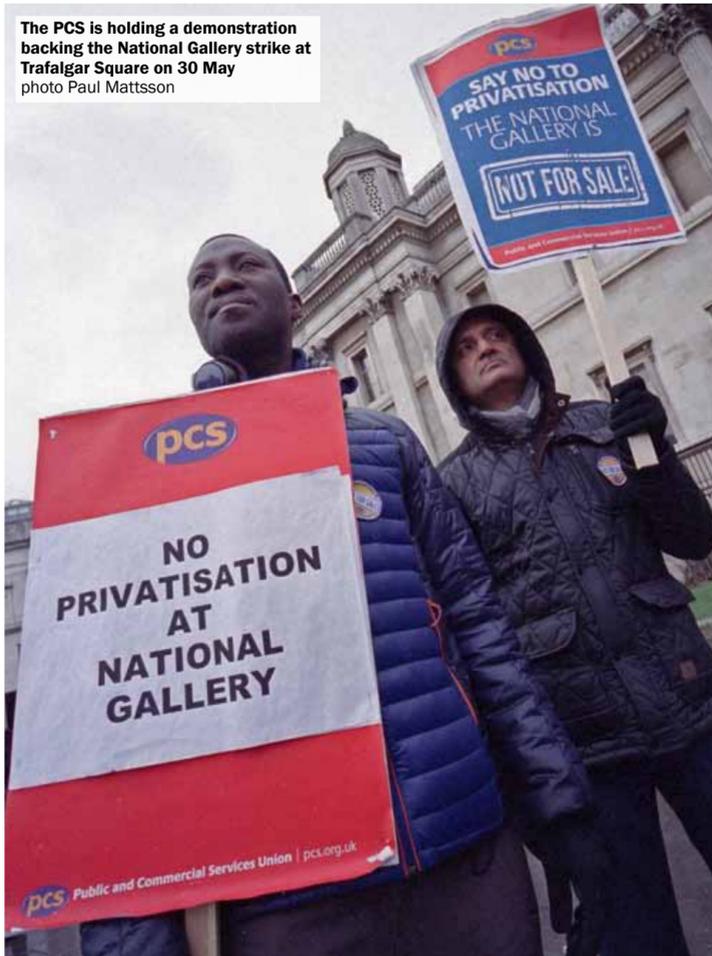
The conference committed to pursuing the union's national demands, including: to end the pay freeze, fair and equal pay, no compulsory redundancies, adequate staffing levels, no detriment of terms and conditions, and a return to genuine national bargaining.

Union busting

The debate on union-busting showed that attempts to break PCS by withdrawal of check-off subs collection have failed because PCS has done "something remarkable in signing so many members in such a short period of time" and that the union would emerge "stronger, more independent from the employer, more able to fight back".

As said in the debate, the Tories "take the trade unions a damned sight more seriously than many trade union leaders themselves do... there is nothing the Tories fear more than industrial action - the most effective weapon of the working class."

Conference was outraged to hear Union officials had contacted former Cabinet Office minister, Frances Maude, without the agreement of civil service unions, and had been given national civil service recognition rights by the union-busting thug. This contravened TUC rules



The PCS is holding a demonstration backing the National Gallery strike at Trafalgar Square on 30 May photo Paul Mattsson

and echoed the 1980s when - rather than fighting back against Thatcher - some union leaders engaged in inward-looking and destructive inter-union competition.

In order to ensure the financial survival of PCS, the conference agreed to suspend this year's group and national elections. This emergency measure was recognised as a necessary move. Despite opposition - including from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the Socialist Workers Party - the leadership convincingly won the debate.

Struggles

Conference gave its full support to the many PCS members in struggle or about to move into struggle.

National Gallery members, having already taken 23 days of action before the election, voted for a further eleven days after the election. This shows a tremendous determination to prevent the privatisation of a national icon by a gang of multi-millionaire philistines who see access to culture as a right only for

the wealthy for "investment". Conference expressed its full support for sacked National Gallery activist Candy Udwin and the whole union intends mobilising for the national protest at Trafalgar Square on 30 May.

No union is better prepared to meet the Tory onslaught than PCS. While not minimising the scale of the battles ahead there was a real confidence among delegates that there is an alternative to accepting austerity - and that is to struggle.

Over 50 delegates attended the Socialist Party fringe meeting which was addressed by the party's general secretary Peter Taaffe, PCS national vice-president John McNally and NIPSA president Padraig Mulholland. A number of delegates asked to join the party. Over 50 copies of the Socialist were sold with over £1,000 raised for the fighting fund.

A longer version of this report can be read at socialistparty.org.uk

DETERMINED DUNDEE PORTERS RATCHET UP PRESSURE

Philip Stott

Ninewells and Royal Victoria hospital porters are eight weeks into an all-out strike which is set to become the longest running in Dundee since the Timex lock-out of 1993.

The pressure on NHS Tayside management and now the Scottish government has been ratcheted up by the determined 120 workers, striking for a band two pay grading and compensation for years of underpayment.

Regular reports of hospital refuse going uncollected and photographs of rubbish piling up are widely circulated. NHS bosses clearly hoped to rely on so-called "goodwill" - in reality pressure from the bosses - of other health workers to fill in for the striking porters.

In practice, band seven and eight managers are taking on much of the work, alongside so-called "volunteers." But this arrangement is clearly failing to even cover the porters' basic duties.

A letter sent to nursing staff last week requested that: "wards/departments make arrangements for staff to collect the ward's clean linen trolley and deposit the used trolley on a daily basis".

In response the nursing union RCN hit back: "Registered nurses and health care support workers have got enough to do without tak-



Dundee porters demonstrating in Glasgow with homeless caseworkers photo Philip Stott

ing on the duties of other staff during industrial action."

Breach

As a Unite steward commented to the Socialist: "This is a breach of even basic health and safety regulations. Nursing and other support staff don't have either the safety footwear or the experience of operating the trolleys."

"They should be spending more time settling the dispute rather than

asking other NHS workers to cover for a strike the management are responsible for creating in the first place."

A protest outside Scottish National Party MSP and Scottish health minister Shona Robison's offices resulted in the minister agreeing to meet with the shop stewards.

Unite senior steward Ronnie Heeney said: "The minister made all the right noises, but then again she did the same seven weeks ago

when we last spoke to her. We said again that if the proposed mechanism for settling the strike - the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC) review - did not come up with a decent offer, it will not be binding and the strike will continue."

STAC is due to make a proposal the week beginning 1 June. The porters are taking two coaches to protest at the Scottish parliament on Thursday 28 May.

Glasgow Homelessness caseworkers: Political fund threat changes Labour council's tune

Matt Dobson

After nine weeks of all out strike action, Glasgow's Labour Council still refuses to resolve a dispute over pay with seventy homelessness caseworkers.

At a meeting on Wednesday 20 May between the union, two Labour councillors and two senior council officials, management initially refused to commit to an offer until the end of June.

In response, Ian Leech, Unison social work convenor and Socialist Party Scotland member, told the press: "At today's meeting Unison questioned who was running the council - unelected senior officers or the elected politicians?"

"We believe that the conduct of this dispute from the council side exposes a dysfunctionality at the heart of the council, with one senior officer openly hostile to the trade union and its members."

"The Unison Glasgow branch will be writing to our national office asking that all political fund payments from Unison to the Glasgow Labour Party are halted due to the way in which our members are being treated."

The council then changed their



Homeless caseworkers and Socialist Party Scotland members on the North East picket line photo Glasgow Homeless Caseworkers

approach under this political pressure, against the backdrop of the crisis in the Scottish Labour Party. Management left the room for a recess. Upon their return they stated they would have a written proposal within a week.

Strike breaking

The union claims the council is using non-council workers - support

workers from charities and voluntary organisations - to provide written information on a person's needs to cover the work of the striking staff. This breaches strike breaking laws and may also breach data protection rules.

An undercover Glasgow Evening Times reporter has detailed how he was first turned away for a night from the homeless service and

then advised to get legal help in suing the council to provide their legal obligation to give temporary accommodation.

The media coverage has also exposed how Glasgow council, while not willing to pay their homeless caseworkers fairly, are paying £90 a night for rooms in hotels and bed and breakfasts to put people in temporary accommodation.

Bromley council battle continues

Bromley council workers in Unite the Union have continued their strikes against privatisation of service by the Tory-run local authority. The latest round of action culminated in all sections striking on 19 May.

Unite branch secretary Kathy Smith said about the strikes: "Our library section closed all libraries in the borough. It was amazing during the strike to see librarians convert nursery songs to picket songs defending public services and forming lines to sing and dance."

We've had many honks from the passing traffic and mums with kids on their way to school saying thanks for doing this for us. Some non-members in our transport section crossed the picket line with the intention of getting a limited service out.

While at our adult services section all the centres were closed for the duration. So we moved the pickets from adults to join transport.

We split the picket between entrance and exit gates. The drivers sat in their buses without coming out for a while with the engines running.

After about 30 minutes they shut them down and went back into the office and then were sent home."

12 June: **Strikers Benefit Night, Labour Party Rooms, St Marks Rd, BR2 9HG - 7pm onwards. Tickets £5 available from onay.kasab@uniteunion.org**

13 June: **"People and Services First" march, assemble 12 noon, Norman Park, Bromley Common, BR2**

Blacklisting: The secret war between big business and trade union activists

Public meeting hosted by the Haldane Society of socialist lawyers and the Institute of Employment Rights

Tuesday 2 June 2015, 6.30pm

Diskus Room, Unite union office, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1

Order the book from www.leftbooks.co.uk or phone 020 8988 8789



1945 - VICTORY IN EUROPE

When 'liberation' meant socialism



Commemorations marking the 70th anniversary 'victory in Europe' (VE) day recently took place in Britain (and throughout the world) with establishment dignitaries saluting veteran service men and women who liberated Europe from the clutches of fascism. However, the official ceremonies didn't refer to the prevalent mood of the working class at the end of World War Two, ie a desire not to return to the horrors of war, mass unemployment and poverty associated with capitalism. As **Dave Carr** explains in the following article, first published in 2005, the period 1945-47 was characterised by a resurgent working class fighting for socialism.

VE had come at an enormous cost. 40 million soldiers and civilians had been killed. 27.5 million in the Soviet Union alone. The German ruling class's gamble with fascism had resulted in much of eastern Europe coming under the influence of the USSR, with capitalism and landlordism being swept away there. In the West, capitalist industry was on its knees - crippled by the burden and destruction of the war. Throughout Europe the mass migrations of demobbed soldiers, workers and refugees was creating political instability. Everywhere there were food shortages, unemployment, homelessness and poverty. But as the Allies advanced into Germany they frequently found factories and mines taken over by committees of workers who had driven out SS saboteurs. The first act of the Allies

was to ban these anti-fascist organisations! Nonetheless, the power of the workers' committees meant that the demand for nationalisation of the mines of Krupps and other war industries became widespread. For example, in 1946 in Hesse, Western Germany, 71% approved of the socialisation of industry in a referendum. A shocked US commander Clay vetoed it. However, the resurrected German Communists (KPD) and social-democrat (SPD) parties, lagged behind workers' demands by only calling for partial nationalisation of industries, while both called for a renewal of capitalism. In 1947 a strike wave took place in the industrialised Ruhr area of Germany which included demands for nationalisation of industry. At its height 350,000 workers were on strike. The US occupiers in response threatened to cut food rations and to



Yalta 1945. Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agree to carve up post-war Europe

impose martial law. The Allies' situation was saved by the trade union leaders and KPD leaders who restrained the workers from taking action. Improved food supplies, an end to the dismantling of industry, and the establishment by the occupying authorities of 'works councils' to address workers' wages and conditions, gradually eased the conflict.

Workers' resistance
In France and Italy the dying days of the war saw massive strike waves by a working class growing in confidence of its power. This was to be a major problem for the Allied occupation. In late 1943, after Mussolini's removal, the Italian workers in the industrialised north, still under the control of the German army, organised strikes and a 15,000-strong armed resistance movement. In March 1944 one million workers struck in the occupied north. In Milan the bosses were forced to pay the workers for the days on strike! Liberation in 1945 left communist and socialist workers dictating to the capitalists the terms and conditions of employment. Perhaps as many as two million workers joined the Communist Party. Likewise in France, 50,000 Parisians - arms in hands - drove out the German occupiers forcing the Allies



French resistance fighters

“Significantly every programme with which the various Resistance groups throughout Europe emerged from the underground contained demands for nationalisation of the banks and large-scale industries; and these programmes bore the signatures of Christian Democrats as well as of socialists and communists (The Economist 1 December 1945).”

to rush General Charles de Gaulle into the liberated city to head off a new Paris commune (1871 workers' uprising). The Resistance movement published a charter demanding nationalisation of the capitalist monopolies. In many regions this demand was implemented with many companies being run by workers' committees. In the first elections in France in October 1945 the Communists won 26.1% of the vote and the socialists 24.8% - a majority. Moreover, for the first time a majority of workers were organised in trade unions. The capitalists' fears following the collapse of the Nazi regimes was summed up by the Economist (1 December 1945): "The collapse of that New Order imparted a great revolutionary momentum to Europe. It stimulated all the vague and confused but nevertheless radical and socialist impulses of the masses. Significantly every programme with which the various Resistance groups throughout Europe emerged from the underground contained demands for nationalisation of the banks and large-scale industries; and these programmes bore the signatures of Christian Democrats as well as of socialists and communists" (Quoted in Capitalism since World War II by Andrew Glyn et al). In the victorious countries of Brit-

ain and the US the working class demanded its reward for defeating fascism. Above all, there was a widespread mood that there should be no return to the poverty and unemployment that characterised capitalism between the two wars. In the US the trade unions embarked on a massive strike wave for better wages and conditions in 1946. In Britain, the Attlee Labour government was swept into office and established a welfare state and carried through the nationalisation of basic industries such as coal, energy production, railways, steel, etc. But, generally, it was only the investment-starved, near bankrupt companies that were taken over.

The most profitable parts of industry remained in private hands. Yet the weakened capitalist class would not have been able to seriously resist widespread public ownership measures but the Labour and trade union leaders had no intention of challenging capitalism.

Stalinism*
With war-weary US, British and Commonwealth troops desperate to return home, a determined revolutionary workers' movement could have successfully overturned capitalism at this time. However, Stalin, who controlled the communist movement, had agreed during 1944-45 with Churchill and Roosevelt to co-exist with imperialism and to divide conquered Europe into Western and Soviet 'spheres of influence'. This counter-revolutionary arrangement was to last until the fall of Stalinism in the USSR and eastern Europe between 1989-91. In France, despite the weakness of the capitalist class and the enormous strength of the Communist Party (PCF), no revolution took place. Instead, the PCF participated in a 'government of national unity' which ruthlessly pursued an imperialist policy in Vietnam (Indo-China), Algeria, Madagascar and elsewhere. Having held back strikes and workers' movements, the PCF was dumped from government by the capitalists in 1947.

Marshall Aid
In 1947, US imperialism, now a capitalist superpower, (British imperialism was bankrupt and faced colonial revolutions in its decaying empire) sought to undermine revolution in Western Europe by imposing stability through the Marshall Aid recovery programme. \$13 billion in grants and loans were

Eastern Europe - Stalin establishes his satellite states

In 1944-45 the Red Army rolled across eastern Europe, ushering the collapse of the Nazis and their quisling regimes. This gave rise to revolutionary movements of workers and peasants. However, Stalin and his bureaucratic clique had no intention of allowing a socialist revolution to reach its conclusion, as a democratic socialist society would end the rule of the privileged bureaucracy. In 1944, as the workers of Warsaw in Poland rose up against the Nazi occupiers, Stalin halted the Red Army on the city's outskirts until the insurrection was crushed.

In East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and elsewhere, anti-fascist committees, workers' factory committees and soviets were snuffed out by Soviet officials. Governments in these occupied countries were established with officials drawn from social-democratic and capitalist parties. But the key ministries - police and army - were controlled by the Stalinist bureaucrats who rested on the only real power, the Red Army. Eventually these 'popular front' governments were swept aside and 'unification' of the social-democratic parties and communist parties took

place. The new regimes became mirror images of Stalinist Russia. Industry (much already having been looted as 'war reparations' - £15 billion from East Germany alone) was nationalised as the new Stalinist regimes leaned on the working class to deal a blow to the capitalists. However, not a hint of workers' democracy was allowed and many genuine revolutionaries wound up in prison. These countries became 'deformed workers' states' ie nationalised economies, but bureaucratically planned and run by totalitarian regimes.

pumped into Europe's ravaged industries over four years. Many of the capitalist institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (forerunner of the World Trade Organisation) were established in the immediate post-war period to impose US imperialism's power on the world economy and prevent restrictions to 'free trade' which had dogged the world economy before the war.

The right-wing leaders of the British and US labour movement were also mobilised in defence of capitalism in Europe. The British TUC persuaded the German trade union leaders to take measures to prevent communist influence. Eventually, the revolutionary wave in Europe exhausted itself, blocked by the political leadership of the workers' organisations who acted as transmission belts for the policies of either imperialism or Stalinism. In Western Europe the ruling classes could not, following the collapse of the Nazi and fascist regimes, use force to ensure the continuation of capitalism. Instead they relied upon the pro-capitalist leaders of the workers' movement, along with those who argued that socialism should be "postponed", to resist the popular demands for socialism and gradually stabilise the capitalist system.

See also 'Marxists and the Second World War' by Peter Taaffe general secretary of the Socialist Party (issue 592, available online: www.socialistparty.org.uk). Written to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the start of World War Two. Peter discusses whether such a global catastrophe can be avoided in the modern era.

World revolution abandoned



Socialist revolutionary Leon Trotsky

As predicted by the socialist revolutionary Leon Trotsky, Stalin's anti-revolutionary strategy of 'socialism in one country' would lead to the political degeneration of the communist movement along national and reformist lines. Defence of the USSR, ie the privileged bureaucracy, and a foreign policy of 'peaceful co-existence' with imperialism meant a jettisoning of the world socialist revolution. Communist historian Eric Hobsbawm concurs that Stalin's position during and after WWII was to derail revolutionary movements. "The communist revolutions actually made (Yu-

goslavia, Albania, later China) were made against Stalin's advice... Few remember that Stalin urged the Yugoslav communists to keep the monarchy or that in 1945 British communists were opposed to the break-up of the Churchill wartime coalition. "For practical purposes, as dissident revolutionaries recognised, it was a permanent goodbye to world revolution. Socialism would be confined to the USSR and the area assigned by diplomatic negotiation as its zone of influence, ie basically that occupied by the Red Army at the end of the war" (The Age of Extremes, Eric Hobsbawm).

Visit socialistparty.org.uk to read more online

***What is 'Stalinism'?**
Stalinism describes the rule of an undemocratic bureaucratic clique. This caste emerged in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian revolution, which had swept aside capitalism and landlordism. The newly established workers' state began to degenerate however. This was not inevitable but a consequence of failed revolutions elsewhere. This confined the revolution to a war ravaged and economically devastated country. An exhausted revolutionary working class eventually lost control of the state apparatus to an emergent bureaucracy headed by Stalin. Workers' democracy was extinguished and many gains of the revolution reversed, but the bureaucracy's privileges depended upon maintaining the nationalised planned economy. (see 'The Russian Revolution and the Rise and Fall of Stalinism' on www.socialistparty.org.uk)



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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Feeling deflated?

Only now, having watched the lunch-time news, do I appreciate my part in the economic crisis. Apparently during the inflationary period of the current economic cycle I was not saving enough. Now, as we enter a period of deflation, I should not be putting off all those big purchases hoping for a further fall in prices.

If only I'd known that before! While I was still on a carers' allowance I would have made every effort to save some money. If I had done that, I could now go out and spend, spend, spend for Britain.

Thank you BBC news! I'll tell all the people I know on zero-hour contracts, minimum wage, paltry pensions and carers' allowances: "you can afford High Street fashion, shop at Waitrose, M&S must have something you'd like. Incomes are up, prices are down - please don't wreck our economic recovery by waiting for a bargain!"

Sue Powell



North to join Scotland?

Some 73% of readers in a Liverpool Echo poll backed Merseyside joining a 'New Scotland'. An online petition called for the north of England to join an independent Scotland with major northern cities being ruled from Edinburgh instead of London.

This shows growing frustration with a political system that produces Tory governments despite the hatred of them in vast sections of society. Many people in the south would also be sympathetic to the SNP's anti-austerity image. Shelter reports there are currently only 43 potentially suitable homes in London that could be afforded by a typical young family buying their first property. One in twenty-five children in London are homeless.

Pauline Smith

Two votes?

If there is a referendum on EU membership in 2017, why not have a referendum on proportional representation at the same time. Millions of voters cast votes for parliamentary and local council candidates last week so we should

We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

be able to cope with casting two votes?

Pete McNally



New convert?

A former Labour MP wrote a letter to the Observer dismissing the Blairites' claims that Labour's defeat was due to 'left policies'. "Our greatest defeat", the letter said, "was in Scotland where the [SNP] anti-austerity message appealed far beyond the nationalist camp. Perhaps [Labour] ought to consider the effect on voters of their policies of taking us into the war in Iraq and courting the bankers."

Who wrote this? 'Dame' Joan Ruddock, my Labour MP in Deptford from 1987 to this year. But will she be leading a fightback? Her record suggests No. Ruddock despite having previously led CND, did not vote against Blair using force in Iraq, unlike 85 Labour MPs who defied their party leader's crazed imperialist policies.

On austerity, was she among the five Labour MPs who, in January, voted against Osborne's Charter for Budget Responsibility which tried to extend austerity for ever? No, she voted for it, according to They Work for You.

I want a fightback against austerity, but trust working class fighters like TUSC rather than Labour politicians like Ruddock.

Roy Howard

Pride at attacking homeless

A police magazine, produced by officers from Greater Manchester Police's (GMP) Didsbury neighbourhood team, boasts it has "patrolled vigilantly" against the homeless. With pride it boasted of "ridding them (beggars) from the streets of Didsbury".

Socialists recognise these individuals as victims of the recession. In reality the plight of the homeless shines a light on serious issues facing people, such as zero hour contracts, increased living costs, the erosion of social housing and welfare, the loss of community and its services. Moving the homeless on in no way solves the problem - it just masks it.

Fiona Stephens



photo Senan

Working class people's real aspirations

The Socialist Party believes Labour lost the election fundamentally because it fails to represent working class people. This was why we are part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, putting forward a socialist alternative. But Labour MP Tristram Hunt claimed it was because they didn't represent 'John Lewis voters'. A queue of party leadership contenders followed, repeating that Labour didn't appeal to the "aspirational". Ambulance worker and Hillingdon Socialist Party member **Steve Harbord** challenges this claim.

I watched a recent piece on BBC news where a couple were asked the question why did Labour lose? He said Labour needs to "go back to its roots and stand up for working class people again". His partner cut across him and, towing the media line, stated "they will never get back in as they don't meet the aspirations of ordinary working people."

Aspirations... it's the latest buzz word from the media bandied about by the Murdoch press, the BBC and the right wing of the Labour Party. The word 'aspiration' has become meaningless when used by the media. Do they seriously suggest that working class people want to be billionaires with a private plane, a yacht in Cannes and a football club to play with?

I would suggest that the vast majority of working class people aspire to a job with decent hours and pay. Enough pay to put a roof over your head, so we don't have to subsidise low paying employers and spiv landlords with taxpayer's money. We aspire to a housing programme to build enough decent housing with affordable rent so that young families can have a decent start in life.

We aspire to a NHS that meets the needs of people where you're not waiting for three hours on an ambulance stretcher waiting for a bed to become available in A&E.

We aspire to a decent welfare state where people can look forward to retirement safe in the knowledge that when they become ill or infirm and unable to be mobile, they will be allowed more than a 15 minute visit by a stressed out low paid care worker (only long enough to make a cup of tea). That's because the less time you spend on scene with a "customer" the more profit the shareholders make.

We aspire to an education service where our children are taught in decent buildings in class rooms of no more than 20 by staff who have the resources and the time to meet the children's needs.

We aspire to an education service that means you don't leave university in debt and find, because of the cost of housing and renting, that the debt is only going to get bigger.

Yes, working class people have aspirations but they are real, unlike the perverse fantasy world peddled by a media owned and subservient to a bunch of billionaire tax dodging spivs.



We aspire to a decent welfare state where people can look forward to retirement

Toon and TUSC slam 'cash cow' boss



Mike Ashley is under fire for his exploitative management of Sports Direct (photo Ninian Reid) and Newcastle United FC (photo William Brawley)

Nick Fray and Tim Wall

Activists and football fans came together to protest against the billionaire owner of Newcastle United and Sports Direct on 25 April.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaigners, including Socialist Party members, joined Newcastle supporters in the demonstration against Mike Ashley. Events took place outside Sports Direct, the notorious zero-hour employer he also runs.

Fans are outraged by Ashley's cynical use of the club as a cash cow and to promote his leisurewear business, while almost allowing the club to slide into relegation. The

protest was the latest in a succession of walkouts and boycotts by fans demanding changes to management.

Ashley's management of the club has been mired in controversy since he bought it in 2007 for some £135 million. He tried - unsuccessfully - to rename St James' Park "Sports Direct Arena". To add insult to injury, payday loan-shark firm Wonga is emblazoned on Newcastle shirts.

Disgraceful

It's disgraceful that Ashley, the richest man in the North East with a fortune of £3.3 billion, says he can't afford to pay his workers a living wage. Last year, Sports Di-

rect - the UK's largest sports retailer - reported a rise of 15% in pre-tax profits to £240 million.

TUSC supporters got a great response from fans and passers-by. Despite pouring rain, fans bought numerous copies of the Socialist, making generous donations including £10 notes.

Two TUSC supporters who went in-store to leaflet workers were escorted off the premises by guards. But our actions got a laugh and a cheer from fans holding a banner that read: "Newcastle United - balance sheet champions".

The best way to hit Ashley is by unionising his workers, fighting for decent wages and guaranteed hours at all Sports Direct workplaces.

Thirty newcomers boost London post-election analysis meeting

Laurel Fogarty

Thirty new faces joined a crowd of around 100 in a packed room in London to hear the Socialist Party's response to the general election. The 21 May event was the first all-London Socialist Party meeting since the Tories won a narrow majority on 7 May.

Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe spoke on the failure of the Labour Party to get the working class out to vote. He also gave a grave warning about cuts and attacks to come over the next five years.



£1,400 was donated and five new members joined on the night

The audience - many standing, some spilling out of the open doors - responded enthusiastically to the discussion of the TUSC election campaign. Peter said that although, as expected, votes were modest, TUSC's campaign meant the pro-business parties did not stand unopposed.

Hugo Pierre, TUSC candidate for Poplar and Limehouse, contributing from the floor, said TUSC's message had spread further than ever before. The campaign inspired a section of people sick of hearing the same pro-cuts, pro-privatisation talk from the main parties leading



Hugo Pierre (left) stood against cuts and privatisation in May's election photo Senan

up to the election.

London youth organiser Hellen Pattison described how anger turned to action among the young, with spontaneous protests building quickly across the UK. Demonstrations attracted hundreds or even thousands of young people at just a few hours' notice.

Sea change

A similar sea change is beginning within the trade union movement itself, reported Suzanne Muna, newly elected member of general union Unite's executive. Serious discussions about affiliation to Labour are looming in upcoming union conferences this summer, not least in Unite - Labour's largest single donor.

£1,400 was donated to the Socialist Party fighting fund, and five new members joined on the night. A good start to our fight against "five more damned years" in London.

Donate to fund the fightback!

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Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	April to June 2015	Deadline 30 June 2015
North West	1,200	1,282		107%
South West	1,400	1,199		86%
Northern	600	440		73%
West Midlands	2,100	1,406		67%
Yorkshire	2,900	1,875		65%
East Midlands	1,600	936		58%
Eastern	1,200	551	46%	
South East	750	289	39%	
Wales	2,300	587	26%	
London	6,100	1,469	24%	
Southern	1,200	201	17%	
England and Wales	3,650	1,111	30%	
TOTAL	25,000	11,345	45%	

PETERBOROUGH OCCUPIERS PROTEST AT HOMELESSNESS

Protesters in Peterborough have occupied Aqua House, formerly Environment Agency offices for the city council. The building has been empty since the council outsourced many of the jobs. Banners have been draped on the building with slogans including "social housing not social cleansing" and "end austerity now". The council has threatened "legal action to evict the squatters" - but at present, protesters are standing firm. **Carl Harper** spoke to one of the occupiers.

Why have you occupied?

We wanted to highlight homelessness issues, and provide somewhere for homeless people to sleep and keep warm. It also gives those left behind by the system a voice.

The site Aqua House is on has plans for 'executive' housing and offices, not social housing. The housing waiting lists in Peterborough are endless.

We also want to highlight closures of Sure Start and community centres. And Peterborough City Hospital is one of the most indebted in the UK, thanks to PFI. We are looking to

stay as long as possible.

How have the public, police and council reacted?

Most members of the public have supported the occupation. The police have also been cooperating well. The council didn't have a clue what to do - no action like this has been taken in the city of Peterborough before!

You have invited the Socialist Party to speak at some of your events. We are part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC),



photo Paul Mattsson

which helps anti-cuts campaigners to stand in elections. Would you work with TUSC in future? Some of the groups involved, such as anti-homelessness activists Op-RealLove, would definitely be interested. Personally, I'm in!



Ireland has voted by referendum on 22 May to allow same-sex marriage - with 61% in favour. Above, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) TDs (MPs) fighting for marriage equality with the 'Radical Yes Campaign' photo Socialist Party



Anti-evictions activist Ada Colau was elected mayor of Barcelona

Local elections in Spain were held on 24 May. Left parties made big gains - including the candidate backed by Podemos and others becoming mayor in Barcelona (above). The share of the vote going to the two big capitalist parties dropped significantly. There were also elections to 13 regional parliaments. Podemos entered all parliaments with force, coming third place in most. Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Spain) member Victor Egio retained his seat as a councillor in Santomera, Murcia. Victor stood for Izquierda Unida (United Left) as part of a local coalition bringing together different left groups. Further analysis will be in the Socialist next week and online at www.socialistworld.net photo Prensa de la Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona



Community activists in Australia are celebrating victory in their campaign, in which the Socialist Party (CWI Australia) played a leading role, to stop the proposed 'East West Link' road tunnel from being built. Direct action stopped construction some months ago, but the government has now finalised shutdown plans. The toll road would have destroyed homes and parks, and cost taxpayers billions

Chile: mass demonstrations

A NEW CHAPTER IN CHILE'S POLITICAL CRISIS

Patricio Guzman
Socialismo Revolucionario
(CWI Chile)

Hundreds of thousands took to the streets of major Chilean cities this month. Demonstrators - mostly youth, but also workers and older people - insisted the government meet students' demands for free education. Protesters also expressed accumulated popular anger at low wages, poor working conditions and corrupt politicians and business leaders.

This explosion from below shows Chile has entered a new period. The government's general crisis of legitimacy is now at its highest point.

College teachers joined the action, demanding decent working conditions and defence of public education. They called for an end to privatisation, which has led to huge education disparity between different areas.

Sadly, events were marred by the unjustifiable killing of two young people during a demonstration in Valparaiso. This was followed by further protests in many cities.

Broken promises

The current government's promises of free education and an end to private profit in the sector have not been met.

President Michelle Bachelet even appointed the notorious Marcos Barraza as a minister in her new cabinet. Barraza is involved in profiteering at Arcis University - which was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The new finance minister, Rodrigo Valdés Pulido, is a veteran of the International Monetary Fund and large US banks.

This cabinet was born in the midst of great distrust. The government's approval ratings are in free fall. May's giant marches are the first response to its brazen pro-big business, anti-working class agenda.



CWI members on the march photo Socialismo Revolucionario



photo Francisisco Osorio

Chile has entered a new period

Bachelet has lost what backing - or benefit of the doubt - she had for partial reforms. Eight months' permanent trickle of corruption scandals, at least one involving the president herself, has demolished her support.

For a long period, student leaders were paralysed by attempts to co-opt them into government. They wasted time participating in inconclusive talks. But now students have showed their strength on the streets, defying the government and its desperate attempts to avoid corruption investigations.

Earlier this month, over 1,000 striking workers from private security firms Brinks and Prosegur marched through the streets of Santiago, fighting for better wages and working conditions. This

Chile: the background

Following the 1973 military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, Chile became the world's laboratory for neoliberal policies: aggressive privatisation and deregulation. Pinochet's crushing of the workers' movement and left opened the door to a series of brutal attacks. As part of this, education was privatised and deregulated, exacerbating inequality.

The struggle against dictatorship was tightly bound up with the struggle of the working class for rights and decent conditions, and therefore against Chilean capitalism.

The massive demonstrations and strike waves which marked the last years of the dictatorship were seen by many workers as a way to take up anew the struggle begun in the 1970s for a socialist society. However, this process was tragically nipped in the bud, as

the leaders of the workers' and main left organisations succeeded in channelling these struggles along the path of "peaceful negotiations".

This established capitalist 'democracy' without doing away with the dictatorship of the big bosses and imperialism. Workers and the poor were told this transition would allow the election of left governments which could dramatically change the situation.

President Michelle Bachelet was elected to a second stint in office for the New Majority (formerly Concertacion) 'centre left' coalition in 2013. Since the end of the dictatorship in 1989, there have been 22 years of Concertacion/New Majority government. These have been years of betrayal, during which the neoliberalism of the Pinochet era was not only maintained, but deepened.

Greece: subordination to Troika or rupture with austerity?

Xekinima (CWI Greece)

We are now in May, the fourth month of the Syriza-led government's term. The result of so-called "negotiations" with the Troika - European Union (EU), European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund - is zero.

The position taken by our so-called "European partners" is to demand every single instalment of debt repayment, without giving one single euro in new loans. This is a conscious policy of strangling the Greek economy with the aim of forcing Syriza to bend to their demands.

As a government spokesperson clarified, the Greek government has handed over €6.5 billion. In these conditions that is a colossal sum. It could help abolish the problem of survival faced by the hardest hit instead.

Syriza is continuing to make debt repayments in spite of the Troika's hostile stance. Stop retreating!

Syriza has abandoned cancelling the debt. It has compromised on privatisation. The anti-gold mining movement in Halkidiki is left suspended in mid-air.

Syriza has "postponed" a number of key measures - collective bargaining rights, a rise in the minimum wage, a Christmas bonus for poor pensioners, abolishing property tax for the poor, and more. Yet the Troika refuses to make any concessions.

Some recent polls give Syriza a mere 10% lead over right-wing New Democracy (ND). Not so long ago, the gap between Syriza and ND was about 25%. Syriza must tell the truth to the Greek working class - and not conduct secret diplomacy in the background, without workers knowing what is happening.

If the government refuses to concede, our Troika "partners" will force Greece to exit the Eurozone.

Grexit

The international mass media is hosting an open discussion about 'Grexit' - Greek exit from the single currency. Major states, global institutions and think tanks are preparing for it. But the Greek ruling class, its political parties and mass media refuse to discuss this increas-

ingly likely eventuality.

They are hiding behind the supposed "desire of the Greek people to remain, at all costs, in the Eurozone" - according to polls they themselves produce. But the picture presented by the media will prove entirely false and could change to its opposite if Syriza changes its position.

In spite of the bosses' best efforts, the question of a referendum on the Eurozone is now open talk in Greek society. We say: if a referendum or new election is called, it must not be on the basis of a rotten deal with the Troika simply to stay in the Eurozone.

It must be held on the basis of a clear proposal to leave the Eurozone as part of a pro-working class, socialist programme. This must be combined with fostering the mass movement. Syriza should help establish popular assemblies, with workplace and community action committees, so workers and young people can actively participate in the struggle.

Socialist programme

To be consistent with pre-election declarations, Syriza has no choice but to break with the euro and move to a socialist programme. This must include refusing to pay the national debt. The government must also bring the banks, and major corporations that control the economy, into public ownership - under the elected control and management of workers and the public.

The only escape from the Troika's attacks is democratic production and economic planning to meet the needs of the majority, not enlarge the profits of the capitalists.

If Syriza does turn to the bold, socialist policies needed to achieve its pre-election promises, the working class and poor will give their wholehearted support. There is only one condition for this: Syriza must decide to fight, and fight until the end!

Faced with a choice of "subordination or rupture", the Greek people will decide on the second without any hesitation. Generations of struggle prove this. It's time for the leadership of Syriza to make up its mind!

Syriza is continuing to make debt repayments in spite of the Troika's hostile stance. Stop retreating!

Government approval ratings are in free fall. May's giant marches are the first response to its brazen pro-big business, anti-working class agenda



Tories threaten young people's welfare, housing and education

FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE!

Helen Pattison
Youth Fight for Jobs

Sitting in my first A-level economics lesson a year before US bank Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy my teacher said to us: "before you finish this course the economy will have crashed and there will be an economic crisis".

Growing up after the crash, the impact of austerity hits you at every turn. At college students have lost EMA (money for students from low income families to help pay for books and travel).

University fees have been tripled to £9,000 a year with further hikes threatened. There are no decent jobs - unemployment, zero-hour contracts and bogus self-employment plague the job market. As if it hasn't been tough enough growing up in austerity Britain, the Tories have more in store.

All of these changes are in the name of austerity - cutting back on government spending on the services, support and welfare many of us will need at some point in our lives.

After years of this approach, the economy is still not in a strong position and working class and young people are suffering increasing poverty. Despite this, it's not been a difficult time for everyone: landlords charging sky-high rents to low paid tenants, for example, receive £9 billion in housing benefit every year.

Housing benefit

Youth Fight for Jobs points out that the housing benefit bill could be slashed by capping rents at an affordable level.

If the Tories succeed, 18 to 21 year olds will no longer be able to claim housing benefit. Already only 5.5% of properties in London are affordable to under-35s. Around 20,000 people will be affected and a spike in youth homelessness is guaranteed.

The housing situation for young people is already dire - the last government oversaw an increase in homelessness and evictions. Half of those who've declared themselves homeless are under-25.

The companies we work for and the poverty wages they pay are part of the problem too. They should be forced to pay a £10 an hour minimum wage - to begin to reflect the real cost of living.

The other change is to Jobseekers' Allowance. Young people will be shifted on to the Youth Allowance. They will have to work for 30 hours a week and job search for ten hours, or lose their benefits. This works out at £1.91 an hour - £3.22 less than the minimum wage for under-21's.

Contrary to Cameron's declaration that this scheme will "effectively abolish long-term youth unemployment" it will make youth unemployment worse. Why employ someone on a proper contract when the job centre will send you young people to work for free?

It's a race to the bottom with the government forcing 50,000 people to work for well below the minimum wage. There are examples of staff being made redun-

dant and then forced to work for free for their old employer under similar previous schemes. Youth Fight for Jobs says, if there's work to do, pay a proper wage and give a proper contract for someone to do it!

Mass protests

Cameron and the Tories will not solve the housing or job crisis. The plans and schemes they have put in place are benefiting big business. But rather than being ground down, it's time to push back. The wave of protests after the election is just the beginning.

We call on young people to join a union, get active and campaign to make it a fighting organisation that struggles hard for the things we need.

The trade unions have a responsibility to reach out and organise the many young workers in un-unionised, casualised workplaces. Trade unions such

as the bakers' union BFAWU are actively organising like this with Youth Fight for Jobs in the Fast Food Rights campaign - calling for £10 an hour now, trade union rights and an end to zero-hour contracts.

Students from school to university will not sit still while education is dismantled around them. In south London, students at schools threatened with academy status have organised big protests and student ballots - showing the fight-back they can organise.

In 2010 hundreds of thousands of young people took part in the student movement against the trebling of tuition fees and the scrapping of EMA. We need to rekindle the spirit of that movement.

And young people will be at the forefront of community campaigns against sanctions, benefit cuts and

the closure of local services.

We have to keep up the pressure on government and local councils. It is young renters who have led many of the inspiring occupations and protests against the housing crisis, particularly in London.

Join Youth Fight for Jobs and help prepare for a mass movement of young people against austerity. A summer of protest fuelled by anger from below is the welcome this Tory government deserves.

■ www.youthfightforjobs.com for reports of the day of action to protest at the Queens Speech on 27 May and for details of protests on the next day of action - budget day on 8 July

Youth Fight for Jobs demands:

- **End austerity** - no to five more years of cuts to jobs, education and public services
- **Stop welfare cuts** - no compulsory workfare for 18-21 year olds, defend housing benefit
- **Fight poverty pay** - raise the minimum wage to £10 now, scrap zero-hour contracts
- **Defend education** - no to cuts and tuition fees
- **Democratic rights** - stop attacks on the right to protest and civil liberties. For proportional representation and votes at 16

STOP THE PRIVATISATION OF STUDENT LOANS!

Mary Finch
Leeds Socialist Students

No one was surprised to hear of the Tories' plans to continue with their brutal austerity programme after winning a majority. And students won't be surprised to learn that they're reviving plans to privatise the student loan book.

This is not, as Chancellor George Osborne claims, about bolstering public finance. The sell-off makes no financial sense, as the government would receive a lump sum rather than a steady income from collecting debt.

Instead this is an ideological attack, orchestrated to help their big business friends, and will push even more working class young people out of education.

£9,000 tuition fees have already started that process, and recent comments from Tory William Hague indicate that the cap could be raised even higher.

A private company collecting student debt would mean raised interest rates and lowered repayment thresholds - the declining numbers of students who are able to pay back their loans because of low wages mean that's the only way they'd make a profit.

The National Union of Students (NUS) said in 2013 they

weren't opposed to the privatisation as long as students were promised there would be no changes to the loan terms and conditions.

Despite being the biggest national organisation of students, with huge capacity to organise the movement against the privatisation, NUS took a back seat and told students to rely on flimsy promises from millionaire politicians.

We need mass pressure to ensure that the resources of NUS are now genuinely put to the service of the student movement.

When the plans were originally announced, students mobilised against it despite the lack of leadership or support from the NUS. Numerous protests, stunts, and days of action were called. For example, Socialist Students organised two successful demonstrations in Leeds against the move.

The task of the student movement now is to mobilise the mass of students against the privatisation, and to consistently build links with education workers and the wider trade union movement.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that student activists look outward, to building a mass movement of students and workers to defeat austerity!

■ www.socialiststudents.org.uk

photo Paul Mattsson



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, 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!

Donate today!

If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:

- pay by card via 020 8988 8777 or socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- cheques payable to "Socialist Party", PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



FIGHT CUTS - DEFEND WORKERS' RIGHTS ORGANISE TO STRIKE BACK

Linda Taaffe
NSSN secretary

Within a week of the general election class battle lines were already being drawn; an anti-austerity demonstration outside Downing Street and in Cardiff, an electric mass march of youth in Bristol, and a threatened national Network Rail strike.

Workers are coming to the conclusion that they have to get together and defend themselves from the vicious cuts coming down the line from an arrogant Tory government cock-a-hoop at its unexpected victory. There is no honeymoon period for this parliamentary gang of bosses' representatives!

Two examples from London: almost 60 teachers in Waltham Forest packed a meeting to plan a strategy to get an upgrade in their pay to the inner London pay scale; in a Brent secondary school teachers turned out at a meeting in a big way to stop management piling on extra work.

It is now more urgent than ever to bring together those already in the fightback with those just taking their first steps.

At the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on

National Shop Stewards Network 2105 conference

Saturday 4 July, 11am-4.30pm
Conway Hall, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL

Confirmed speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, BFAWU general secretary Ronnie Draper and anti-blacklisting campaigner Dave Smith

www.shopstewards.net

Saturday 4 July you will hear from some of the best trade union national and local leaders. But delegates and visitors have a major role in contributing their ideas about how they think the NSSN can best assist our potentially mighty unions into real action-mode.

Strike laws

On the one hand, we will need to fight back collectively to stop cuts decimating jobs and services; on the other, we must stop the Tories from hamstringing our unions with new legislation to jack-up the threshold turnout for strikes to 50% of members, when they attained their right to rule by a mere 24% of the total electorate.

The best means to stop this government is through our collective trade union strength. We want to

add the 12 million non-unionised workers - including debt-laden graduates, young workers on below the minimum wage, parents on zero-hour contracts - to over six million already in unions.

The best way of drawing these new layers into our ranks is by the trade unions becoming a real beacon of resistance. NSSN says united national action is the best way to do that.

The major matter under discussion at this year's NSSN conference is what we, as an organising body, can do to help make that happen. In a union, or not yet in a union, come and be part of NSSN conference 2015!

Read more about a strategy to fight Tory attacks on workers' rights on page 4

We need coordinated union action to beat the Tories
photo Paul Mattsson



ISSN 1366-9621



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