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the Socialist

Labour leader contest
Corbyn's support shows anti-austerity message is popular
> Pages 4&5



Greece and the crisis in Europe
> Page 8&9



Fight the Tory anti-union laws
> Pages 14&15



KIDS GO HUNGRY IN TORY BRITAIN

■ Build the fightback against austerity

It's the start of the summer holidays; a time when families expect to take a deserved break and enjoy themselves. But in Tory Britain, years of crippling austerity cuts, zero-hour contracts, low pay and high rents have driven millions to use food banks in order to put a meal on the table.

In fact for low-income families who have to claim free school meals for the children, the summer holiday is no longer a time to look forward to because they cannot guarantee a daily square meal for their kids.

And because of Chancellor George Osborne's latest budget, low income families will be further hammered by an extra £12 billion-worth of welfare cuts.

13 million families will lose hundreds of pounds a year because of cuts in working tax credits. And because of cuts in Universal Credit, three million households will lose an average of £1,000 a year... and the list of cuts goes on.

But at the same time the super-rich backers of the Tories continue to accu-

mulate wealth.

This year the 1,000 richest families in the UK amassed £547 billion, up £28 billion on last year's total. No problem here buying a fish and chips supper!

The Tories claim their policies will lead to a booming economy and opportunities galore for people to climb the social ladder.

But how can school students study hard for a decent education when their stomachs are empty? How can families afford to send their children to university when the government takes away their grants and makes them pay £9,000 a year tuition fees?

We have to build a mass anti-austerity movement that can roll back the Tories' cuts. That includes the trade union movement coordinating action, including a 24-hour general strike in an opening salvo against the government.

But we also need a political alternative to this crisis-ridden, class-divided capitalist system.

Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party leadership challenge has shown the popularity of anti-austerity ideas. But Labour is still dominated by supporters of welfare cuts. Indeed, only 20% of Labour MPs actually opposed Osborne's budget.

We need a mass, working class, socialist alternative. Join the Socialist Party now to help build it!



Workplace health and safety

Tory cuts and attacks on unions imperils workers

Paul Gerrard
Salford Socialist Party

In December 2012, 16 year old Cameron Minshull of Bury, Greater Manchester, started work at Huntley Mount Engineering. He was over the moon and his mum was so pleased she drove him to work every day. Five weeks later he was dead, killed by the lathe he worked on.

Cameron was untrained and unsupervised. All the lathes had had their guards disabled, and Cameron's sleeve had caught in the machinery, drawing him in and causing fatal head injuries.

It's rare for bosses to be sent to prison for health and safety infringements, even those leading to a death, but this one was. On 14 July 2015 a court sentenced the director to eight months imprisonment and banned him from being a director for ten years. The company was fined £150,000 and the recruitment agency which promised Cameron an 'apprenticeship' was fined £75,000.

Explosion

In the week this sentence was handed down a massive explosion at a wood flour mill in Bosley, Cheshire, reduced the building to rubble, killing four employees.

The plant, owned by Wood Treat-

'We are in a fight for our lives'

Hilda Palmer of Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) told the Socialist: "Good health and safety at work will not survive another five years. If we don't fight for our lives now there will be no health, no safety, and no justice at work, for us, our children and their children. Another five years of Tory misrule risks setting in stone the rowing back of all that was hard won by generations of workers and their unions fighting together for the good of all workers."

FACK campaigns to stop workers and others being killed in preventable work incidents and supports bereaved families. Contact them at: www.fack.org.uk

ment Ltd, had experienced two fires in 2010 and 2012. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had served Improvement Notices on them in 2013 and 2014 for failing to control the exposure of workers to wood dust, and for failing to reduce the risk of fire or explosion from liquid petroleum gas stored at the plant. The brother of one of the victims said this was an accident waiting to happen.

There have been at least nine work-related deaths in recent weeks. A sign of things to come? Especially given that Prime Minister David Cameron has made it his mission to rid the UK of "red tape", for which read "health and safety".

The HSE has had its budget cut by a third over the last two years, following a major re-organisation under Labour which saw, among

others, offices in Manchester and Preston close.

The Tories have restricted preventative inspections to five sectors classified as 'high risk', so employers in other sectors need not fear a HSE phone call.

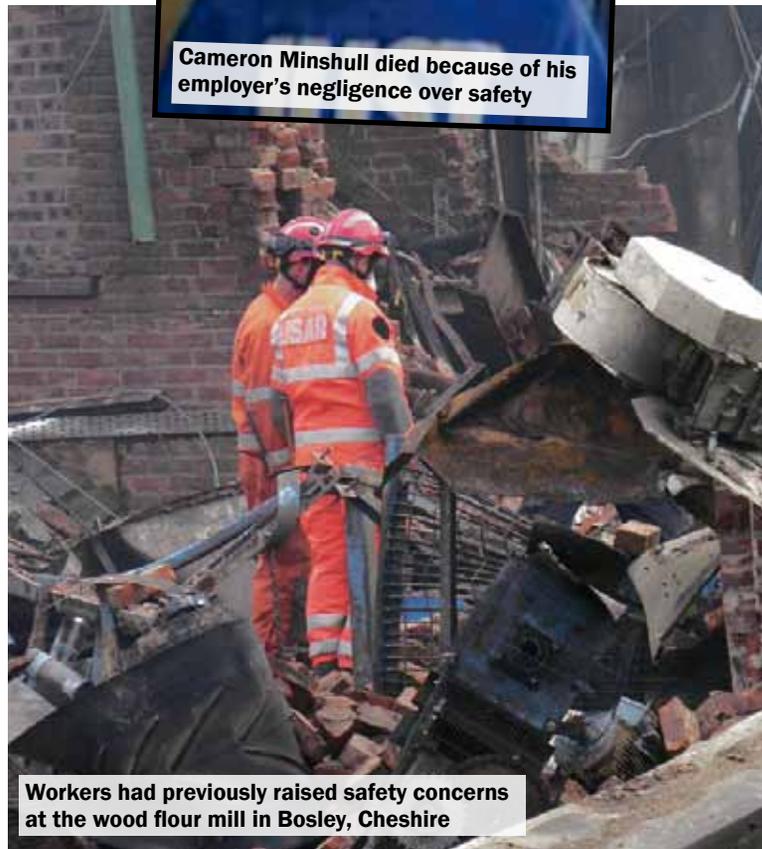
Role of unions

The HSE has also had a 'growth agenda' imposed on them ie nothing the HSE does should impede the expansion of the economy and jobs growth. Bosley, on the other hand, now has four deaths to mourn and 50 mill workers without jobs to go to.

The Health and Safety at Work Act was only ever a lever in the battle with the employers. Workers' health at work depends on the strength of the trade unions and active safety reps and stewards.



Cameron Minshull died because of his employer's negligence over safety



Workers had previously raised safety concerns at the wood flour mill in Bosley, Cheshire

However, union recognition and reps' facility time are under attack across virtually all workplaces, despite facing corner cutting and super-exploitation on a massive scale through 24/7 operation, zero-hour

contracts, etc. The defence of health and safety at work must be part of the campaign to build fighting trade unions which will use their power to bring employers and the Tories to heel.

Wales: Stop the Bedroom Tax evictions!

Socialist Party Wales reporters

A vulnerable family became the first people evicted in Wales as a result of the bedroom tax. Mandy Williams, who suffers with depression, and her 17-year-old daughter, Sky were thrown out of their council home by bailiffs on 23 July after accumulating rent arrears.

Neighbours, anti-cuts activists and Socialist Party members turned out to defend the property. Police arrested party member Steffan Batement to get into the property. He was later released without charge.

Until March, Mandy worked as a cleaner at the Welsh Assembly in Cathays Park for contractor Kier. Her mother died just before Christ-

mas 2014, which impacted on her mental health and led to her having to take time off work. Kier 'let her go'.

Ross Saunders, Secretary of Cardiff Against The Cuts and Socialist Party member, said: "This is a disgrace. While Assembly Members get a massive pay rise their own cleaners get treated like dirt by both their employer and Cardiff's Labour-run council, which has always claimed to be against the bedroom tax. Cardiff Council needs to withdraw this eviction notice, and the Assembly must urgently take the 'Scottish road' and abolish the Bedroom Tax for all tenants."

But rather than taking the Scottish road the council instead decided to do the Tories' dirty work and sent bailiffs and police to make a family



Anti-bedroom tax campaigners outside Mandy Williams' home in Cardiff. The movement must reorganise to scrap the hated tax

homeless. Labour has shown, once again, not to be a party that defends working class people.

With a re-elected Tory government, the anti-bedroom tax move-

ment needs to reorganise and begin a mass campaign to scrap the bedroom tax in Wales. We can't wait another five years while vulnerable people are put in these situations.

Millionaire Tory welfare minister Iain Duncan Smith introduced the hated bedroom tax, which became law in April 2013. Social housing tenants have had their housing benefit cut for having a 'spare bedroom' - an average of £16 a week from the income of 500,000 of Britain's poorest households.

The Tories say this is to make tenants downsize to free up more social housing. However, council house sell-offs mean that insufficient smaller properties are available, causing tenants to build up rent arrears and face legal action by councils.

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

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Austerity measures cut social care provision



Simon Carter

Millionaire health minister Jeremy Hunt has reneged on the Tories' election promise to cap social care costs for over 65s. The government was committed to limit care bills to £72,000 (still an enormous sum) next year, but this has now been shelved until 2020.



Health minister Hunt reneged on capping social care costs

Hunt didn't even have the guts to announce it in the Commons, instead issuing a statement to the House of Lords on a day when MPs weren't in session.

The government will 'save' £3 billion by postponing this recommendation of the earlier Dilnot commission report.

The deferral will cost huge sums of public cash (up to £100 million) having paid Saatchi and Saatchi to publicise the new cap, as well as spending money on new IT systems, staff training, etc.

According to media reports, plans for a new appeals system to challenge care-needs assessments and a new right for people, whatever their means, to ask their local council to arrange and pay for a care home place at lower rates, have also been shelved.

A limit on fees charged to elderly people for residential care is a major issue for millions of families. Currently, anyone with assets over £23,250 has to pay the full cost of their care. Over three million people over 65 years have care needs but only 850,000 qualify for state assistance.

It's estimated that 10% of people receiving such care will pay in ex-

cess of £100,000. Many are forced to sell their homes to pay these bills.

Councils are now expected to pay care fees up front as a 'loan', repayable from a person's estate after their death. But they only have to offer these loans if a person's non-property assets are less than £23,250.

Most home care has been outsourced from councils to private profit making companies.

Under the Tories' shelved plan, those in residential care will still be responsible for food and lodging even when the £72,000 cap has been reached.

Meltdown

As the previous issue of the Socialist reported, the social care system is in meltdown due to a toxic mix of huge government funding cuts and privatisation. Since 2009, some 500,000 people have lost access to state help with washing, dressing and meals. And many elderly people remain stuck in hospital due to a lack of community care.

We need to end privatisation and ensure a fully-funded, publicly owned and run social care system. A socialist economy would guarantee such a system, free at the point of use.

Private, for-profit, companies represented by the UK Home Care Association have told Chancellor George Osborne that they can't afford to pay their carers next April's "national living wage" of £7.20 an hour, unless they get an extra £753 million of funding.

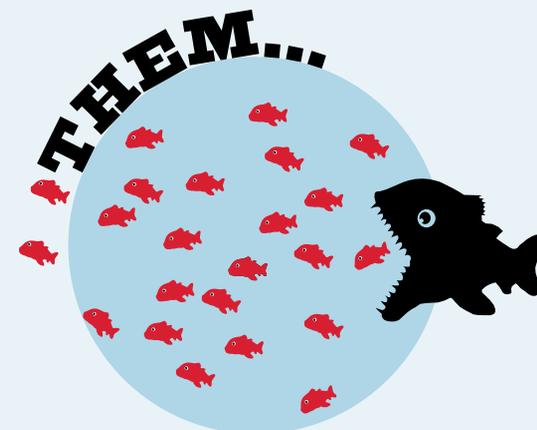
Around 90% of home care is now provided by private companies paid

by cash strapped local authorities and the NHS. These companies are notorious for paying low wages. Many home care workers have complained about not being paid travel time between visits, meaning they are effectively paid below the current paltry minimum wage of £6.50 an hour.

The government's austerity cuts

must be reversed, local authorities and the NHS should be properly funded, and carers should be paid a £10 an hour minimum wage as a step to a living wage.

That requires a mass movement to stop the cuts and a workers' government to renationalise the privatised public services and set a proper living wage.



20%

Disgracefully, only 48 of Labour's 232 MPs voted against Tory welfare cuts in Osborne's latest austerity budget.

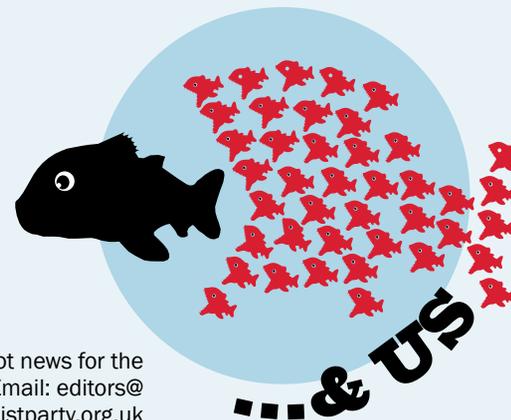
Centrica, which owns British Gas, is also expected to announce axing 2,000 jobs. Centrica is headed by Iain Conn who receives a basic annual salary of £925,000.

Conn artist

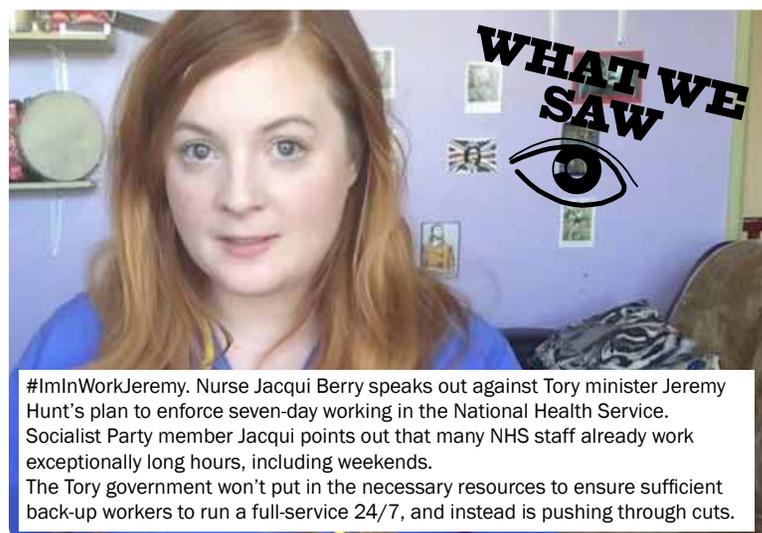
Despite much publicised fall in wholesale energy prices British Gas has seen its profits soar by 50% compared to a year ago. This announcement comes only weeks after the Big Six energy companies were accused of over-charging customers by £1.2 billion a year. Meanwhile, millions of low income households continue to experience 'fuel poverty' ie spending 10% or more of income on energy.

Oh Lordy

When not doing lines of cocaine and hanging around with prostitutes, several ermine clad peers in the House of Lords are content to busy themselves with "cash for access" 'duties' or simply fiddling their expenses. The Tories and Labour won't however call for abolition of the Lords because it's used for political patronage and can act to block legislation of a future left-wing government.



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



#ImInWorkJeremy. Nurse Jacqui Berry speaks out against Tory minister Jeremy Hunt's plan to enforce seven-day working in the National Health Service. Socialist Party member Jacqui points out that many NHS staff already work exceptionally long hours, including weekends. The Tory government won't put in the necessary resources to ensure sufficient back-up workers to run a full-service 24/7, and instead is pushing through cuts.

The Socialist summer schedule

In order to allow our editorial team a summer break, issues 866 and 867 will be fortnightly and will cover the periods 6-19 August and 20 August-2 September respectively. The Socialist will recommence its weekly schedule with issue 868.

Our website - www.socialistparty.org.uk - will, however, be regularly updated with news, reports and comment.



Labour leadership contest: CORBYN'S SUPPORT SHOWS ANTI-AUSTERITY MESSAGE IS POPULAR



What we think

Panic is gripping the right wing clique that dominates the Labour Party at the possibility of Jeremy Corbyn becoming the next Labour leader. Even some in the Tory Party, despite enjoying watching civil war unfold within the Labour Party, are now frightened about what it will mean if Corbyn actually wins. One cabinet member is reported as worrying that Corbyn's leadership "would drag the overall debate to the left and the tiny risk of his victory would be a catastrophe for Britain" (Guardian 27 July 2015).

For decades barely a whisper of the views of the majority of working class people – far to the left of any of the establishment parties – has been heard in Westminster. For example, opinion polls consistently show big majorities for renationalisation of privatised companies. One YouGov poll in 2013 showed 68%, 67% and 66% support respectively for renationalisation of the energy companies, the Royal Mail and the railway companies. Yet Labour – just like the Tories and the Lib-Dems – has refused to promise any renationalisation. On the contrary in office it massively expanded the role of the private sector in the NHS and other parts of the public sector.

Even former World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz, who is no socialist, commented that he was not surprised at Jeremy Corbyn's popularity given the "demand for a strong anti-austerity movement around increased concern about inequality". He went on: "The bottom 90% of the economy has seen stagnation for a third of a century...It's just very hard to say these centre-left parties – with emphasis on 'centre' – have been able to deliver for most people. Their economic models have not delivered and their message is not working."

'Dangerous' ideas

Only a handful of Labour MPs – including Jeremy Corbyn – have put forward such 'dangerous' ideas as opposition to austerity, or call for the abolition of student tuition fees or for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws. Up until now they have been drowned out by the baying of the Blairites. This was summed up by the leadership election before Jeremy Corbyn's late entrance, with all three candidates competing to show who was the most 'business friendly'.

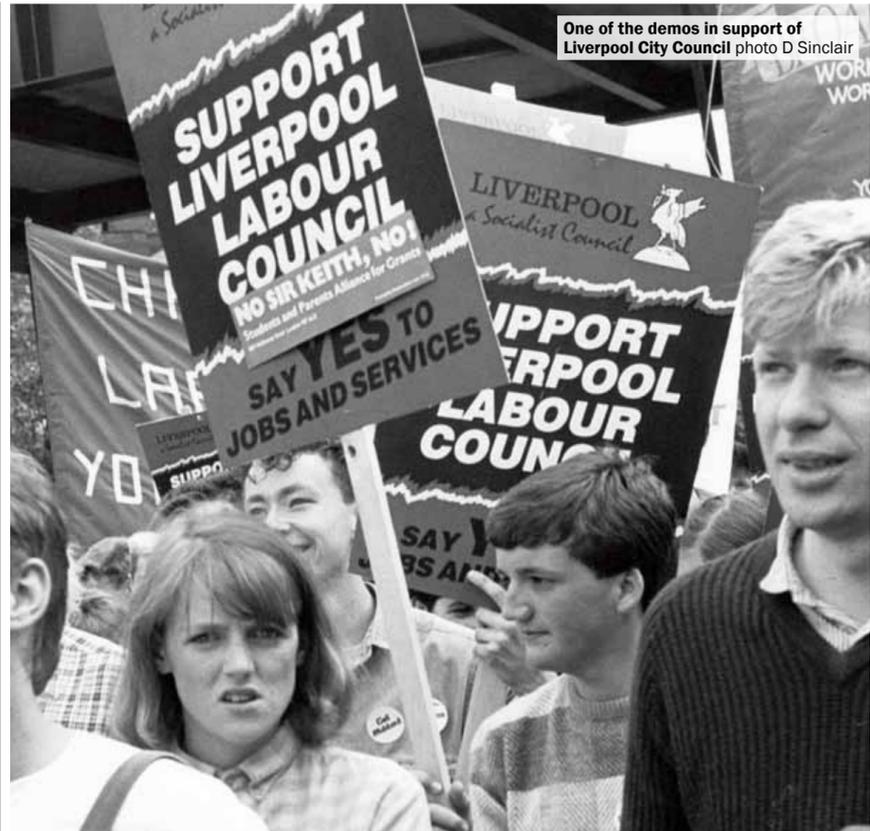
Now – having scraped onto the ballot paper after being 'lent' nominations by right-wing MPs – Jeremy Corbyn has got a platform for an anti-austerity programme. The result has been a tidal wave of enthusiasm for his candidacy. The right wing MPs who nominated him to 'broaden the contest' are bitterly regretting their actions. One of them, Margaret Beckett, accepted the accusation that she had been a 'moron'.

Young people and trade unionists, excited about anti-austerity ideas are the worst nightmare of the Blairites. They have dedicated decades to stamping socialist ideas out of the Labour Party, beginning with the witch-hunt against the Militant Tendency (now the Socialist Party).

Now the anti-austerity voice of the majority is in danger of bursting their Westminster bubble. To try and stop this, the Labour right is scurrying around to try and ensure that Jeremy Corbyn is defeated. In this they have the full and vocal support of the capitalist media and behind it the capitalist class. They are using every tool at their disposal to try and undermine Jeremy Corbyn. However, so far all their efforts are back-firing.

One of the lines of attack is to suggest that the Labour

It is possible Corbyn could win. This would be a real step forward. It would mean, in effect, the formation of a new party



One of the demos in support of Liverpool City Council photo D Sinclair

Party is supposedly being infiltrated by "Militant Tendency types". According to the Daily Mail the chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party John Cryer MP has claimed that "Militant supporters are using the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to pay the £3 voting fee."

This is wholly inaccurate. The Socialist Party wishes Jeremy Corbyn well in the Labour leadership election. However, we are part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) along with the transport workers' union, the RMT, and many other socialists and trade unionists. TUSC stood over 700 candidates in the elections which took place on 7 May, 2015 aiming to begin to create the basis for a new - 100% anti-austerity – party

of the working class. We are not encouraging TUSC supporters to join the Labour Party, but rather to continue to build TUSC.

The existence of TUSC has, however, assisted Jeremy Corbyn's leadership bid. It was made clear at the UNITE NEC, a Labour-affiliated union, for example, that one of the reasons for their decision to back Jeremy Corbyn was that – if they didn't – TUSC supporters campaigning for a new party may succeed as a result of the increasing discontent of Unite members with Labour's anti-worker policies.

The people being decried as 'infiltrators' are overwhelmingly young people new to politics and also older



Jeremy Corbyn speaks on an education protest photo Paul Mattsson



workers previously disillusioned by Labour's transformation into a capitalist party. Labour lost the general election not for being too left wing, as all the other Labour leadership candidates claim, but for not being left wing enough. Millions of 'traditional Labour' voters did not vote, or voted for other parties, because they could not stomach Labour's 'austerity-lite' programme.



The Socialist Party wishes Jeremy Corbyn well. However, we are not encouraging TUSC supporters to join the Labour Party, but rather to continue to build TUSC.

Now, faced with further vicious attacks on working class people by this Tory government, Jeremy Corbyn's candidature has kindled a hope that Labour could become a voice in defence of all those under the cosh. His campaign programme is actually quite limited, merely calling for 'meaningful regulation of the banking sector' rather than for nationalisation of the banks under democratic control, for example. Nonetheless he has enthused many with his clear call for abolition of student fees and to reinstate the student grant, his promise to repeal anti-trade union laws and other pledges.

In a concerted attempt to frighten Corbyn supporters out of voting for him, the Labour right is claiming that left wing ideas will never win an election. The Militant is being held up as a bogeyman whose ideas would have consigned the Labour Party to un-electability. Yet the history of the Militant Tendency demonstrates exactly the opposite.

Liverpool

The Militant Tendency played a central role in the 'city that dared to fight'; the 1983-87 heroic struggle of Liverpool City Council against Thatcher's government. The council refused to implement cuts, and demanded the return of the money stolen from the council by the Tories. It was able to mobilise working class people Liverpool in support of its stance, with massive demonstrations and city wide strike action.

As a result of standing up to the Tories in 1984 it won £60 million from the Tories. Liverpool City Council achievements included the building of 5,000 council houses, six new leisure centres, four new colleges and six new nurseries. Today Labour councils up and down the country are dutifully implementing Tory cuts; imagine how popular a council that took the 'Liverpool Road' would be? If a swathe of councils took the same stand the resulting movement would have the potential to end Tory austerity. And the 'Liverpool Road' was popular back then as well.

The legacy of the Liverpool struggle was, for many years, a consistently higher Labour vote in Liverpool than other cities. Kinnock, then leader of the Labour Party, launched a vicious witch-hunt against Militant and Liverpool City Council. In reality, this was part of the drive to



See www.tusc.org.uk

transform Labour into one more party of big-business, virtually indistinguishable from the Tories and Liberals. It was justified, however, by the need to be 'electable'. Yet in the 1987 general election, Labour nationally inched ahead, condemning workers to another five years of the Tories. Meanwhile in Liverpool Labour's vote increased by 9.5% compared to 1983, the biggest swing to Labour in the history of the city.

These events were followed by the battle against the poll tax, where Militant supporters led an extremely popular eighteen million strong mass non-payment movement, which not only led to the abolition of the tax but also to the resignation of Thatcher. If the Labour leadership has supported the non-payment movement they could have won the 1992 general election. Instead, disastrously, Labour councils were sending non-payers to prison.

As Militant supporters were expelled from the Labour Party we warned that this was the thin end of the wedge, and that the end result would be the expulsion of socialist ideas and the voice of the organised working-class from the party. This is what has taken place over the succeeding decades. The right has strengthened its political grip on the party, while the democratic structures of the Labour Party – which allowed the organised working class in the trade unions to influence the party – have been destroyed.

£3 to vote

It is highly ironic that an unintended consequence of the latest undemocratic rule changes, implemented under Miliband, is the current situation. The Labour leadership has become a virtual lottery in which any individual – Labour supporter or not – can potentially vote. The result is people signing up for £3 to vote for Jeremy Corbyn.

We do not support this electoral system, which is more akin to a US-style 'primary' than to a democratic election of a party leader. Usually this system means that the membership of a party is dissolved into broader layers of the population, who are more influenced by the pro-capitalist propaganda from the mainstream media. On this occasion however, despite the efforts of the capitalist press, given the groundswell of support for Corbyn, and the extreme weakness of the other candidates, it is possible he could win.

If this happens it would be a real step forward. It would mean, in effect, the formation of a new party. Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters would face open revolt from the right-wing that dominates the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour machine, which would be totally unwilling to accept his leadership. Of the two hundred and thirty two members of the Parliamentary Labour Party only nine are members of the Socialist Campaign Group to which Jeremy Corbyn be-

longs. Already Labour MPs are threatening to trigger another contest immediately in order to get Jeremy Corbyn 'out by Christmas'. Far from respecting democracy the Blairites, as Bertolt Brecht put it, want to dissolve the electorate and get a new one!

In this situation Jeremy Corbyn would need to stand firm and mobilise the maximum possible support from across the workers' movement. We would encourage him to organise a conference of all those who have voted for him, plus the many trade unions – including non-affiliated unions like the RMT, PCS and FBU – which support a fighting anti-austerity programme. The Socialist Party would participate in such a conference and would encourage other TUSC supporters to do the same. The ensuing battle could result in the pro-capitalist elements being ejected from or leaving the Labour Party.



We would encourage Jeremy to organise a conference of all those who have voted for him, plus the many trade unions which supported a fighting, anti-austerity programme

However, given the class character of the Labour Party today – it is more likely that such a struggle would result in the right clinging onto the machine and forcing out the democratically elected leader and his supporters. Whatever the outcome the basis would be created for a significant, clearly anti-austerity, and potentially very popular new party.

If, on the other hand, one of the three Blairite horrors wins the election we would urge Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters to draw all the necessary conclusions from their experience. While anti-austerity ideas are viewed with disdain by the Labour Party machine, they are very popular among workers and young people.

A political voice for those ideas is urgently needed. The Socialist Party, along with others in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, has been campaigning to prepare the ground for the creation of such a party. If Jeremy was defeated in the Labour leadership election but was then to call for his voters to join him in building a new party – with a clear anti-cuts, socialist programme – it could very quickly gain momentum.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the single most important feature of it is that anti-austerity young people and workers are beginning to find a political voice. This is an important step forward which will be vital in the coming struggles against the Tory government.



Tony Blair has intervened to warn against voting for Corbyn



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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[News in brief]



National Gallery

Guest services staff at London's National Gallery are escalating their strike campaign against privatisation. Members of public service union PCS will begin indefinite action on 17 August. They have taken 52 days of strike so far, with four more planned before the all-out offensive.

Dave's case, which has become about the democratic right to protest, is slated for 25 to 26 January.

Auction action

Two victimised union reps at international art seller Sotheby's have won reinstatement - two more to go. Cleaners and porters at the London auction house are fighting for sick pay and against management bullying. They are organised by the trade union United Voices of the World.

Reps removed

Tory-led Bromley council in south London wants to wipe out trade union representatives. Alan Brown, a steward for general union Unite, was suspended on 17 July - with no clear charges. Meanwhile, the branch secretaries of Unite and public service union Unison have lost all time to do trade union work. Unite secretary Kathy Smith is not even invited to liaison meetings with management anymore.

Housing strike

Maintenance workers for housing company Aspire in Newcastle-under-Lyme plan further strikes against cuts to wages, sick pay, holiday and benefits. Members of construction union Ucatt and general union GMB walked out on 27 July, and will strike again on 31 July.

What a trial!

The courts have postponed anti-blacklisting activist Dave Smith's trial due to establishment incompetence. He stands accused of 'unlawful obstruction' during a demonstration. Prosecutors had not completed any of the tasks expected of them. And ten witnesses were due to speak - in only half a day!

Earning a crust

Bakery workers at Gunstones in North East Derbyshire plan to strike again from 6 August over pay and conditions. The 48-hour walkout organised by bakers' union BFAWU follows members' 93% rejection of bosses' latest offer.



photo Neil Cafferky

Coal closure costs 700 jobs



photo Chris Sampson/Creative Commons

Malik J Rofidi Selby Socialist Party

There is a storm brewing in Castleford.

The local Yorkshire landscape is dominated by industrial structures. Three power stations fall within a few miles of each other. They are concentrated around one of the three remaining deep coal mines in Britain: Kellingley Colliery.

The mine is due to shut by the end of the year, costing 700 jobs. Staff received more than 200 redundancy letters in June. The previous coalition government refused to fund it, bucking the trend of its European coal-producing competitors.

Of course, society needs to phase out coal power. However, with 31% of our current energy coming from the fossil fuel, closing Kellingley now will not mean we suddenly

cease using coal. It will mean increased imports, particularly from the US and Russia.

There is nothing green about transporting fuel thousands of miles when you could source it from below the very ground your power stations stand upon.

'Hope'

There is also the matter of job losses. The Conservative MP for Selby, Nigel Adams, told the local paper that he "hoped" workers would find alternative employment quickly. During a march for the colliery at the start of the year, long-time Labour MP Dennis Skinner spoke passionately as ever, and recently asked the government to step in. But he cannot hide the relative indifference of his party

to Kellingley's plight.

Bringing the colliery into public ownership would be a pre-requisite to a controlled and realistic withdrawal from coal usage. Furthermore, instead of providing our 'hopes' to those who need alternative employment, we could then provide them jobs. Plus the support they need: training opportunities, so workers can build and adapt skills to new energy sources or engineering.

Nearby Ferrybridge power station is also due to close by March 2016, with a further 172 jobs at risk.

The Socialist Party calls for public ownership of all mines and power plants. This must be part of a democratic, socialist plan of green energy production to stop climate change and guarantee jobs for all.



photo Paul J Everett/Creative Commons

STRIKING HOMELESSNESS WORKERS BEAT CALLOUS GLASGOW COUNCIL

Matt Dobson Socialist Party Scotland

After 17 weeks of all-out strike, homeless caseworkers in Glasgow have won their central demand against the city's council. Strikers voted on 21 July to accept a pay rise to 'grade 6', in line with other social workers.

The dispute exposed the rotten role of a strike-breaking Labour council. It also shows the importance of militant, democratic workplace organising.

The Glasgow branch of public service union Unison said: "The offer was recommended to a mass meeting by the union branch and the striking shop stewards, and secures the central demand of the dispute - parity on grade 6 with other frontline social care staff.

"The offer creates 68 new grade 6 posts, with the council describing that number as a floor. The three temporary caseworkers whose substantive posts are grade 4 will be given permanent grade 5 posts elsewhere in the homeless service."

"The council has insisted an assessment process takes place for these posts, but the union will have a consultative role in this process. Caseworkers will also receive a transition cash payment of £350 while this assessment takes place.

"The strike has been successful in winning a £1,000 increase following the assessment process, rising to £5,000 by 2018. In addition, the council has been forced to concede an acceptable number of grade 6 posts."

Determination

At the strike's onset in March, social work management and Labour councillors publicly stated caseworkers did not deserve a regrade. Strikers' determination - staying out for 17 weeks, with high levels of energy and organisation - secured this reversal.

The success also shows the crucial role of political action. Unison Scotland threatened to withdraw funding for Glasgow Labour. This led, ten weeks into the strike, to the council conceding the principle that homelessness caseworkers should be on pay grade 6.

The council then tried to minimise the numbers it would have to regrade in an effort to divide the workforce. But strikers stood firm.

Management was determined not to concede a regrade for the majority. And, most of all, to weaken the socialist-led Unison branch. The workers had been in dispute over



photo Socialist Party Scotland

fair pay since 2013, when they staged a wildcat strike over victimisation of a colleague for union activities.

Bosses refused to negotiate until over a month into the latest stoppage. They also used illegal strike-breaking tactics, engaging charities to cover strikers' caseloads.

The council consciously prepared for the stoppage, including stockpiling accommodation, hoping to starve strikers back to work. They turned homeless people away - breaking statutory obligations - when the service began to collapse. Managers and the Labour council were prepared to let vulnerable homeless people suffer for months to break the union.

This action came after disputes involving residential care workers and pupil support assistants in the last couple of years. In all these struggles, Glasgow Unison put a brake on the council's cost-cutting agenda.

As part of its commitment to Tory austerity, the Labour council wants to cut posts in the homelessness service over the next year. Again it will

seek to inflict defeats on the union, its most consistent and powerful opposition over cuts.

However, the strikers' tenacity shows that council workers are willing to fight. The level of public support in the city and beyond shows the wider community is too. Glasgow Unison will be prepared to confront the offensive.

Involvement

The strike united all workplaces, and cut across historical divisions played on by a bullying management. Crucially, the branch leadership, workplace reps and the strike committee encouraged maximum involvement from all members. They organised picketing, demonstrations, and democratic discussion on the way forward. This has developed new activists that will strengthen the union for the battles to come.

All council workforces face a tsunami of cuts, huge increases in workload and attacks on terms and conditions. Unison nationally,



The Labour council used illegal strike-breaking tactics

alongside other unions with right-wing leaders, failed to mobilise the national action needed to defeat this onslaught. This strike has inspired support from across the country as an example of what can be won when workers are given a chance to fight.

Fantastic support came in from workers across the country. Tens of thousands poured into the strike fund as strikers were invited on speaking tours.

They also made important links with strikers elsewhere, particularly the victorious Dundee hospital porters. The porters were on all-out strike for fair pay for 13 weeks. The Glasgow homelessness workers held joint rallies and demonstrations with them.

Both victories underline that strike action works. What if the national leadership of the various unions were prepared to call coordinated strikes? Then the fightback against Tory austerity, and the Labour and SNP politicians implementing it, could really begin.

TUBE STRIKE LATEST

> Continued from page 16

Already, assaults on staff are up. So are crime on the tube and sexual assaults on female passengers. Job cuts potentially affect the safe running of the tube too, with all-night engineering hours being cut.

Even if we did sell our agreements for a pot of gold we would be condemning our staff to working practices that would strain every sinew of their body and suck out their lifeblood.

We want a safe, affordable service that is fully staffed, publicly owned, with all outsourced work being brought in-house. We also believe the wages and conditions of our members should be

protected. These hard-won conditions should be the norm for workers in all industries and across the public sector.

These attacks are politically inspired by the pro-austerity measures of the government, which wants to cut £4.2 billion from the transport budget. They also want to shackle our unions by making it harder to take strike action. We will resist this on London Underground - we have already built joint action with every union.

We will fight for as long as it takes and take whatever action is necessary to defend our members' terms, conditions and pay.

United we are strong, united we can win.



photo Paula Mitchell

TURMOIL IN GREECE WILL BE REPEATED ACROSS EUROPE

The recent events in Greece provided the backdrop to the discussion on Europe at the 2015 Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) School (see box). Peter Taaffe, General Secretary of the Socialist Party and member of the CWI's International Secretariat introduced the discussion. This is an edited version of his speech.

'Sharp turns, sudden and abrupt changes in the situation' is a phrase we used in the past, but it characterises the period which Greece has entered today, and the rest of Europe will experience tomorrow.

The historic and magnificent landslide in the referendum was the result of the marvellous response of the heroic Greek masses - particularly the working class and the youth summing up its reserves of revolutionary energy, even after more than 30 general strikes!

The result clearly shocked not just the capitalist class in Greece and throughout Europe but also Prime Minister Tsipras and the Syriza government.

The huge 'No' vote gave him no excuse to apply the brake, yet he did not know what to do with this colossal victory. He was afraid of power, the power that was now vested in him and his party by the masses.

A week later came the gigantic sell-out by Tsipras and Syriza leadership. Syriza began to split. Tsipras has embraced the capitalist pro-austerity parties, which could lead to a 'national government'.

This was like a football team winning the World Cup one week, only to be relegated to the 54th division of its national league the next!

Laboratory for capitalism

But the fate of the working class is at stake, not just in Greece but throughout Europe and worldwide. Greece has become a laboratory in which capitalism, reformism and revolution are being tested.

The Greek working-class has gone through agonies; the Greek unemployment rate would mean 8 million unemployed in Britain! Yet this will now be added to by this rotten capitulation. The economy will plunge a further 4.2% on top of the 25% drop in GDP already.

This could lead to a rise in support for the openly Nazi Golden Dawn but there will be more opportunities for the workers' movement to go forward before a threat of fascism is posed.

In the negotiations with the Troika, Tsipras was 'waterboarded'. Yet it is not true that Tsipras had no alternative or that Greece is too small to



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

resist. This capitulation will now be used by the bourgeois and their social democratic echoes as well as some faint hearts on the left, but there are big possibilities lodged in the Greek situation.

The fighting record of the Greek working-class is immense. This is borne out by the vicious reaction of the European and world bourgeois to their defiance in the referendum. In contrast, the reaction of the international working-class was one of solidarity.

A big ideological shift against the 'market' is threatened, which is why the IMF declared the programme for Greece "unsustainable". The capitalists fear 'contagion' in southern Europe and Ireland but also in Britain and northern Europe if the Greek workers won.

What is this if not an expression of Trotsky's permanent revolution? Anti-austerity and socialist forces would have been boosted. Obama urged a settlement, as did the French and Italians, signifying a deep split with seri-

ous consequences for the future of EU and the likely breakup of the euro.

Programme

The programme of our Greek comrades and our organisation, Xekinima, is the best guarantee of a victory for our class.

At each stage, Xekinima has put forward a clear analysis and they have intervened magnificently with the demands for the nationalisation of the banks and workers' control and management, the taking over of the decisive commanding heights of the economy, and the spreading of the movement internationally.

Every activist should read Lenin's 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It' to understand the programme for socialists in the face of a crisis.

Greece has had a new government on average every 14 months since 2010. A new general election is likely in the near future.

The political reflection of the crisis has been expressed in a frenzied form



"Inherent in reformism is betrayal." The ex-social democratic parties have been utterly incapable of offering progressive reforms in this crisis

in southern Europe and particularly in Greece itself. This has resulted in political fracturing; in many countries the old two-party domination has gone with the rise of nationalist, far right and left parties.

"Inherent in reformism is betrayal." The ex-social democratic parties have been utterly incapable of offering progressive reforms in this organic crisis of capitalism.

They have openly gone over to the side of the capitalists and propose counter-reforms. Unfortunately, Syriza has gone through 'Pasokification' ending in its betrayal, the same outcome as the Greek social democratic party Pasok.

New formations

The ground is being prepared everywhere for new formations, including in Britain where the general election and the Labour leadership election have produced interesting developments (see pages 4 and 5).

The working-class, checked on the political plane, is turning to the industrial plane. There is a bitter, determined mood developing in reply to the offensive of the employers and Tory government.

The overall situation in Europe is extremely unstable, which can worsen because a new crisis - maybe deeper even than 2008 - is on the horizon.

The slowdown of the Chinese economy, which has sustained world capitalism, has had an immediate impact on commodity producers in the neo-colonial world and aggravates their crisis. On top of this are the recent gyrations in the peculiar Chinese stock exchange.



Syriza's capitulation was like a football team winning the World Cup one week, only to be relegated to the 54th division of its national league the next

The capitalists have huge 'savings' but nowhere to invest. If the US increases interest rates in the autumn, it could drag the world economy into another crisis.

The eurozone is predicted to experience sluggish growth this year and next. European Central Bank president Mario Draghi commented: "At such a pace, the European continent may never shake off persistently high unemployment and will be mired in debt into the distant future." This is what lies behind the calls for 'debt relief'.



Greek workers delivered a resounding 'no' vote in the recent referendum

In reality, there is an element of Greece everywhere in Europe. Thomas Piketty highlighted the dilemma facing Greece: it is supposed to pay 4% of its GDP for 30 years to the 'lenders'. It would be much easier to just cancel the debt.

The willingness to fight has been shown in the German train drivers strikes (the shameful German Social Democrats support anti-strike legislation against them), the general strike movement at the end of 2014 against the spectre of Thatcherism in the new Belgian government and struggles in France to preserve what is left of the 35-hour week.

Conversely, in most countries in Europe there has also been a growth in the far right, a side result of the crisis of capitalism and the failure of the left. Part of the rise in their support is due to their exploitation of the migration crisis.

Migrant crisis

Collapsing societies in the Middle East and Africa mean between half a million and a million people in Libya alone are threatening to cross the Mediterranean while thousands have already died in the attempt.

This is a big challenge to the workers' movement, and socialists have to propose a programme against the right's vicious anti-immigrant campaign, including fighting for the right to asylum.

Conflicts over the 'boat people' show the unbridgeable national divisions in the EU, as does the Greece crisis. They demonstrate that monetary union is clearly impossible without political union, but that is also impossible on a capitalist basis.

The breakup of the eurozone is



CWI School

300 socialists from 24 countries met in Leuven, Belgium, from 19-24 July for the CWI's annual European Summer School. As well as the discussion highlighted here, there was a more in depth report from Greece, a discussion on 'world in turmoil', reports on the building of the CWI in different areas and many commission discussions on topics from marxist economics to the anti-water charges movement in Ireland. Socialist Party branches should plan reports from those members who attended from England and Wales.



inevitable. But as Karl Marx once wrote: "Tradition lies on the brain of the living like an alp." There is a big stumbling block in Greece: the so-called 'advantages' of membership of the eurozone, identified with the emergence from backwardness into a modern society.

The same strong sentiments exist in southern Europe and Ireland, and

to some extent in the rest of Europe. Workers don't want to go back to the drachma but the euro has already dragged Greece, and other countries, to the backwardness of the past and worse.

If Greece eventually leaves the euro, it will be the end, or the beginning of the end, of the common currency. With Italy and France having

unsustainable debts, there is a fear of a larger country needing assistance.

The Troika were determined to crush and completely discredit Syriza, and have, in a sense already achieved 'regime change'.

This will undoubtedly have an effect on anti-austerity struggles in smaller countries like Ireland and Portugal, and even big countries like Italy and Spain. Podemos, with no real programme and top-down organisation, is already beginning to move to the right as a result.

But in Ireland attacks on conditions, through water charges for instance, have provoked mass discontent and movement with 57% not making the first payment. The incredible referendum result on 'same sex' marriage saw a huge defeat for the forces of Irish reaction including the Catholic Church.

This opposition of the Irish working-class has already resulted in the election of Socialist Party members as TDs (MPs), with more SP and Anti-Austerity Alliance TDs possible in the approaching general election. This could become an important reference point for European struggles

Similarly, the referendum on Scottish independence reflected national and class revolt against Tories but also the 'Red Tories' (Labour) in the battle against austerity, which had big consequences in the general election.

The 56 Scottish National Party MPs have offered a bloc with Labour against the Tories, including on anti-union legislation.

Revolutionary conclusions

Greek workers will reap a bitter harvest of even more suffering, but capitalism is teaching all workers some brutal lessons in the school of the class struggle. It is possible, even likely, that the broad masses will be discouraged and temporarily resign themselves to the suffering before engaging in new offensives.

But the more politically developed workers and youth will have learnt, will ponder and draw far-reaching revolutionary conclusions.

There is no alternative to creating new mass working class parties in the countries of Europe. Such parties will prepare the way for real mass revolutionary parties.

In the past year, Europe and the world have gone through a stormy, in some ways brutal period. Eastern Europe and the Middle East are in turmoil, impacting on Europe through the Ukraine war, the refugee crisis and terrorism. Only the working-class can unify the masses and go on the offensive against sectarianism and capitalism.

It will take time, but the CWI is confident that the masses will find the road to struggle against capitalism and that young people, in particular, will embrace the liberating ideas of socialism.

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Solidarity with RMT

On 21 July Chris Reilly, Reading RMT branch secretary, spoke at a meeting of Reading/Bracknell Socialist Party members. He updated us on the RMT dispute with Great Western Rail. Chris explained that issues such as driver only operation and the loss of buffets are vital struggles which RMT must win. Losing it would embolden the bosses throughout the rail network.

We expressed our total solidarity with RMT in this dispute. We will keep attending their picket line to build unity and solidarity in our local communities with workers in struggle. The RMT has been in the lead in fighting for better wages and conditions for their members as well as seeking to protect passenger safety. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Terry Pearce

Unions save lives

As a trade union and health and safety (H&S) rep, I think the appalling explosion at the wood mill in Cheshire, where four workers died, may not have happened if the company had been unionised with a H&S rep.

A while back, the private contractor who was running the public service that we were supposed to be providing, treated both employment law and H&S with equal contempt. As a rep I was forever hounding them over these issues.



They sacked me for this but were forced to reinstate me. While I was suspended, I grassed up the company to the Health and Safety Executive. They came to the site and did an inspection. After that the company, for the first time, were actually forced to take health and safety seriously. It is sadly too late for the wood mill workers but trade union action can save lives.

Jon Elvin,
Hillingdon Socialist Party

Prison's new Gove-nors

Inhumane overcrowding in British prisons is a distressing problem. But the government keeps cutting funding for prisons, while cutting lucrative deals for their rich business friends like Serco.

A government report acknowledged the Prison Officers' Association (POA) union claim "that day-to-day communication between prisoner and officer was rapidly diminishing, with an inevitably detrimental impact upon security and safety." Between 2010 and 2014 "the number of full-time equivalent staff in public sector prisons fell by 28 per cent, a reduction of 12,530."



Justice Secretary Michael Gove, who now runs prisons, will probably apply the same destructive commitment to privatising prisons as he did to our schools. Gove's former adviser on schools was Sir Martin Narey, a man who as Director General of the Prison Service gave fresh impetus to prison privatisation. The POA's recent conference reaffirmed their commitment "to resist the privatisation of prisons and return all privatised prisons to the public sector". Trade unionists should show solidarity with the POA's ongoing struggle against our fat-cat government and their profit-hungry friends.

Michael Barker

Brownshirts or posh suits?

Hitler, Mussolini and Pinochet on hijacking power moved to crush the trade unions, the bulwark in defending workers against impoverishment. Gangs of brown-shirted thugs murdered and imprisoned trade unionists.

The current Tory government, responding to its billionaire paymasters' demands is not yet minded to use gangs of thugs, but is substituting the brown-shirts with legal methods making it almost impossible to withdraw labour and remain within the law. They plan to criminalise picketing, permit employers to hire strike-breakers, and empower police to oversee picket lines.

While a hedge fund billionaire can sign a cheque for millions to bankroll Osborne's thuggish party, they plan to choke off trade union finance to fund political representation. Verbal protest will never be enough to stop this government. A powerful campaign of industrial action to defend workers from the Tories' excesses is now imperative.

Tony Mulhearn

'PREVENT'ING TERROR OR PREVENTING OPPOSITION?



Teacher and Huddersfield Socialist Party member, **Dylan Murphy**, comments on government strategy to combat extremism in schools.

On the last day of term at my school, a staff training session told us how the government expects us to teach "British values" to the kids.

They said this would be monitored by the Ofsted inspectorate. This was bad enough, what exactly are 'British values'? But it got worse in the last session of the day.

A police officer from the local 'Prevent' unit addressed us about the dangers of extremism facing the kids we teach. He said Prevent is a 'key government initiative to help combat the threat of terrorism in the UK'.

He started by talking about the dangers of Islamic terrorism and then the threat from neo-Nazi groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) and National Front.

Police

He went on to say that the police regard anti-fracking protestors as extremists and referred to the behaviour of Green MP Caroline Lucas who sat down before her arrest on a protest as an act of 'extremism'.

He finished off by pointing that 'far left' socialist groups are also regarded as extremists who are monitored by the police. In effect he was equating socialist groups with Islamic State (ISIS) and the neo-fascists of the EDL. I could not believe my ears.

We were told that we have to be-

come spies and pass on any concerns we may have over school kids who are espousing "extremist" views to the assistant head with responsibility for safeguarding.

I interjected and told the Prevent officer the deeply authoritarian nature of what he was saying. I said I had been on strike a while ago and asked if that made me an extremist to be monitored by the police? He had no answer to my points or the questions I raised.

Alienate young people

All Prevent will do is to alienate many young people. It will fail abysmally at stopping the radicalisation of ordinary people into various movements fighting austerity and defending the environment.

The workers' movement needs to expose and campaign against this repressive state body which will be used against us to try and suppress opposition to the Cameron government and its big business backers.



I was out on strike a while ago, does this make me an extremist to be monitored by the police?

They will then pass the child's name on to the local Prevent liaison committee. The police officer's slogan was: "If it doesn't sound right pass it on".

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Turkey: only workers' unity can end terrorism, division and war

Paula Mitchell

On 20 July, 32 young people, members of the Socialist Federation of Youth Associations, in the South East Turkish town of Suruc, were horrifically killed by a suicide bombing most likely carried out by ISIS terrorists.

This is the first time ISIS has targeted a socialist organisation inside Turkey. The slaughter of young people, whose aim was to travel across the Syrian border to Kobane to help rebuild the Kurdish city laid waste by ISIS last year, has repelled people across the world.

Yet the demonstrators who took to the streets in Istanbul and other Turkish cities in solidarity with these murdered young people were themselves attacked by the Turkish police with tear gas and water cannon.

The Turkish government, and President Erdogan, have blood on their hands. Their foreign policies have emboldened ISIS and invited terror attacks.

The Turkish government stands accused of collusion with ISIS against the Kurds in Syria. It has held back from attacking ISIS and allowed large numbers of jihadists to cross its border. Turkish aims in Syria include setting up a buffer zone and replacing Kurdish fighters with their own forces.

The truth is that the Turkish state would rather see ISIS win out than a Kurdish victory, fearing the effect that could have on the Kurdish population in Turkey.

Regional politics

But now there has been the agreement reached between the US and Iran, the Turkish government fears losing its regional role, and wants to be seen to cooperate further with the US. It also feels compelled to take some action against ISIS in reaction to the Suruc atrocity and the instability that such terror acts bring.

On 23 and 24 July it bombed ISIS bases in Syria for the first time - action that will only increase the threat of terrorism and instability in Turkey. In addition, Turkey and the US reached an agreement to conduct joint operations against ISIS, allowing the US to launch air strikes from



Socialist Party members joined demonstrations in London in solidarity with the victims of Suruc photo Paula Mitchell

the Nato air base at Incirlik.

Turkey has called for a special meeting of Nato ambassadors to discuss its security and has arrested hundreds of people on suspicion of terrorism

The Turkish government has also taken the opportunity to bomb Kurdish PKK bases in Iraq, seemingly more heavily than its bombing of ISIS, a major shift away from the stalled 'peace process' it had been conducting. Citing the shooting of three policemen and a roadside bomb that killed two Turkish soldiers - incidences claimed by the PKK following the Suruc attack - Erdogan is attempting to equate the PKK with ISIS.

Counter-productive

There can be no comparison between the individual armed actions of PKK fighters against forces of the Turkish state and the mass horrific slaughter of ordinary working class and poor people carried out by ISIS.

Nonetheless, the Socialist Party does not believe that such individual actions are the way forward for the Kurds' struggle. They are counter-productive, providing an excuse

for further aggression by the Turkish state and they risk deepening division between Turkish and Kurdish workers.

Erdogan hopes that the west will turn a blind eye to - or even condone - his attacks on the PKK as the price for Turkey's cooperation against ISIS. In reality this is complicated for the US, who have relied on Kurdish forces in Syria to fight ISIS on the ground. The US has so far distanced itself from the strikes against PKK bases.



The main responsibility for the nightmare in the Middle East lies with western imperialism

Nonetheless, Kurdish people should not expect any succour from western powers. The main responsibility for the nightmare in the Middle East lies with western imperialism.

There has long been subjugation and conflict stoked by western and regional powers to allow the region's resources to be looted and for their own prestige.

This and the decades-long oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli state, backed by western powers, has been exacerbated by the so-called 'war on terror' and the wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

The Turkish government has been

alarmed by the electoral success of the pro-Kurdish HDP in the elections in June, in which the ruling AKP lost its majority. Its greatest fear would be the coming together of Kurdish and Turkish workers in a mass uprising that could challenge the whole Turkish regime.

The Turkish government tries to whip up anti-Kurdish views among Turkish workers in order to maintain its rule and counter the Kurds' aspirations.

President Erdogan might call new elections this year to try to regain an AKP parliamentary majority and push the HDP, the party based on Kurdish and left wing support, out of the parliament.

Working class

But an appeal to working class people in Turkey from workers' organisations, with a programme to defend the democratic rights and national aspirations of all peoples, for jobs and homes, for the vast resources of the region to be owned and controlled democratically for the benefit of all, could break down those barriers.

On the basis of a socialist programme, it would be possible to build a movement that unites people across Syria, Iraq and across the region that can repel ISIS, the corrupt regional powers and imperialism in the Middle East. A voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East would enable all peoples to freely and democratically decide their own fates.

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Determined mood at Tolpuddle to defend the unions

Sean Brogan
Exeter Socialist Party

Thousands gathered in Tolpuddle, Dorset, from 17-19 July to celebrate the founding of the trade union movement in the 1830s. In 1834, farm workers in west Dorset formed a trade union. Six of their leaders were arrested and sentenced to seven years' transportation to Australia for taking an 'oath of secrecy.'

A massive protest swept across the country. Thousands of people marched through London and many more organised petitions and protest meetings to demand their freedom, which was eventually won.

Record crowd

This year saw a record crowd as the camp site was fully booked and the car parks were overflowing for the march on Sunday. The whole weekend reflected a new mood after the



TUSC supporters on the march photo Sean Brogan

government's budget cuts and the anti-trade union laws threatened by the Tories.

Members of the Socialist Party handed out hundreds of leaflets calling for the TUC to organise a general strike to combat the anti-trade union bill, and National Shop Stewards Network leaflets promot-

ing the 13th September lobby of this year's TUC Congress.

We had three stalls, one in the main marquee. Hundreds of people signed our 'Defend the Trade Unions' petition.

This is testament to the echo we received for our demands on the TUC to start defending our movement.

Anti-austerity protests from Northumberland to the 'English Riviera'

Torbay

A 200 strong anti-austerity walk on the 18 July in Torbay, South Devon, was organised by local group Torbay-3Towns which is led by Socialist Party member Nick Slater. Nick spoke passionately and powerfully on the day.

While the event itself was a great success in an area promoted as 'The English Riviera' (known more for its pier rather than protest) the real significance was the way we turned to the trade unions in the area for support and the relations we have built with them as a result.

These include Torbay Trades Council and five local union branches. One of the highlights was the speech made by Fire Brigades Union Secretary Scott Atkins from Totnes.

I spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party and our call for a 24-hour general strike was warmly received. We are following up the event with



Torbay rally photo Alex Moore

a meeting of Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition where Nick will be our guest speaker.

Alex Moore,
Plymouth Socialist Party and
TUSC Candidate Totnes

Hexham

Over 100 people took to the streets of Hexham on 25 July to protest against austerity.

Organised by local activists, the protest is the first in this safe Tory

seat - which even Thatcher's attacks failed to stir. It just goes to show the impact of current cuts.

Hexham is described as an 'outwardly prosperous' town, but that perception can't hide the fact that 300 children currently rely on food banks, or that there are one in four children living in poverty in parts of the town.

Despite some initial apprehension, the protesters were warmly received by market day shoppers, with many stall holders expressing their solidarity and people joining the march along the route.

Speakers at the rally included Avram Benjamin from Youth Fight for Jobs who raised the demand for a £10 per hour minimum wage now, a call to make the anti-union laws unworkable and the idea of a 24-hour general strike.

Ben Michaels,
Newcastle Socialist Party

held on 23 July. Dave received 85 votes or 4.1% (an increase from 1.8% in May), fifth out of six candidates, this time beating the Greens.

Salford college campaign
Staff and students at Salford City College have been mobilising following the announcement of 57 job losses and plans to 'streamline' the

existing teacher centred courses with a £1 million e-learning system. A protest on 9 July was a great success. More on the campaign can be found on the Socialist Party website.

Read more online at socialistparty.org.uk

HELP FUND THE PARTY THAT FIGHTS AUSTERITY!

Ken Douglas,
Socialist Party national treasurer

The Socialist Party is in the news! The Blairites in the Labour Party are panicking at the growing surge behind Jeremy Corbyn's candidacy; they don't understand that it is linked to the failure of Labour to fight the Tories. As one person on Twitter commented: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor".

The storm of anger at Labour MPs abstaining on the Tories' cruel Welfare Bill shows the potential support for the Socialist Party and our determined struggle against austerity.

We can tap into this support. Our members are out campaigning and fundraising to ensure that we reach this quarter's fighting fund target of £25,000.

At Tolpuddle, £200 was collected for the fighting fund; members commented that they had never seen such a response before. Members in Southampton raised £100 campaigning against the closure of the Bitterne, Walk-in centre. In Salford, after raising £107 at their normal spot, members tried doing a campaign stall in Broughton and after a slow start raised £24 with 3 people asking for more information about joining. In Stoke £213 was raised campaigning against the closure of Longton Cottage Hospital.

Everyone can raise money for the Socialist Party, from the newest to the oldest member, and branches can organise fundraisers and social events that tap into those talents. East Kent branch raised £50 from helping put on a musical event and have plans to raise more through a clothes sale; Liverpool branch raised £102 at a car boot sale. Dan Crowter from Coventry West raised £60 with a CWI fantasy football league, half the money going to winner Josh Asker's branch in Southampton.

But you don't have to join the Socialist Party to raise money for us! Go to the donate button on our website at www.socialistparty.org.uk/main/donate and you can make a regular donation via PayPal or with your credit or debit card.

We appeal to all our supporters to consider making a donation, whether a one-off or regular; help fund the party that fights austerity!

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Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	July to September 2015	End of quarter totals
North West	1,200	832		69%
West Midlands	2,100	1,060		51%
South West	1,400	536		
Southern	1,200	343	29%	
Yorkshire	2,900	531	18%	
Wales	2,300	349	15%	
South East	750	110	15%	
London	6,100	758	12%	
Eastern	1,200	101	8%	
East Midlands	1,600	121	8%	
Northern	600	31	5%	
England and Wales	3,650	157	4%	
TOTAL	25,000	4,937	20%	

Nottingham rehab unit campaign

The majority of service users, carers and staff attending a consultation meeting rejected Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust's proposal to close a rehabilitation unit.

75 attended the meeting to discuss Broomhill House, a 12-bed rehabilitation unit which was reported as "an effective well run service that provides an excellent quality of care" by Care Quality Commissioners inspectors in 2014. The Trust are also proposing closure of an 18-bed unit in Mansfield which only opened in 2010.

The Trust structured the consultation to dissipate debate. A PowerPoint presentation for the whole audience was then to be discussed in small groups fa-

cilitated and recorded by Trust managers. The final straw came when staff were asked to join a separate group to discuss their particular concerns.

But the organisers were forced to back down and the debate was conducted with the entire group. This meant we gained confidence, clarity and solidarity from each other's contribution. The PowerPoint informed us of the £22 billion cut to the NHS budget showing that the driving force for the proposals was to cut costs.

There was a call for people to join the Friends of Broomhill House campaign to save the unit and to link up with Mansfield campaigners.

Cathy Meadows,
Nottingham Socialist Party

[News in brief]

TUSC increases vote

Grimsby Socialist Party members are "well pleased" with Dave Mitchell's vote for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the Croft Baker ward by-election for North East Lincolnshire council

The menopause: breaking the taboo

An issue for all workers and their trade unions

Jane Nellist
 NUT national executive member
 (personal capacity)

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued guidance to GPs and health professionals about how to treat and support women experiencing the menopause - and it's about time too!

In our modern society, few subjects are off-limits and issues such as mental health are freely discussed by workers. For too long, the menopause has been ignored and is regarded as the last taboo subject for women.

3.5m

women over 50 are now in the workplace

Because of this, most women suffer in silence, feeling that they should just 'get on with it'. But actually, they are going through major changes which, for some women, will even result in surgery in the form of a hysterectomy.

What's more, very little money is spent on research into the health problems that beset many women, to varying degrees, at some time in their life.

Symptoms

Not every woman's experience of the menopause is the same. There are many symptoms associated with it and these can last for varying lengths of time.

Hot flushes, night sweats, headaches, bladder problems, susceptibility to anxiety, fatigue and stress are common. Many of the discomforts can be resolved at the workplace with simple measures such as ventilation, access to toilets and wa-



The trade unions must fight to make menopause a collective issue, not a personal one photo Paul Mattsson

ter. Some need more, such as time off and perhaps reduced workload.

But at the very least we need a sympathetic management and the confidence to know that we are not going to be persecuted for admitting we are going through 'the change'. What's more, at this time of life, women have more demands placed on them to care for elderly relatives or support for grandchildren.

At the 2014 conference of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), a debate on the menopause took place, promoted by Socialist Party members in Coventry.

From that, the NUT agreed to carry out national research on the

issue. That research led to advice and guidance that can be used by all workers - because this isn't an issue just for teachers. Anecdotal evidence from union casework was backed up by the research.

The major factor that needs to be recognised is that there are now far more women over 50 in the workplace - 3.5 million according to the TUC. This will rise further as the pension age increases and benefits are cut, forcing older women to work.

Cull?

In my own union, the NUT, 76% of members are women. Over the last few years, the number of older women teachers who've had issues raised by management about their capability has increased. In some schools there appeared to be a 'cull' of older teachers.

Older teachers are likely to be the highest paid members of staff. They may also be the most resistant to those changes that are not conducive to their pupils' well-being. With the pressure of testing and a restricted curriculum, management targets this group of teachers to cut costs and remove obstacles.

But the fact remains that underlying many of the cases there were health issues, often clearly associated with the menopause.

As often is the case, management don't always willingly offer solutions to problems in the workplace. Improvements have to be won by trade unions standing up for our rights and collectivising the issue.

The NICE advice, coupled with



Women: fighting austerity, fighting for equality, a collection of articles from the Socialist
 £2 including P&P

Available from Left Books
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 020 8988 8789
www.leftbooks.co.uk
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk
 Make cheques payable to 'Socialist Books'

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 Many of these discomforts can be resolved at the workplace with simple measures

good workplace policies, is just the start. We need far more research into the menopause and how to treat women, many who go through agonising physical and mental changes.

We need to fight for a lower pension age for all workers with decent pensions and better care for our elderly relatives. For that, we need to join together to fight to change our society to one where all are valued and supported.

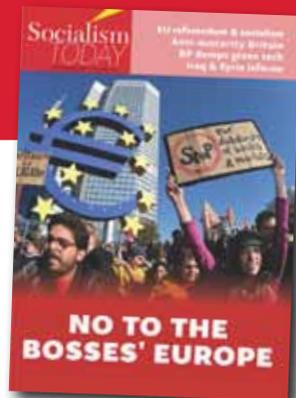
■ See the NUT guidance at www.teachers.org.uk/briefings/menopause

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

The July/August issue includes:

- **EU referendum** - The reasons why socialists should vote No by *Clive Heemskerk*
- **Britain** - Battle lines have been drawn in the fight against austerity by *Hannah Sell*
- **Iraq/Syria** - Sectarian civil wars were unleashed by US/UK invasion by *Serge Jordan*



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National Shop Stewards Network supporters protest against the bill outside Parliament photo Sarah Sachs-Eldridge



photo Paul Mattsson

Bill Mullins and Rob Williams

The gloves are well and truly off. The Tories have unveiled their Trade Union Bill, which is far more vicious than first trailed and is an extension and deepening of Thatcher's anti-union laws.

It is absolutely essential that the trade union movement confronts these laws and fights the continuation of the cuts offensive.

The Tories' outrageous plans to introduce even more anti-union laws have left most union activists shocked. Incidentally, one of the major crimes of New Labour was to leave these laws on the statute book over the 13 years of Blair and Brown, allowing them to be added to by Cameron and Co.

Many union leaders who normally say little about the wider problems of society have been taken back by these new proposals.

Mike Whelan, general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef, was quoted by the Guardian comparing the attack to Germany in the 1930s under fascism. Paul Kenny of the GMB said rather more tamely that "this would remove any incentive for the bosses to listen to their workers".

Sajid Javid, minister for (big) business, said: "One nation government will balance [the rights of trade unions] with those of working people" - as if the unions don't represent working people anyway! The sheer hypocrisy of the Tories takes your breath away.

The Tories' proposals include measures, in effect, to criminalise shop stewards and other elected



Minister for business, Sajid Javid

workers' representatives who organise picket lines. At the moment it is a civil offence to go outside the guideline for no more than six pickets to be on the gates during a strike. This will now be designated a criminal offence.

Measures

The measures include the obligation to give the police the name of the person organising the picket line, and they could end up in prison as a result!

Other measures proposed in the new legislation include:

- A right for the employers to hire scab workforces from agencies.
- A double threshold for unions in transport, health, education and other parts of the public sector. First, they have to get at least a 50% turnout of those entitled to vote (which every union will now have to do even if not in these sectors). The union

has to tell the employer exactly who they will be asking to strike and where exactly they work. Then at least 40% of all those entitled to vote must vote for action. An example given in the Guardian said that if 100 teachers were asked to strike

then at least 50 have to vote. Of those at least 40 have to vote for strike action, i.e. 80% have to be in favour of strike action.

- There will have to be a fresh strike ballot at least every four months.
- Two weeks' notice of strike action has to be given, allowing management plenty of time to hire a legal strike-breaking force through labour agencies.
- They propose to dramatically cut union facility time across the whole of the public sector - they have already started this in the civil service.
- They also propose to cut the unions' ability to have political funds. Not just those who give money to the Labour Party (some £25 million a year at the moment) but all political funds whether

affiliated to the Labour Party or not.

■ In a breathtaking fashion they are also proposing to introduce a levy to make the unions pay for the government's "certification officer" - who is responsible for policing the anti-trade union laws. It is as if they are making the prisoner pay the wages of his jailer!

Lessons from the past

This smacks of what happened under the Harold Wilson Labour government in 1968 and then the Ted Heath Tory government in 1971. Struggles defeated attacks on the unions then. It is essential that union activists study those events and learn the lessons from them.

First the Wilson government proposed its "In place of strife" laws, which included the jailing of any shop steward who called an 'illegal strike'. These measures were defeated by an aroused trade union movement and had to be hastily dropped.

In 1970, Ted Heath's new Tory government introduced the Industrial Relations Bill (which later became the Industrial Relations Act).

Again this led to outrage within the trade unions with an outbreak of unofficial strikes organised primarily by the Communist Party front, the Liaison Committee for the Defence

of Trade Unions (LCDTU).

This movement from below forced the TUC to act and in 1971 it organised its biggest ever demonstration of over 200,000 mainly trade union activists from industry. It was here that the call to "kill the bill" appeared for the first time on official union placards, with a picture of a shop steward behind bars.

Such was the movement at that time that the TUC suspended three unions from its ranks, including the Sogat print union, for cooperating with the new laws.

Eventually the whole Act became a farce. Despite the national unions getting massive fines, the state and its courts were unable to stop widespread strikes.

Defeat this government

The unions do not have the same numerical strength now as they had then - there were 13 million in unions in the late 1970s; there are 6.4 million now.

But despite that, the new laws could create similar conditions for an unofficial movement - or an official one - that could end in the defeat of this Tory government, just as the Heath government was defeated.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has played an important role over the last five years in seeking to mobilise rank and file union members to act as a lever on the trade unions to take the necessary action against the cuts. It will now also look to galvanise action against these anti-union laws.

The NSSN has organised a lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton on Sunday 13 September to demand



The ongoing tube strikes show the power of the organised working class photos London SP

that the TUC and the unions organise a demonstration on the day that the Tories take their Trade Union Bill to parliament in the autumn.

The NSSN also demands that they prepare for mass, coordinated strike action on the scale of a 24-hour general strike if the bill is passed, linking in the fight against the Tories' brutal cuts. The lobby should be the start of similar rallies and protests in every area to build the pressure for this action.

Last year there were 704,000 days lost in strikes and this could go up. That is why the Tories are introducing these legal hurdles against the unions.

But this could end up with an even bigger uproar as workers re-

alize that it is up to them to defend their trade unions, because the only way they can defend themselves at their place of work is by effective trade unionism.

It is no accident that this bill was presented just a week after the brutal Budget that has plied another £12 billion of cuts on top of £80 billion rolled out under the previous Con Dem government.

It is also possible that the fantastic tube strike, that started that evening and locked-down London, has led to the Tories ramping up the bill. But the London Underground stoppage shows the power of the unions and the organised working-class which could defeat both Cameron's laws and the cuts.

KILL THE BILL!

Stop the new Tory anti-union laws

national shop stewards network www.shopstewards.net

KILL THE BILL!

Strike together against the Tory cuts & anti-union laws!

NSSN public rally & lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton
1pm Sunday 13 September
Charlotte Room in the Grand Hotel,
97-99 King's Rd BN1 2FW

Speakers to include:
● MARK SERWOTKA, PCS general secretary
● MICK CASH, RMT general secretary



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 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!

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into

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

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BACK TUBE STRIKES



Striking tube workers on a picket in Paddington on 8 July
photo Hannah Sell

John Reid
RMT executive member

As we go to press all four London Underground unions are planning a new shutdown of the tube network on 5-6 August. United action by Aslef, RMT, TSSA and Unite stopped every train and closed every station on 8-9 July. This followed over 50% of members voting - over 90% for strike action.

Station staff are having their agreements ripped up and will have to work anytime, anywhere, any place. This is a result of the decimation of station staff with 850 jobs planned to go. All despite a record number of passengers being carried on our trains.

We are fighting for a fair deal on pay and night tube working, now being introduced.

MP's have accepted a 10% pay increase and the richest thousand people in Britain have seen their obscene levels of wealth double in the last four years. All we are asking for is for our terms and conditions to be protected and for our pay increases to rise with inflation as a minimum.

'Increase'

Management has offered a new 1% 'increase' for the first year, and 1% or RPI inflation (whichever is the higher) for years two and three. In the first year there would be a recurring payment of £500 for all staff, plus £500 one-off payment for all staff, except drivers, who work on lines carrying out night work. For drivers working nights the offer is £2,000.

It's an attempt to buy them off for giving up their hard-won agreements for regular weekends off and rosters that allow a life-work balance.

Under the proposed new agreements staff will work more weekends and more nights. These payments are also divisive - with only one-third of staff being offered the bonus.

Continued on page 6