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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

Bernie Sanders

Call for a political revolution against the billionaire class enthuses millions
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Corbyn, Momentum and cuts

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Don't give taxpayers' money to Ukip and Tory EU campaigners

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FIGHT COUNCIL CUTS!



Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

There is nothing left to cut. Even Tory council leaders don't know where they'll find the government's latest 'savings'!

The Socialist Party says: strike to save jobs and services - and fight to oust the Tories and Blairites, for a political alternative to austerity.

In Birmingham, Britain's second city, the council is trying to make its workers pay. The ruling Labour group wants to

withdraw staff from nationally agreed terms and conditions. General union GMB is set to ballot its 7,000 members employed there if this happens.

There are three main proposals. Reduce sick pay to three months' full wages - half the current entitlement. Stop performance-related raises for three years, starting in the 2017-18 financial year. And add half an hour to the working week.

The council will also charge workers who are required to have regular criminal record checks £13 a year.

Council leader John Clancy said at budget consultation meetings he will "wave any placard and go on any demonstrations against government cuts to local authority financing". But he clearly will not take the lead and set a no-cuts budget. The GMB has

rightly attacked Birmingham's Labour leaders for betraying their supposed principles.

This is a serious test for Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, as well as the pro-Corbyn group Momentum. Labour's leadership should be instructing council chiefs to propose no-cuts budgets.

If local authorities won't, Momentum should work with council unions and groups like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. We need to kick the pro-austerity right wing out of Labour - or prepare to stand anti-austerity candidates against Blairite cutters at May's elections.

■ **More on Momentum and fighting council cuts: pages 11 to 13**

■ **Striking teachers score victory at Birmingham school: page 6**



photo Kevin Walsh/Creative Commons

■ Anfield walkout

15,000 Liverpool fans walked out of the team's game with Sunderland in protest against owners' extortionate price hikes.

US firm Fenway Sports Group bought the Reds in 2010. Fans will have to cough up £77 for home tickets - in spite of an increased number of seats.

Supporters group Spirit of Shankly described the protest as "a difficult choice". After one third of the stadium's capacity walked out in the 77th minute, Liverpool conceded two goals. The Anfield fixture resulted in a 2-2 draw.

Fans chanted "Out the ground at 77" and "Enough is enough you greedy bastards" throughout the match. Presenters on Match of the Day and other celebrities have since come out in support of the campaign.

The Socialist says that fans, not grasping corporations, should own and manage their sports clubs. Kick the profiteers out of the beautiful game!

■ 'Reclaim the Game' by John Reid - a socialist programme for football: £3 from leftbooks.co.uk

■ Clinton coins it

Right-wing US presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton earned \$675,000 giving speeches for parasite speculators Goldman Sachs in 2013.

The establishment Democrat earned somewhere between \$9.7 million and \$12 million in speaking fees that year, much of it for bankers. Other selected highlights include:

- Qualcomm (phones): \$335,000
- Cisco (IT): \$325,000
- eBay (online retail): \$315,000
- Deutsche Bank (bank): \$260,000
- GE (everything): \$225,500

Clinton has ludicrously insisted she can't be bought, saying: "Anybody who knows me who thinks they can influence me - name one thing they've influenced me on. Just name one thing."

Her consistent support for Wall Street gamblers is reflected in big business donations to her campaign. Nearly 300 super-rich donors have given over \$100,000 each. Meanwhile, self-described socialist candidate Bernie Sanders receives an average donation of \$27.

More on the USA: pages 14 and 15

DEFIANT MOOD AS THOUSANDS OF JUNIOR DOCTORS DEMONSTRATE



Sam Gleaden

Junior doctors from across the country demonstrated in London on 6 February. Medics protested against unsafe changes to working hours, and what are effectively pay cuts.

Thousands attended the demonstration - which comes ahead of a planned 24-hour walkout, with emergency care only, on 10 February.

The mood of the demonstration was defiant. Morale was also impressive considering this was the third march of its kind since the dispute began.

There were two hours of speakers, followed by a 'masked march' on Downing Street from 3pm. In their speeches, NHS workers exposed Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's false claims about the "weekend effect". His lies are just a cover for cuts. Peer-reviewed studies show Hunt's claim doctors need to work more hours at weekends to be nonsense.

Doctors correctly see this as part of a wider drive to privatise public services. Speaking to the Socialist,

Dr Iona Maxwell from Southampton said: "I think it is definitely a part of the whole picture."

"This is the first step, in a way, to the government privatising the whole NHS. And that's going to happen all over, to any public service."

Action

Doctors also agreed with the Socialist Party's call for coordinated action across the NHS - and other public services - to fight austerity. Junior doctor Scott Farenden said: "I support anyone who is feeling oppression on their working conditions at this moment. I was speaking to a police officer today and they are up against it just like we are."

Clearly, if the fight to defend the NHS is going to be successful, workers across the NHS need to coordinate and mobilise. Without mass action, different sections of NHS workers risk becoming isolated.

■ Visit socialistparty.org.uk for reports from the next doctors' strike



photos Paul Mattsson

Lawyers defeat Tories' unjust legal aid cuts

Paul Heron

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers executive committee (personal capacity)

of justice.

Justice Secretary Michel Gove made a complete u-turn on cuts to legal aid at the end of January.

He has scrapped plans for a two-tier contract system, and suspended an 8.75% cut to payments for criminal law solicitors. The victory has effectively prevented the closure of up to 1,000 law firms and saved jobs. But most importantly, it will undoubtedly prevent miscarriages

Central to the victory was criminal lawyers withholding their labour, refusing new cases in protest. The campaign which forced the climbdown was the work of the London Criminal Courts Solicitors' Association and the Criminal Law Solicitors' Association. It also involved rank-and-file lawyers pressuring the leadership of the Criminal Bar Association to support the massive anger in the profession.

The campaign garnered support from all sectors of the legal profession, including those who were victims of 'British justice'. Gerry Conlon

of the Guildford Four and Paddy Hill of the Birmingham Six, wrongfully convicted of IRA pub bombings. And Raphael Rowe of the M25 Three, wrongfully convicted of robbery and murder.

Retreat

This retreat arrived only weeks after a rally of 400 organised by the Justice Alliance. The rally heard Jeremy Corbyn describe access to legal aid as a human right.

It also followed a consultation involving 16,000 responses which

spelt out loud and clear that the Tories' disastrous scheme would deny access to justice for ordinary people. The Tories ploughed on regardless as always, but have now been called to account.

Members of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers played a key role during the dispute. We called for united, escalating strikes against the attack. This, along with pending litigation, brought the battle to a successful conclusion.

photo StockMonkey.com/Creative Commons



Amazon workers have notoriously bad pay and conditions, especially in China photo Scott Lewis/Creative Commons

Cushy government job for Amazon boss

'Nathan' PCS union rep, Department for Work and Pensions

Tory work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith has appointed Doug Gurr, president of Amazon China, to his department's board of directors.

The reputation of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has slumped in recent years. There is anger at the impact of austerity carried out by the Tories, Lib Dems and New Labour.

Confidence in the welfare state is at an all-time low. This is due to benefit cuts, sanctions, failed privatisation projects, and profiteering corporations carrying out medical

assessments designed to trip sick people up.

DWP staff morale is not much better following years of job cuts, a pay freeze, and attacks on our pensions.

Gurr's appointment will not make life any better for staff or benefit claimants. Working conditions in Amazon factories have been roundly condemned for their abusive nature.

A BBC documentary concluded that Amazon workers face "increased risk of mental and physical illness". Members of the German trade union Verdi have organised a series of strikes at Amazon warehouses against low pay and poor working conditions.

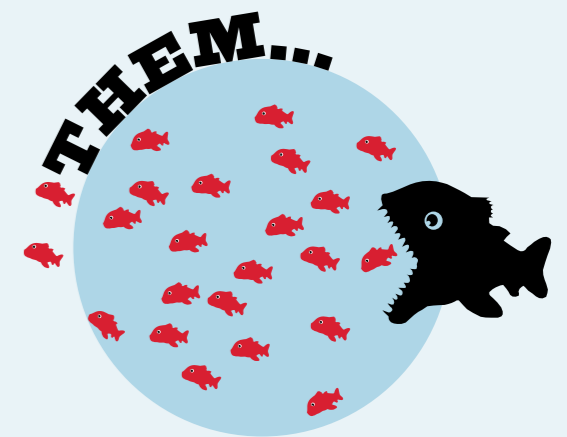
Amazon also robs millions of pounds each year from our public services through tax avoidance.

The Tories will hardly get tough on tax avoiders if they're giving them cushy jobs! The only lasting solution is to bring these big businesses into public ownership.

Organise

Trade unions in Britain should emulate their German counterparts, and organise these workplaces to fight for better conditions. Finally, we need to kick out IDS and the rest of his rotten millionaire government, and replace them with elected representatives prepared to take on the power of Amazon and the tax avoiders.

What's your view? email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk



■ Money missed...

A Tory MP earns so much moolah moonlighting as a barrister that he didn't notice £400,000 entering his account.

Geoffrey Cox explained he was busy setting up new offices in the tax havens Dubai and Mauritius when the £400,000 came in. For this reason, he failed to declare eleven payments totalling £400,000.

As a result of the £400,000 oversight, he stood down as a member of the Commons Standards Committee.

But his former colleagues' only disciplinary action against him was to ask him to say sorry. For not declaring £400,000.

Four. Hundred. Thousand. Pounds.

£400,000

Amount so piffling that Tory MP Geoffrey Cox didn't even notice it going into his account

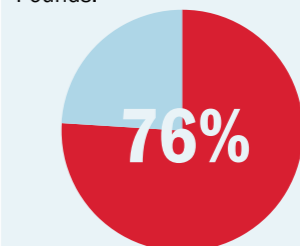
■ ...money missing

Meanwhile, 16 million workers will be worse off under the Tories' new flat-rate state pension.

53% of 43-year-olds, and 76% of 24-year-olds, will lose entitlements worth thousands of pounds over their retirement, according to research by the Telegraph.

MPs, on the other hand, will receive splendid pensions based on their career average salary. They currently earn £74,000 a year.

The Socialist calls for MPs to take only an average worker's wage, and campaigns for decent pensions for all.



76% of 24-year-olds will be worse off with the new state pension

■ Mum's the word

Parents can be so embarrassing, especially if you're prime minister. David Cameron's mum - and now his auntie too - are campaigning against cuts in his home constituency of Witney.

Mary Cameron and sister Clare Currie oppose the Tory council's cuts to children's centres in Oxfordshire. David himself even

disingenuously spoke against the council's attacks.

Perhaps you should stop ordering cuts, Dave?

While childcare centres disappear for us, in 2014 Cameron proposed a 20% childcare tax break for high-income families earning up to £300,000.



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

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Cameron's EU renegotiation charade

What we think



Last July Socialism Today, the monthly magazine of the Socialist Party, wrote that "after some suitable renegotiation sound and fury by Cameron", his position and that of "the main forces of capitalism in Britain and internationally" would be to support Britain's continued membership of the EU.

And 'sound and fury signifying nothing' describes precisely Cameron's 'new deal for Britain in Europe'. Most of the provisions are effectively a clarification of what is already stated in the EU treaties.

One new proposal is an 'emergency brake' to deny full in-work benefits for up to four years to workers in Britain from other EU countries. But, as The Economist magazine says, it is largely "theatre".

Just 84,000 families on tax credits would have been affected by the 'brake' if it had applied for the last four years, according to the HMRC. And they count in this one in ten of these couples with one partner who is a UK national.

The 'savings' from the brake would be minimal. They pale, for example, next to the annual €1 billion EU migrants' healthcare costs incurred by Spain, where 50% of the Britons who live there are aged over 50 and are not in work.

Cameron's deal has it that the 'emergency brake' will be activated if the leaders of the other 27 EU countries in the European Council agree that Britain's 'social and economic systems are being overwhelmed'. But who are these capitalist politicians to pass judgement, having imposed austerity across the continent, including the savagery in Greece?

Austerity

Many local communities in Britain will rightly feel that public services are 'overwhelmed' when drastic cuts have been made and with another round of council cuts on the way. They need real action to defend and improve services, not Cameron's divisive play-acting.

There is palpable rage at the shortage of decent affordable housing, for example. Meanwhile the 'big nine' house-building companies hold enough land to build 600,000 new homes and sit on a £1 billion cash pile. An 'emergency brake' that really dealt with the housing crisis would mean nationalising these building monopolies and handing over their land banks to local councils to build homes.

But public ownership and other forms of state intervention are outlawed under EU treaties. Local councils, for example, have to sign off everything they do against EU state aid regulations. Cameron didn't demand that these were 'renegotiated', of course.

In that regard Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was right in his Commons' response to Cameron to warn that the new deal's clauses on 'competitiveness' were "a fig leaf for increasing pressure to privatise our public services" and reduce workers' rights.

But he was wrong to say that to keep workers' rights "we need to remain with the EU". Doesn't what happened in Greece to the Syriza government's attempts to implement policies similar to Corbyn's prove the opposite?

The Socialist Party opposes the EU because, as Greece showed, its laws and institutions, while they ultimately could not stop a determined workers' government supported by a mass movement from carrying out socialist policies, are another hurdle to overcome. We oppose the EU, Cameron's deal included, in order to defend working class interests and take forward the fight for socialism, in Britain and Europe.

In contrast, that minority of capitalist politicians who oppose the EU eagerly participate in Cameron's renegotiation and referendum charade the better to try and divide the working class. There can be no unity with them in the trade unionist and socialist campaign that needs to be conducted for a Leave vote.

DON'T GIVE TAXPAYERS' MONEY TO UKIP AND TORY EU CAMPAIGNERS!

Clive Heemscker

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition national election agent

The EU referendum campaign is now officially under way. Although the actual date has still to be announced, the main rules for how the referendum will be conducted have passed through parliament – including plans to potentially give millions of pounds of public money to Tory and Ukip EU campaigners.

Under the rules the Electoral Commission, an unelected quango, has been given the power to choose who shall be the 'official' Remain and Leave campaigns in the referendum.

Leave campaigns

This is important, bestowing political 'authority' to a particular campaign but also substantial public re-

sources. The official campaigns will receive grants of £600,000 each, free postage for leaflets delivered across the whole country, TV and radio time for referendum broadcasts and the use of rooms free of charge.

The establishment media has already decided that Ukip, Tory and other reactionary pro-austerity politicians and organisations are the only exit voices they will feature. They completely ignore the millions of trade unionists, young people, anti-austerity campaigners and working class voters who, like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), oppose the EU from a completely different standpoint.

The danger is that the Electoral Commission will follow the establishment media's lead and appoint either Vote Leave or Leave.EU, or an amalgam of the two, as the official exit campaign.

Until recently the Vote Leave

group, which is supported by the sole Ukip MP Douglas Carswell, was led by the founder of the right-wing Taxpayers' Alliance, Matthew Elliott. Its campaign director is Dominic Cummings, well-known as Michael Gove's former special advisor behind the Tories' 'free schools' programme.

Big business

Such people, representing a section of 'British business' interests, oppose the EU not because, for example, its treaties mandate the privatisation of public services, but because they want 'first bite' on the contracts.

But Leave.EU is no different, and if anything is more dominated by Ukip figures. It was founded by the former Tory donor Arron Banks who defected to Ukip in 2014 with a £1 million donation – increased from £100,000 after ex-Tory leader Wil-

liam Hague called him a 'nobody'.

Banks could afford his fit of pique. One source of his wealth is a company, Rock Services, which paid just £12,000 UK corporation tax in 2013-14 on gross profits of £19.7 million after 'recharging' services to another company based in lightly-regulated Gibraltar. Not Google-scale tax juggling but a 'little Englander' version at least.

Neither of these organisations could possibly represent those who oppose the EU because it is a club that puts the interests of big business and the rich and powerful first. Vote Leave has now brought in Thatcher's former chancellor and climate change denier Lord Lawson as an 'acceptable face' to try and effect a merger of the two campaigns.

This confirms that a unified campaign would also not be an organisation that trade unionists and socialists could give any support to.

Petition

That's why TUSC has launched a petition to the Electoral Commission calling on them not to give taxpayers' money and other public resources to either the Vote Leave or Leave.EU campaigns, or any amalgam of them, in the EU referendum.

As the petition states, "the Electoral Commission does not have to choose an official campaign if there is not one organisation that adequately represents [all] those supporting a particular outcome to the referendum". Vote Leave and Leave.EU patently don't.

If the Electoral Commission can be persuaded not to choose either of them as an official campaign, that will be a significant blow against



Austerity PM David Cameron is campaigning for Britain to remain in the EU photo creative commons/wikimedia

Ukip and their Tory allies. But it would also undermine the equally pro-big business campaign to remain in the EU.

The ardently pro-EU Guardian columnist Martin Kettle explained the Remain campaigners' strategy: "If voters come to see the Brexit option as a step towards a Nigel Farage universe" then a substantial pro-EU result is more likely. If working class voters who oppose the EU are forced to line up behind reactionary racist and pro-austerity Leave campaigners, it is a win for the Remain campaign.

The situation will be different the more it is possible to show that a significant proportion of those who will vote against the EU support basic socialist policies of workers' rights, public ownership, and opposition to austerity and racism. Signing the petition to the Electoral Commission is part of that.

Exit left

TUSC was co-founded in 2010 by the late Bob Crow, the RMT transport workers' union leader who was well known for his opposition to the EU as an agency of anti-worker and pro-austerity policies.

TUSC's core policies, which we have campaigned on since our inception, include the renationalisation of privatised public services, industries and utilities; defending the right to asylum and opposing racist immigration controls; and democratic public ownership of the banks and major companies. All of these policies go against the EU treaties. TUSC also opposes the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) being negotiated

TUSC petition

We the undersigned call on the Electoral Commission not to give taxpayers' money and other public resources to either the Vote Leave or Leave.EU campaigns, or any amalgam of them, in the forthcoming EU referendum.

There are millions of trade unionists, young people, anti-austerity campaigners and working class voters generally, whose opposition to the big business-dominated EU would not be represented in the referendum by these organisations.

Founding signatories

All names appear in a personal capacity:

Dave Nellist ex-Labour MP (1983-1992); **Janice Godrich** President PCS civil servants union; **Sean Hoyle** President RMT transport workers union; **John McNally** National Vice-President PCS; **Peter Pinkney** RMT President 2013-2015; **Paul McDonnell** RMT National Executive Committee (NEC); **John Reid** RMT NEC; **Dave Auger** Unison public sector workers union NEC; **Roger Bannister** Unison NEC; **Hugo Pierre** Unison NEC; **Karen Reissman** Unison NEC; **Polly Smith** Unison NEC; **Pete Glover** National Union of Teachers (NUT) NEC; **Jane Nellist** NUT NEC; **Stefan Simms** NUT NEC; **Eleanor Haven** PCS NEC; **Marianne Owens** PCS NEC; **Paul Williams** PCS NEC; **Carlo Morelli** University and College Union (UCU) NEC; **Sean Wallis** UCU NEC; **Saira Weiner** UCU NEC; **Mike Forster** Unison Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE); **Huw Williams** Unison Local Government SGE; **Gary Freeman** Unison Health SGE

A downloadable version of the petition is available from the TUSC website at www.tusc.org.uk/txt/360.pdf

between the EU and the US which will significantly increase corporate power.

These are the reasons why, following a decisive vote at our autumn conference, TUSC is campaigning against EU membership in the referendum.

The conference also agreed, however, to fully respect the right of those in our coalition who don't support this stand to campaign publicly for their own position.

And the same applies to the petition to the Electoral Commission. There will be socialists, trade union-

supporting a particular outcome to the referendum.

We condemn the mainstream media for promoting Ukip, Tory and other pro-austerity and racist establishment politicians and organisations as the only exit voices. We call on the Electoral Commission not to follow their lead and instead recognise that a significant proportion of those who will vote against the EU support basic socialist policies of workers' rights, public ownership, and opposition to austerity and racism.

ists and others who may support a Remain vote or abstention in the EU referendum, or don't agree with TUSC in general, but who still oppose giving political credibility and taxpayers' money to Ukip and Tory EU campaigners. The petition is for them too.



Trade unionists from across Europe march against EU austerity photo Paul Mattsson

Big victory at Small Heath School against academy attack



The picket line at Small Heath School on 19 January photo Jane Nellist

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

The third week of strike action in the Small Heath School dispute in Birmingham due to run from 2 to 4 February was called off after the sponsors of the proposed academy withdrew their interest on 29 January.

The scale of this victory can't be underestimated. Many schools in Birmingham have been turned into academies with no organised resistance from staff or parents and many schools thought that there was nothing that could be done to stop them.

Small Heath has proved them wrong; not only was the NUT teachers' union solid but members of other education unions, NASUWT and ATL, also came out on some of the strike days.

There is no doubt that the academy sponsors threw the towel in because they don't want to deal with a militant and campaigning union organisation.

The strike was well organised from day one, with a high level of participation from NUT members. Crucially, a number of meetings for parents were organised which helped ensure that the majority of the parents supported the strike.

Quality education

This victory also shows that those behind academies are out to turn education into a business and that a union branch that campaigns to defend quality education and against bullying management and cuts to staffing is something they don't want.

The proposal to get rid of 71 out of 200 staff has also been scrapped.

The suspension of NUT rep Simon O'Hara has still not been lifted (there is no doubt Simon was suspended to try to break the strike action, as reported in issue 886) and this is now the subject of a separate dispute, with NUT members unanimously voting to strike on 9-11, 16-18 and 23-25 February.

Please send messages of support to banut@btclick.com

LEICESTER TAXI DISPUTE: LABOUR'S RANK HYPOCRISY

Steve Score
Leicester Socialist Party

Taxi drivers in Leicester, organised in transport workers' union the RMT, are furious at the dictatorial attitude of the city's Labour mayor. They have already held a number of protests and 'go slows' that have gridlocked the city centre during rush hours.

At a protest meeting on 4 February 100 taxi drivers and supporters met to discuss their ongoing dispute over a penalty points system being imposed.

Livelihoods

The system could potentially result in the drivers losing their livelihoods over relatively minor infringements with no right to appeal.

Elected Labour mayor Peter Soulsby, who has refused to sit down and negotiate, was invited to the meeting but publicly said no.

RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said: "Surely an elected official should listen to their constituents? We understand there is limited parking space in Leicester city centre, but there aren't enough taxi ranks."

"But now the mayor is reducing them further in a fit of pique that is childish. Council officers are now targeting black cabs, discriminating in favour of private hire. That's

not acceptable." RMT branch secretary, Umar Khan, said:

"We did not oppose the actual scheme, but how it would be implemented. But we were not given the opportunity to be heard. We designed positive proposals.

"We understand the health and safety grounds for these rules such as failure to wear a name badge. But they can be forgotten or misplaced. It's not proportionate to automatically give points that could contribute to loss of licence.

Protest

"Why not have a place to display a name badge on the central screens of the taxi? Why not discuss the provision of taxi ranks?" "Drivers have invested more than £40,000 in their vehicles. If there aren't enough places to park - where can they go? We were forced to protest."

Steve Hedley summed up: "If you are suffering an injustice you don't suffer in silence, you rise up and fightback. The campaign won't stop here."



RMT branch secretary Umar Khan speaking photo Steve Score



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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@Socialist_party Text 07761 818206 /CWISocialistParty



photo Simon Haytack/Creative Commons

A Tesco worker

I almost laughed when I was told by my manager that I was getting a pay rise. From July I will be paid 23p more an hour. Great, what's not to like?

But I almost laughed because I'd already seen page four of the leaflet we were given which explains the 'changes to premiums', the changes being cuts. Cuts to Sunday, overtime and night working premiums - all of which I rely on to make my pay packet resemble a living one.

Overtime

I start work at 5am, meaning at the moment I get £2.18 on top of my hourly rate for the first hour of my shift each day. I work Sundays so get time-and-a-half for that and the same rate when I do overtime which is pretty often.

Cuts to premiums mean no 'rise' in store for Tesco workers

All this is being cut (as reported in last week's issue) meaning that I won't be getting a pay 'rise' at all.

That's why I almost laughed. I didn't though because there is nothing funny about struggling to make ends meet. And while I'm not getting a rise, there are other people I work with, especially part-timers and night staff, who are getting a pay cut due to the loss of premiums!

I became a trade union rep to make the working lives of my colleagues better but I felt I was doing the opposite when breaking the news of the

pay deal to them. I wish I could do more. I work on the back door and regularly talk to drivers and distribution workers who still have a vote on pay and have threatened taking industrial action.

I've also seen photos on Facebook of mass meetings in Ireland called by the Tesco workers' union there. This gives me confidence we can fight and I think Usdaw should do more to lead that fight, this is why I became a rep and why my members pay their subs.

South London: Library workers strike to save services

A Unite member

Library workers in Greenwich and Bromley have taken strike action against the proposed swingeing cuts to their respective libraries, despite the fact that Greenwich council has £320 million in reserves and Bromley council more than £400 million in its coffers.

Strikers joined the campaign group 'Speak up for libraries' in a lobby of parliament on 9 February where campaigners and Unite the union made the point that councils could actually be breaking the law by not providing a "comprehensive



Greenwich libraries picket line 9 February photo Wally Kennedy

and efficient" library service.

Bromley Unite walked out from 6 to 13 February in a long-running dispute over the council's privatisation programme, including at the 14 libraries where there are plans to replace professional staff with volunteers.

Meanwhile in Greenwich, Unite members have taken strike action from 9 to 12 February in protest against the proposed withdrawal of the mobile library service.

We have a huge democratic mandate with a 90% yes vote after

a turnout near 80%, in a library workforce where Unite density is 95%.

If not challenged, other closures will follow. That is why we are taking action. We cannot wait until it is too late.

In the same week Unison members in Lambeth took strike action as part of their continued campaign against plans to close five of the ten libraries and sell them off to become private gyms.

No hush, no quiet, these librarians want to riot!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNION BACKS NO-CUTS COUNCIL BUDGETS

The trade union representing the majority of local government workers on 5 February called on councils not to implement the latest round of cuts to jobs and services.

The vote on Unison's local government service group executive (SGE) called on councils to use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to plug the gap left by cuts in funding from central government.

Unite

This follows a similar vote by local government workers organised in general union Unite.

Supporters of the no-cuts position see this as a temporary measure to buy time while councils build up a mass campaign to win back funding from central government to fund public services.

The move by local government unions in favour of no-cuts budgets comes at a time when councils are facing

huge cuts in funding from central government.

This year alone the cut is 37% while cuts amounting to 75% are in store by 2018 (see pages 11-13).

Serious debate

Socialist Party member Mike Forster, a member of the local government SGE from Yorkshire, moved the proposal. He said of the decision:

"This was the most serious debate of our meeting, as the executive weighed up the huge crisis facing local government workers and services.

"We need now to approach the leadership of the Labour Party, together with Unite, to demand that they join Britain's two largest public sector unions in resisting these cuts all the way."



photo Paul Matheson

Continued action in crane drivers' dispute

Ainscough picket line in Leeds 8 February photo Iain Dalton



Crane drivers for Ainscough, the country's largest crane supplier, took a second day of strike action on 8 February.

A report of a picket line in Cardiff during the first strike was carried in last week's Socialist. Iain Dalton reports on the latest walkout from Leeds:

Striking for an improvement in their pay offer, pickets reported just how busy they and the company had been in the last year, with the company producing record profits. Given this, their anger at the pitiful pay offer the company has made, was compounded by the fact that seven years ago the company had failed to honour the second part of a two-year pay deal giving them a 60 pence an hour increase, claiming they would do so in better times.



[News in brief]

Blacklist action

As preparations were underway for major annual maintenance work at the huge Fawley refinery near Southampton, new workers turning up for induction faced lengthy queues to get on site. Blacklist campaigners were leafleting in protest at the exclusion of a Unite rep by contractors Hertel. Leaflets were well received as workers are clearly angry about workplace conditions at Fawley. Activists are determined that contractors will not be allowed to get away with this and are determined to protect the national agreement at Fawley. There is a lot of frustration that despite having handed in their CVs many have not been given the chance to work. The demand of jobs for all was given the thumbs up by many!

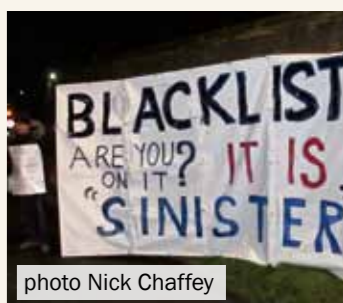


photo Nick Chaffey

Choristers clash

Entertainers' union Equity has announced it will ballot the chorus of the English National Opera (ENO) for industrial action over pay and job cuts. Choristers at ENO have been told to expect a 25% pay cut and lose at least four jobs. The 44-strong chorus sang Hail Poetry from The Pirates of Penzance to launch their campaign to save wages, jobs and, in their eyes, the very future of ENO. Hilary Hadley, the union's head of live performance, said the dispute was about more than the wages and job security of its members because the proposals amounted to "cultural vandalism".



photo Joshua Brown/Creative Commons

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MENTAL HEALTH: SYSTEM IN CRISIS



Mental health worker
South London

Mental health services are being cut to the bone and patients are dying as a result. There has been a 20% spike in deaths in mental health care in the last year.

Incidents where people with mental illness or those close to them suffer significant harm have risen by 34% in a year according to the Guardian.

Home treatment teams increasingly have to cope with patients who should be in hospital but aren't due to the closure of hospital beds. As a result suicide rates among those receiving home treatment have risen sharply.

Southwark News says a freedom of information request revealed that a quarter of nursing posts in South London and Maudsley NHS trust were vacant in July 2015.

The workload of all frontline staff is increasing and the pressures on us are mounting. There is an unacknowledged staffing crisis in most mental health community teams and management are not addressing this.

Results

Payment by results means that there are demands on staff to spend significant amounts of time completing admin which impacts on the amount of time available to offer patients and carers a service.

Individual staff who can't keep up with the crushing workload are placed on 'performance management.'

Rather than supporting and assisting patients we are instructed to use coaching methods to encourage patients to 'do things themselves.'

This advice is appropriate when a patient is in the final stages of recovery but is wholly inappropriate for the majority of patients we see who are in the acute phase of illness.

Services that help mental health patients recover like psychology, hearing voices groups, benefits advice and support and vocational help are being cut.

Medication and sections of the Mental Health Act including community treatment orders are increasingly the only options left to staff who are struggling to help patients recover from relapse.

Addiction services have been privatised throughout south London resulting in many not getting the assistance they need to support them to cut down on their substance misuse.

Increasingly, community mental health teams are struggling to cope with supporting those with addictions when many don't have the specialist training, knowledge and skills to offer this support.

Struggling

It is difficult for frontline NHS staff to understand the decisions made by senior hospital managers. The pay freeze and training cuts mean that hospital trusts are struggling to recruit permanent staff.

Trusts are either unable or unwilling to come up with incentives to attract permanent staff but paradoxically they end up spending far more money on temporary staff over the long run.

Agency staff don't have the same job security as permanent staff and if any agency nurse dares to speak out about problems or issues, they find themselves out of a job within a week.

Hospital beds are shut down while patients are increasingly being shipped out to private beds across the UK at treble the cost. These private admissions cause added stress to the patient and to families forced to travel to support them.

Pressing need

There is a pressing need for NHS staff to unite in solidarity and to become activists in the trade union movement. The trade unions should be the bodies organising to force NHS trusts and councils to make patient-centred choices about where public money is spent.

We must make concrete demands on health managers via our unions and stop accepting the lie that there is nothing that can be done locally and that there is no money for health or social care.

The facts

Mental Health Network NHS confederation factsheet published in January 2014 titled "Key facts and trends in mental health":

- Men in the lowest income group were three times more likely to have a common disorder than those in the highest income households (23.5% and 8.8% respectively)

- Young Minds' most recent survey found 67% of councils have reduced child and adolescent mental health services funding between 2010 and 2013

- In 2004, the Office for National Statistics estimated that one in ten children and young people between the ages of 5 and 16 had a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder. Children and adolescents with poor mental health have relatively worse prospects throughout their adult life

- People with mental health illness are almost twice as likely to die from coronary heart disease as the general population, four times more likely to die from respiratory disease, and are at a higher risk of being overweight or obese

- Around 30% of those suffering from a long-term physical health condition also have a mental health problem. The King's Fund estimates that between 12% and 18% of NHS expenditure and management of long-term conditions is linked to poor mental health and wellbeing

- Compared with the general population, people with mental health conditions are one and a half times more likely to live in rented housing, with greater uncertainty about how long they can remain in their current home

photo Maxres/Creative Commons

MY BATTLE FOR THE HELP I NEEDED

Amalia

I was told by my GP that I have severe depression and anxiety on 1 October 2015. Now I had a name for it. And suddenly whoosh, I joined the one in five that will at some stage of their life suffer from some form of depression.

What I have is the most common combination for mental health sufferers.

Two years ago, I was assaulted by a man who was being chased by the police. I landed with my full weight on my hip, resulting in the fracture of the neck of the femur. The ambulance didn't come so friends gave me a lift to Whipps Cross Hospital, east London.

I was there only earlier, protesting cuts and attacks on staff. I stayed for a week. I was on sick leave for about six months.

Suicidal thoughts developed during those six months, I was home and totally dependent on others to be washed, fed etc. I told someone and they said I should ring the Samaritans.

I never did. But as far as they were concerned they ticked the box of telling me about a phone service. When I returned to work things changed; but only temporarily.

Feeling angry

I soon went back to often crying and waking up feeling angry at the person who attacked me. They never caught him and they never will by the sound of it.

I suppressed it. I had to worry about walking again and being able to function like I did before the injury. I can't. I went to the GP because of physical pains I was having and decided to talk about it. That time I was given a questionnaire.

I had to circle numbers, for example: 'From one to five how often do you think about killing yourself?' I was told I have severe depression.

Then I was told I was going to be referred to psychology services. They rang me more than three weeks after the diagnosis. According to the GP that's good!

They talk to you on the phone for 30 minutes and just ask you to give them numbers like the previous questionnaire.

After that they say they will ring you in two weeks at the latest. Again, it took them longer. When they did call they told me who my therapist was and what sort of therapy I'd get - in



Things got worse and I couldn't go out of the house alone. I collapsed at a station and had to be picked up from the floor



Coping outside hospital was difficult and lonely photo Martin Howard/Creative Commons

12-14 weeks.

"But I've got worse since then, I can't go out of the house alone" I told them. I collapsed at a station and I was literally picked up from the floor by station staff. They replied: "We are not an emergency service, madam, but please talk to your GP or go to A&E."

In the meantime there are other services in my area. These are run by charities. Some use zero-hour contracts for some of their staff because of "the nature of mental health". Sometimes even these have no beds and enormous waiting lists to access any service they provide.

Charity

I understand that in some form or other charities get money from the state, therefore the taxpayers, us. It's an ideological problem of top down crumb giving.

This money should be given to the NHS. Charities, no matter how good their intentions and how people rely on them, should be replaced by properly staffed mental health services, publicly run and free for all through the NHS.

Charities are not accountable to society and might not be around forever. And our health isn't a matter of charity - it's our right to have free, public access to decent health services.

I never thought I would need mental health services. We never know what life will bring us. I speak up because of two reasons - firstly to show the faces behind the numbers and the statistics, the people behind the facts and figures.

And secondly, to highlight what cuts to these services are doing to us, how it's related to everything that is happening to the NHS and to wider austerity issues.

Despite mental health often being referred to as being a cross-class issue, it really isn't. This government has ministers like Iain Dun-

can-Smith who dares to claim that he personally can get by on £7 a day, at the same time claiming £39 for just one breakfast!

Fight

We have people leading some unions that don't give the fight that is needed both for their own members as well as wider society.

But working class people can see that austerity policies are killing people by pushing people with mental health problems into work because of 'fit to work' schemes and benefit sanctions!

And we will fight back.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- Reinvestment in social and mental health work - to allow genuine social work with manageable caseloads, to protect and assist those who require support
- Abolish the Health and Social Care Act - no cuts, closures or privatisation
- Support health workers - united action by all health unions to defend our NHS
- Scrap the Private Finance Initiative and cancel the debt
- Nationalise pharmaceutical companies and all private health providers
- Investment not cuts - for a well-funded NHS, free at the point of use

“EXCELLENT AND INSPIRING” SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY CONFERENCE

Robin Clapp
South West regional secretary

Long-standing Socialist Party member Mark Baker declared it to be “excellent”, while Nick from the soon-to-be-formed Torbay branch left “feeling very fired up and fighting the good fight with so many solid people”.

Aaron from Plymouth summed up the mood best of all: “It may have pissed down all day, but it never dampened our spirits. Really inspired by the Socialist Party. Despite all the chaos in the world, I feel at home here and the future may well belong to us.”

Brilliant

These were just a selection of texts and messages sent to me after our brilliantly successful Socialist Party South West conference on 6 February, where 70 members from 20 different villages, towns and cities across the region met in Bristol to discuss global and British events under the title of ‘a world in crisis’. Others sent apologies, many of them young members trapped in retail zero-hour jobs who dared not



Peter Taaffe introduced the discussion photo Matt Carey

risk missing a shift for fear of being thrown on the stones.

General secretary Peter Taaffe provided the incisive introduction which drew appreciation measured

not only by the stormy applause that followed but also by a magnificent collection which raised £2,000 for the party’s fighting fund.

Workshops took place on selling

the Socialist, trade unions, building more support among women and developing our key youth and student interventions. The day was rounded off with a general session



National Conference 2016

Saturday 13 February

9.30am-6pm

Venue: Coventry SQ Club,
Ringway Whitefriars,
Coventry, CV1 2DT

on party building.

A new branch in Cornwall which the day before had defied Atlantic storms to stage our first sale of the Socialist in Falmouth since 1974, big anti-cuts successes in Torbay (see other article) and the likelihood of a second branch in Gloucestershire during this year, were all causes for further celebration.

Moving ever westwards, who’s going to bet against us building next on the Isles of Scilly!

Torbay

“A tale of two towns”

Alex Moore
Torquay and south Devon Socialist Party

Torbay may be the English Riviera for the well-heeled, but for many working people it is a place of poverty, insecurity and low wages. Torbay Council in South Devon openly accepts that the further £32.4 million of cuts it has planned may result in failure to maintain statutory levels of service.

Around 70 people, including trade unionists and community organisers, attended a ‘Torbay talks back’ anti-cuts conference on 30 January. Opening the conference, Socialist Party member and conference chair, Nick Slater, thanked Torbay Trades Council, Torbay NUT, the Green Party and the Socialist Party for making the event possible.

In a session called ‘reports from the frontline’ in which local people,

rather than experts, were encouraged to speak, Barrie Woods from Torbay Trades Council described “a tale of two towns with one living in paradise and the other struggling to survive.”

For me one of the most telling contributions came from a community worker who carried out a primary school survey of what the children would like for Christmas and top of the list were “cheaper electricity bills”, “warmer houses” and “safer parks”.

Robin Clapp explained that while wishing Jeremy Corbyn the best, workers could not afford to sit aside if Labour Party councillors and others were not prepared to oppose cuts - this idea was warmly received.

A social worker in Torbay commented on hearing Robin: “It was the best speech of all, he took me right back to my days in the Militant in Derby during the miners’ strike.”

Anger against plans to close Bradford libraries

Ian Slattery
Bradford Socialist Party

The planned decimation of library services in the Bradford area of West Yorkshire has led to angry scenes at recent ‘consultation’ meetings, where details about the possible closure of eleven libraries have been put on the table.

Blaming budget pressures, Bradford Council proposes to fully fund just seven libraries in the region, with the other eleven to be run by volunteers or closed.

Socialist Party members are among those organising opposition to these plans, to give a voice to the anger that exists on the issue.

The council will debate the issue on 25 February. This leaves predictably little time to regroup and organise resistance, but they will have a shock later if they expect the meeting to take place without a wall of opposition outside.

With Labour running Bradford council there is hope among some that a re-think may yet happen. As we made clear at the consultations, the £218 million they have in use-

NHS campaign gains support

We held our first public activity in Redditch town centre on 30 January where the maternity unit at Alexandra hospital unit is under threat of permanent closure.

The response was very good from passers-by with many saying how the hospital and particularly that unit had saved the lives of members of their family. We sold 30 papers and raised over £40 fighting fund in one and a half hours.

Ruthie McNally
Worcester Socialist Party

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

| | £ received | £ target | January-March 2016 | | | | Deadline 1 April 2016 | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------|--|--|------------|
| North West | 1,687 | 1,800 | | | | | | | | 94% |
| Yorkshire | 2,308 | 2,900 | | | | | | | | 80% |
| West Midlands | 1,445 | 2,100 | | | | | | | | 69% |
| Northern | 309 | 600 | | | | | | | | 52% |
| South West | 676 | 1,400 | | | | | | | | 48% |
| Wales | 1,052 | 2,300 | | | | | | | | 46% |
| Southern | 414 | 1,200 | | | | | | | | 35% |
| London | 1,782 | 6,100 | | | | | | | | 29% |
| East Midlands | 333 | 1,600 | | | | | | | | 21% |
| South East | 109 | 750 | | | | | | | | 15% |
| Eastern | 139 | 1,200 | | | | | | | | 12% |
| England and Wales | 68 | 3,050 | | | | | | | | 2% |
| TOTAL | 10,328 | 25,000 | | | | | | | | 41% |

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
- cheques payable to ‘Socialist Party’, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD





photo Serena Cheung

Portsmouth: support for anti-austerity stand

Vladimir Bortun

On 28 January Portsmouth TUSC organised a public meeting on how to oppose the city council's cuts by putting forward an alternative no-cuts budget.

Kym Maria from Sisters Uncut spoke focussing on the upcoming £180,000 cuts to domestic violence services in the city, which will mean that from now on only high risk victims will be given direct support in designated day centres.

Socialist Party member Chris Pickett emphasised that the council intends to implement £11 million in cuts (including 100 jobs) despite having £16 million in reserve funds and an extra £2.6 million profit from the Portsmouth International Port! These figures clearly show that there is an alternative to cuts if there is political will for that.

Members of the local Labour and Momentum branches present at the meeting fully agreed with the need for such an alternative. They pledged to try and pass a motion through their organisations to support only those Labour candidates committed to opposing austerity. One of them even said that not only will they agree with TUSC standing candidates against Labour councillors who endorse cuts, but that they will actively support us in the election campaign.

Rob Williams

The GMB union has revealed that there are over 25,000 redundancies in the offing at 52 English, Scottish and Welsh councils.

This is a devastating total on top of the huge numbers of local authority workers sacked since Osborne's austerity offensive was launched in 2010. Unison, the biggest union in local government, claims that in that period half a million council workers have lost their jobs.

When you consider that the GMB figure is from just 52 councils out of over 400, hundreds of thousands of workers could face the dole.

As we enter council budget-setting season, a much clearer picture of this catastrophe will come into view. Every job lost is yet another essential service strained to breaking point, outsourced into the private sector marketplace, or simply closed.

Onslaught

These developments bring into sharp focus the issue of how the local authority unions fight back against this onslaught.

Unite's Scottish secretary, Pat Rafferty, has correctly attacked the SNP-led Scottish Government for passing on Tory cuts: "Make no mistake our councils are being forced an austerity agenda that's been manufactured by the Tories in Westminster but delivered by the Scot-

tish government". But there is a far more muted response by the trade unions when it comes to Labour-led councils and the Welsh Assembly Government.

The letter issued to Labour councillors by Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell before Christmas (saying that they must set 'legal budgets') is being used by right-wing Labour councillors to justify implementing the cuts.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national chair and former Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist has written to Jeremy and John to request a discussion about working together to avoid what we consider to be a mistaken approach to the cuts. We believe that they do not appreciate the catastrophe that is facing councils, their workforces and communities.

Under former Labour leader Miliband, the leaders of the council unions seemed, at best, conflicted about what to demand of Labour councils. This was reflected in their lack of support for Labour councillors who rebelled and voted against cuts.

But also, there was no coordinated national campaign of industrial action across the local authorities, meaning that every union branch largely fought alone. On top of the pulling out of the pension strike in late 2011, this lack of a serious fight only emboldened the Tories to go further.

The election of a left, anti-austerity Labour leader should have transformed the situation. But where

have the demands been from the leaders of the main affiliated unions representing council and fire service workers to the new Labour leadership about calling on Labour councillors to resist?

Outgoing GMB leader Sir Paul Kenny has railed against Jeremy because of his opposition to Trident and its potential threat to 19,000 defence workers' jobs. But have he and other union general secretaries been beating a path to Corbyn's door about potentially ten times as many job losses in local government? Over 20,000 of the redundancies claimed by the GMB are in either Labour majority controlled councils or where they lead the local authority.

Contrast

In contrast to some of the leaderships of the unions, the national local government committees of both Unite and Unison have passed motions from Socialist Party members which call on Labour councils to set no-cuts budgets.

The massive level of public sector cuts means that the struggle can't be postponed until Corbyn possibly wins a general election four years away. In any case, Labour is in power in over 100 councils and in Wales.

A clear anti-cuts stand that calls out to Labour councillors to resist in the council chamber and link up with the unions and communities is needed. This could build a mass movement to face down the new tidal wave of cuts and take on what is a weak Tory government.



Have the trade union leaders been beating a path to Corbyn's door about these job losses?

Photo Louise Whittle



LACK OF STRATEGY AND EXCLUSIONS THREATEN MOMENTUM

On Saturday 6 February Momentum organised its first national committee. The response of John McTernan, former Blairite advisor, was: "It's war." Well, if it is a war, and it is, then Momentum is unfortunately setting itself up for defeat.

Where was the democracy in this process? An organisation that claimed to be open, broad and, in its initial aims, "involving all those who support Jeremy Corbyn inside and outside Labour" had attempted to appoint regional delegates.

When protests came in, it then limited those who could stand to Labour members only. The details of the meeting were organised like a secret society - it was impossible for others to leaflet and discuss with delegates.

Excluded

Why was it done like this? The primary purpose was to exclude the serious forces on the left, in particular the Socialist Party. Outrageously for example, Tony Mulhearn, a leader of the magnificent battle of Liverpool City Council against Thatcher's onslaught in the 1980s, was excluded from a meeting in the city.

But they will not succeed in excluding the Socialist Party and our ideas from the battle.

A report from Labour's local government conference, also held over the weekend, confirms that there is a war on between the two parties

that exist within Labour. Right-winger Luke Akehurst reports that these councillors are "mad as hell with the antics of the national leadership".

This is the mountain that must be overcome - and that won't be done by an attempt to mollify the right wing.

Compare the approach of the Momentum leadership to the local government committees in the Unite and Unison trade unions. There, Socialist Party members have successfully moved resolutions that call on councils not to implement the latest round of cuts to jobs and services. This shows what is necessary - the creation of a mass vehicle for working class political representation that has been absent in Britain for nearly 30 years.



The situation of two parties in one cannot continue indefinitely

In Momentum meetings across the country, Socialist Party members have found interest and enthusiasm for the strategy of fighting council cuts - by calling on Corbynista councillors to fight for no-cuts budgets and refuse to pass on Tory austerity.

We will continue to put forward such a strategy, in Momentum meetings and elsewhere. If Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Momentum are pursuing this energetically it would bring millions of people to the party as fighters.

But the Momentum leadership has issued no serious strategy to rally the millions angry about austerity into action.

The situation of two parties in one cannot continue indefinitely. Will a new anti-austerity party come from Corbyn and McDonnell lead-

ing a fight that can force out the Blairite rump from Labour? Or will the enthusiastic Corbynistas, without a clear lead, give up on the idea that Labour is the vehicle for their struggle?

The movement against the bombing of Syria gave a glimpse of the potential if a clear appeal was made to the working class and the youth to fight the right. Around 70,000 people contacted their MPs at Jeremy's request to demand a No vote to the Tories' warmongering.

This was not an exclusively Labour Party event by any means - for example in Walthamstow Socialist Party members joined with others inside and outside Labour to march on local MP Stella Creasy's office and demand a No vote.

As a result of this pressure, four times more Labour MPs voted with Jeremy Corbyn than had nominated him to stand for leader.

Angry

The 66 Red Tories who sided with Cameron faced calls of deselection from angry young people and workers, with Socialist Party members making the call on TV in the face of vicious attacks from the right wingers in Labour and the media.

We warned that this odium was as nothing compared to how the right wing would attempt to crush any serious moves to curb the interests of the 1%, such as nationalisation of the energy companies, an end to the anti-trade union laws or the scrapping of student fees.

Instead of readying the troops for future battles, unfortunately, the leadership of Momentum when faced with attacks chose to abandon the call for re-selection and attacked the Socialist Party for raising it.

The primary task for the left is to mobilise the millions who could be drawn to a militant anti-austerity banner and the building of a political organisation that can give it a voice. The Momentum leadership's decisions show it is not at all prepared for this struggle.



all photos Paul Mattsson

Birmingham: socialists kicked out of Momentum

Ted Woodley
Birmingham Central Socialist Party

In January I received an email from 'Team Momentum' inviting me to its new North Birmingham group's inaugural meeting on 1 February.

I was invited to help to "grow our movement for a more equal, democratic and decent society." As a previous Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) parliamentary candidate for the area I duly attended, looking forward to positively engaging with supporters of Jeremy Corbyn and other socialists.

However 20 minutes later I was walking back to my car. Why? I'd been told to leave because I was a member of the Socialist Party.

The chair announced that Momentum HQ had issued a set of rules for local groups, one of which was to bar members of other political parties, specifically mentioning the Socialist Party, from Momentum meetings.

The first casualty was 72-year-old Zarina Bhatia, an ex-Labour Party member who'd resigned in 2003 over the war in Iraq, now a member

of Left Unity. She raised her hand to ask if she should leave the meeting on account of this ruling. The chair said that he thought that would be "for the best". She protested, gathered her things, and left. I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

The chair asked if anyone else was in any other parties, I identified myself and was then told that I must leave the meeting. I protested but the chair said they must comply with the national rules and that if I wanted to stay I should join Labour.

I said that that I wouldn't be allowed to join Labour even if I wanted to but that I, and the Socialist Party, support Jeremy Corbyn. I said that it was crazy for Momentum to exclude fellow socialists from a meeting of anti-austerity campaigners and that we should collaborate and fight to make Jeremy's policies a reality.

If Momentum is to be a success it needs to throw its doors open to all those who want to fight austerity, not just Labour Party members. It should be putting its energy into kicking out the careerists and the Blairites, not the socialists.

Leeds meeting expresses Corbyn and McDonnell's contradictions

Iain Dalton
Socialist Party member in Leeds East constituency

Hundreds crammed into a Leeds meeting hall recently to hear Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell speak at a meeting organised by left-wing Leeds East MP, Richard Burgon.

Burgon opened the meeting commenting that there was nowhere he would like to be more than in a room full of people wanting to change society. The discussion that followed whetted people's appetite for more discussion and action to challenge the austerity agenda.

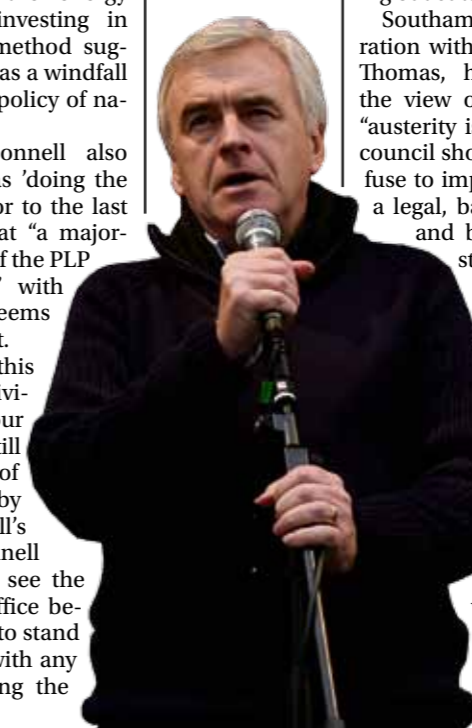
In recounting the whirlwind process of the Corbyn for leader campaign, McDonnell raised again many of the policies that had won Corbyn so much support - from free education to reinstating trade union rights, a mass council house building programme to an end to privatisation in the NHS.

Responding to the looming cli-

mate change catastrophe McDonnell raised "making the energy companies pay for investing in renewables." Yet the method suggested to deliver this was a windfall tax rather than a bold policy of nationalisation.

Unfortunately McDonnell also praised Ed Miliband as 'doing the best job he could' prior to the last election. His claim that "a majority, in fact virtually all of the PLP have come to terms" with Corbyn's leadership, seems a stretch to say the least.

Notwithstanding this papering over of divisions inside the Labour Party, the meeting still expressed the breath of fresh air represented by Corbyn and McDonnell's leadership. McDonnell expressed his wish to see the Tories kicked out of office before 2020 and pledged to stand shoulder to shoulder with any trade union in resisting the anti-union laws.



SOUTHAMPTON: SILENCE ABOUT CUTS WON'T HELP CORBYN SUCCEED

Nick Chaffey

Southampton's Labour council is about to propose the largest cuts to jobs and services since it was thrown into office following the successful strike of council workers in 2011. Promising to be the friend of those facing the brunt of Tory cuts, it quickly became part of the problem, expelling from the Labour group councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, who defied its budget cuts.

Following Jeremy Corbyn's election there was a hope that things would change. Hundreds have joined Labour - whose local membership now tops 2,000.

There is an overwhelming mood of anger against cuts across the city. Thousands protested at the closure of the Bitterne NHS walk-in service but the councillors failed to lift their little fingers to oppose it or use their council powers to refer the decision to the secretary of state for health. Now furious council tenants are threatening a rent strike in a tower block that has just one working lift for over 100 families.

It is no surprise then that council leader Simon Letts seized on Jeremy Corbyn's letter to councillors in December, tweeting: "A clear message from the Labour leadership today on what is expected of Labour councillors at budget setting meetings."

But councillors do have a choice. How can they build a campaign against austerity, as they claim to be doing, while at the same time carrying out cuts?

Southampton TUSC, in collaboration with Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, has consistently voiced the view of John McDonnell that "austerity is a political choice". The council should use its powers to refuse to implement further cuts, set a legal, balanced, no-cuts budget and build a campaign to restore government funding to the city. On this stand both Keith and Don have been re-elected to the council with huge majorities.

In the autumn Southampton TUSC launched its own budget consultation, asking people what services they want the city to provide and whether they would support a campaign of defiance by the council. Hundreds have completed our

forms, 99% backing the demand that the Labour council refuses to vote for further cuts.

Labour Party members were reluctantly allowed to attend the Labour councillors' group meeting but only after the budget was decided! Party officials have refused to hand over new members' information to party activists. And Momentum has failed to organise a single meeting.

Some on the Labour left have criticised calls to challenge the Labour right wing, have spoken in defence of the council leader and ridiculed the idea of a 'no-cuts' policy.

Attempts to discuss the 'no-cuts' motion agreed by the Unite local government committee at Southampton Unite Community branch were obstructed and ultimately delayed until after the budget.

The challenge remains to defeat the right of the Labour Party, which will only happen with a determined struggle to mobilise the Corbyn supporters and transform the party as so many have claimed to wish to do. However there is not an unlimited amount of time.

How does it assist the fight against austerity if the Labour councillors' mantra of 'we have no choice' goes unopposed? Silence risks throwing away the hope of hundreds that joined the Labour Party to fight back.

Socialist Party members in Southampton gave our full support in 2012 to Labour's rebels Keith Morrell and Don Thomas and their successful fight to save Oaklands pool. We will continue to offer our support to all those who stand up and oppose the cuts in deeds as well as words and will back any Labour councillor who seeks the road of resistance and refuses to vote for cuts.

But we will not sit on our hands and allow those who carry out cuts to go unopposed in the local elections in May.



How does it assist the fight against austerity if the Labour councillors' mantra of 'we have no choice' goes unopposed?





Ireland: General election campaign launch

The Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA), in which the Socialist Party plays a leading role, held a hugely successful election launch meeting in Dublin with over 300 attending. The meeting was addressed by Socialist Party member and AAA TD (MP) Paul Murphy (facing a judicial witch-hunt by the state over his opposition to the government's unjust water charges), along with Socialist Party TDs Ruth Coppinger and Joe Higgins (who is retiring). The general election will be held on 26 February using a system of proportional representation.



South Africa: Success in outsourcing battle

The #outsourcingmustfall campaign initiated by the Workers and Socialist Party (CWI in South Africa) in November last year, is winning! Last month, after ten days of strike action, University of Pretoria management signed an agreement meeting all of the workers' demands. See www.workerssocialistparty.co.za



Taiwan: Campaigning for workers' rights

CWI members (above) in Taipei, Taiwan, campaigning for the Nan Shan life insurance workers in a long-running dispute with the company over pension rights and an end to contract labour.

US elections

SANDERS' SOCIALIST MESSAGE RATTLING THE ESTABLISHMENT

The opening US presidential primaries showed support for 'non-establishment' candidates in both the Republican and Democratic Party caucuses. Significantly, in the Democratic Party contest, avowed 'socialist' Bernie Sanders is expected to win the New Hampshire primary, having run establishment front runner Hillary Clinton to a 'virtual tie' in Iowa. Against this electoral backdrop, **Joshua Koritz** of Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the CWI in the USA) looks at the prospects for developing a genuine socialist voice to represent the majority of Americans.

For a candidate openly calling himself a "democratic socialist" who, a year ago, was 40 points behind Hillary Clinton in opinion polls, the Iowa result marks a victory for Bernie Sanders. His call for a "political revolution" against the billionaire class interrupted the coronation of Clinton as head of a Wall Street-dominated party. The Sanders campaign is inspiring young people and working class people to get active and fight to elect a candidate standing up for their interests.

The Iowa polls showed high turnouts, driven mainly by Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders supporters who explicitly wanted outsider candidates - yet more evidence of the enthusiasm and attention that Trump on the right, and Sanders on the left, are generating. Working people all over the US are looking for alternatives to the broken political system. On the right, the growth of sexist, racist, and anti-immigrant ideas presents a real threat and needs to be answered.

However, despite the incessant media focus on Trump, Sanders' results reflect the generalised move to the left in US society. This shift in the past period is also seen in the massive impact of the "Black Lives Matter" movement, the victories for LGBTQ equality, and the progress of campaigns for \$15 an hour minimum wage.

What next?

The impact of the Iowa and New Hampshire results will affect subsequent primaries. The standard media narrative is that Nevada and South Carolina, still to vote before "Super Tuesday," states with larger non-white populations than Iowa and New Hampshire, will be much tougher terrain for Sanders.

But Sanders' support in the black community is growing fast and is intersecting a growing revolt against a Democratic establishment which pretends to have an anti-racist agenda while presiding over mass incarceration and police brutality.

In addition, polls reveal Sanders' massive popularity with young people, especially young women. The growing support for Bernie in this demographic, mere months ago considered a stronghold of the Clinton campaign, is just another symptom of the profound mistrust and anger against the corporate political system and its corporate candidates.

All told, Sanders has real possibilities of doing well in a number of upcoming primaries.

Strong results for him will push the Democratic Party establishment towards increasingly overt hostility towards Sanders. This is already starting to happen. As Sanders wins delegates and the media is forced to take his campaign seriously, policies like a \$15 an hour mini-



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mum wage seem more realisable to more Americans, despite establishment hostility.

Yet there should be no illusions on how difficult it will be for Sanders to win the nomination against the massive resources of the Democratic establishment and the corporate media.

It will take building a movement truly independent of the Democratic Party machine to defeat it. Recent polls showing Sanders would defeat Trump by a bigger margin than Clinton are undermining her claim to be



Bernie Sanders, building on the electoral success of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, has tapped into a groundswell of working class support for socialist policies photo Gage Skidmore/Creative Commons

more electable. But the Democratic leadership and establishment will not accept having a candidate who refuses corporate money and stands for key reforms in the interests of working people. It will do everything in its power to prevent this outcome.

The Democratic Party establishment will point to the threat represented by Trump and Cruz as a reason to rally behind Clinton, along with continuing attacks on Sanders as too far left and unelectable.

To combat these arguments, Sanders supporters who want to win his programme and win the nomination will need to organise independently from the Democratic establishment to fight for Sanders' "political revolution."

Let's build the #Movement4Bernie that Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative have launched - independent of corporate cash, independent of the Democratic Party machine.

Trump and the right

In the Republican Party, the continued rightward trajectory of its base has meant that Cruz, Trump, and Carson collectively demolished the establishment corporate candidates by two to one. This reflects the de-

gree to which the whole process has gotten out of the establishment's control.

Most revealing - the corporate darling, Jeb Bush, who has a Super PAC (Political Action Committee - a fundraising organisation) with over \$100 million in it, received barely 3% in Iowa and was beaten by outsiders Ben Carson and Rand Paul.

Bernie Sanders has neutralised Hillary Clinton's wide lead for the Democratic presidential nomination since the start of year. Both candidates are dead-heating nationally, says a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted between 2-5 February, following the Iowa caucus

Marco Rubio did gain significant momentum in Iowa, and if the anti-establishment vote continues to be split between Trump and Cruz, this may represent a path to victory for Rubio and the Republican establishment.

But let's be clear: Rubio is no moderate. For example, he opposes abortion rights even after rape and

incest, and has pledged to roll back marriage equality.

In Iowa, while Cruz won big with regular caucus goers, Trump was heavily popular with first-time caucus goers who put a premium on their candidate being an "outsider."

Mainstream rejected

Large numbers of voters have rejected corporate mainstream politics. Political space is opening for the left to use to build an independent party that unapologetically fights for working people. Otherwise, the threat from the right wing, with its misogyny, racism, and pro-business populism, will grow.

Sanders' predicted win in New Hampshire, on top of an impressive showing in Iowa, means his "political revolution against the billionaire class" could gain momentum.

While young people and progressive workers grow more and more excited, the political establishment will step up its attacks against Sanders and his platform. The Democratic Party establishment will prove, by its actions, that winning Sanders' platform is not possible through their party - further alienating a new generation who will increasingly search for answers outside the two-party system.

This is why Socialist Alternative and #Movement4Bernie are calling for building a new party of the 99%. While Bernie has repeatedly and mistakenly said he would support Hillary if he loses, we see in his campaign the outlines of a desperately needed, new left political force in American society.

For updates on the presidential election contest and more US political issues see www.socialistalternative.org



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.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, 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. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

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.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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TORIES BANKRUPTING



Trade unionists must organise fightback

Simon Carter

The National Health Service (NHS) in England is in financial meltdown due to the Tories' relentless drive toward privatisation. According to Chris Hopson, chief executive of NHS Providers, the NHS's accumulated deficit is likely to balloon to £2.5 billion this year - jeopardising patient care as health trusts cut back on staff.

This deficit is largely as a result of successive governments pursuing rip-off Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts.

In Barts, east London, the largest hospitals trust in England, a PFI redevelopment of the Royal London Hospital has left it owing £135 million - up from £93 million since last year. But while private contractors are quids-in, the trust has a shortage of 1,044 nursing posts and is making cuts. A Barts health worker (speaking

under anonymity) told the Socialist: "This debt should be dropped and repudiated - it has absolutely nothing to do with the increasingly overworked staff responsible for providing health services to some of the poorest communities in the country."

Urgent

"What's urgently needed is a mass national demonstration called by the TUC and built seriously by the health unions as part of coordinated, generalised, strike action to defend the junior doctors and student nurse bursaries and to kick out big business from our NHS."

"Such a programme of action, supported by my union branch, will be hugely popular with both health workers and a working class angered by the increasing brutality of these cuts."

- Junior doctors demo page 2
- Mental health system in crisis - see pages 8-9

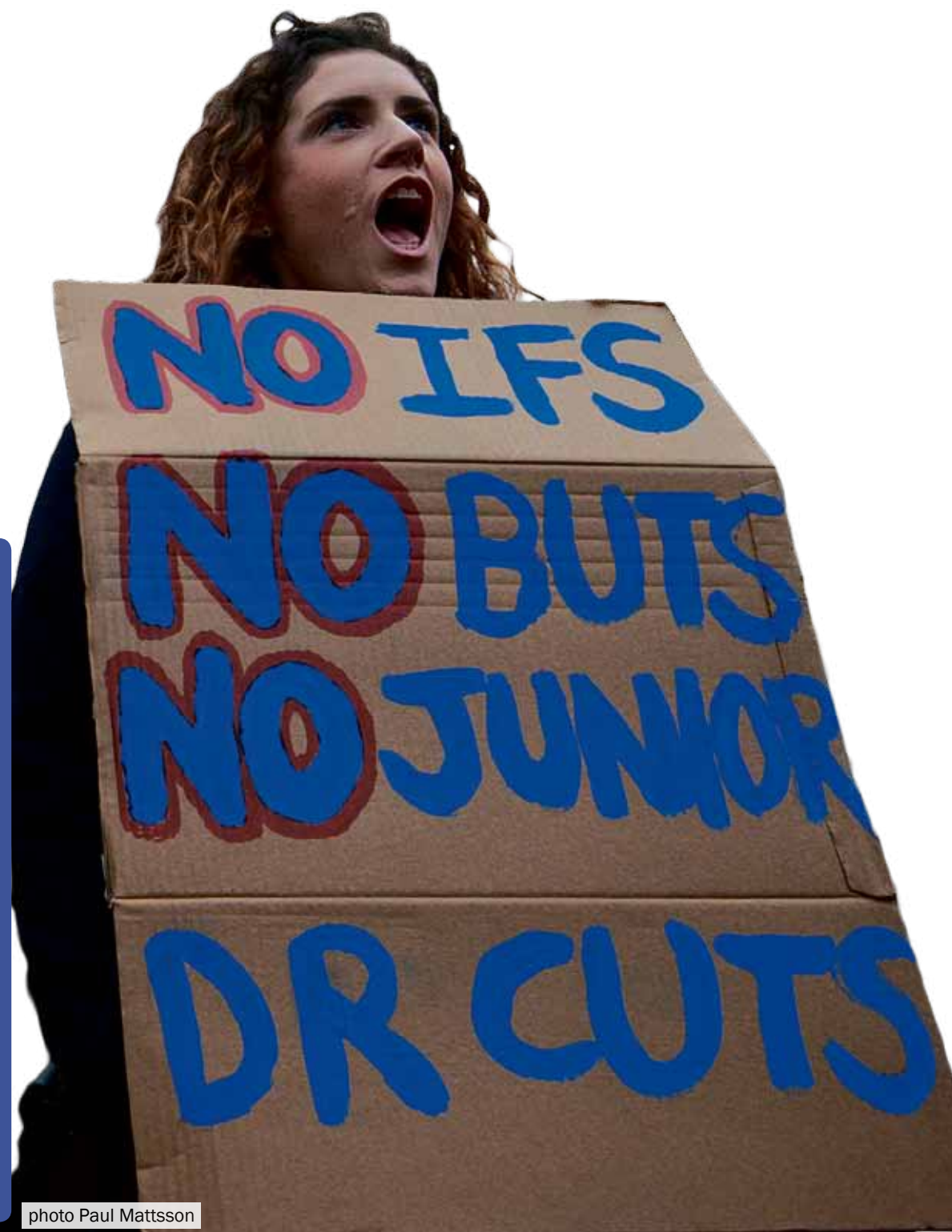


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