



Putting the millions before the billionaires!

Socialist policies

New Labour has allowed a massive increase in inequality. Conservative and LibDem policies show that they would have done the same if they were in office.

What would socialists do differently?

WORK AND INCOME

New Labour's record

- Maintained a poverty level minimum wage which continues to discriminate against young workers.
- Watched the gender pay gap increase so that women are earning on average 22.6% less than men.

What we call for:

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. 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. Enforce equal pay.

UNEMPLOYMENT

New Labour's record:

- Allowed unemployment to rise to nearly 2.5 million, officially 7.8%, but in reality much higher, particularly among the young.
- Claim to be tackling unemployment while making plans to sack 100,000+ of the government's own employees.

What we call for:

- No job cuts. Full employment through a massive programme of socially useful public works with a living wage of at least £8 an hour and a maximum 35-hour week.
- No cheap labour apprenticeships and unpaid internships. Guarantee at least the minimum wage and a job at the end.

PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

New Labour's record:

- Launched a vicious propaganda campaign against the right of public sector employees to a decent pension after allowing private sector bosses to take pension contribution holidays and close virtually all final-salary pension schemes.
- Kept those kicked out of work in poverty with a measly £60 a week, even less for the under 25s.

What we call for:

- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with earnings now.
- Reject 'welfare to work'. For the



No to cuts in jobs and services. Make the bosses pay!

right to decent benefits without compulsion or means testing.

PUBLIC SERVICES

New Labour's record

- Spent £63 billion on PFI building contracts in the NHS, more than five times the value of the assets built.
- Introduced university tuition fees and then announced more than half a billion pounds worth of cuts to the higher education budget – pay more, for less!

What we call for:

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, free at the point of use, in full public ownership and under democratic control.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education available at any age. Abolish tuition fees and introduce a living grant.

HOUSING

New Labour's record:

- Allowed house repossessions to reach a 14-year high, with 46,000 homes repossessed last year.
- Allowed the worst housing crisis since World War Two to develop with next to no council homes built while five million people wait for social housing.

What we call for:

- No repossessions. Nationalised banks should offer cheap loans and mortgages for housing.
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing to provide good housing with low rents.

INFRASTRUCTURE

New Labour's record:

- Continued to subsidise private companies on the railways by nearly £5 billion last year while trying to wreck Royal Mail in the same way, through privatisation.
- Allowed energy corporate profits to soar. Gas and electric companies made profit of £105 per customer on average last year.

What we call for:

- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system. Renationalise the railways and the buses.
- End fuel poverty. Cut fuel bills immediately. Take the gas and electric companies into public ownership.

DEMOCRACY AND SLEAZE

New Labour's record:

- Whatever they like! Whether it is going to war or privatising public services, the government has ignored the views of those who elected them.
- Stuck their noses in the trough. MPs from all three establishment parties have been claiming dodgy expenses on top of their generous £64,766 per year salaries.

What we call for:

- No MP to receive more than the average wage of a worker, to be re-elected every two years, to be accountable and subject to recall and to have their expenses open to the scrutiny of their constituents.
- Abolish the House of Lords.
- Introduce a democratic form of proportional representation.

THE BANKS

New Labour's record:

- Continued the Tories' policies of deregulating the City – allowing the banks and finance companies to do whatever they like.
- When this resulted in a collapse of the banking system, taxpayers' money was used to underwrite the banks to the tune of £1.2 trillion.
- Allowed most of the 'banksters' to remain in charge and to continue claiming huge salaries.

What we call for:

- Nationalise all the banks on the basis of democratic public ownership. Compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.
- End city fat cats' bonuses, golden parachutes, and gold-plated pensions.
- For a socialist government to exercise a monopoly of foreign trade, as a means of controlling all imports and exports including capital movements. No 'flight of capital'.
- Reject the dictates of the ratings agencies, the European Central Bank and other unaccountable and unelected international finance bodies. For international workers' solidarity and economic planning across borders.

THE ECONOMY

New Labour's record:

- Doing the bidding of the giant corporations, banks and finance companies.
- Like the Tories, overseeing the destruction of manufacturing industry, so that it now makes up just 13% of Britain's GDP.
- Let companies – such as Bosch, Vestas, Visteon, Woolworths and many more – throw their workforces on the scrap heap.

What we call for:

- Open the books of the major companies that dominate the economy; let popular committees of workers, trade unionists and consumer groups see where the profits have gone.
- For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies that dominate the British economy, to be run under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to shareholders 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.



Marching to defend the NHS.

photo Paul Mattsson



Cleaning out the dirty big-business politicians!

photo S Sachs



Supporting striking civil servants.

photo Soton SP



Discussing and debating ideas.

photo Paul Mattsson

How would we pay for all this?

THE TOP politicians and fat cats would have us believe that socialist policies are unrealistic and unaffordable. But there is more than enough wealth and potential wealth in society to bring in the policies we have outlined.

The 100 richest individuals in the UK have a combined personal wealth of over £250 billion. Just £90 billion of this would solve the so-called 'structural deficit' of the UK at a stroke.

Big business would squeal that they could never afford to pay so much, but they are happy that we should pay – with longer working hours, worse working conditions and cuts in public services. It is the logic of the market – of capitalism –

that dictates that cuts in public services and workers' living conditions are the only way forward. But we do not accept the logic of a system that is driven by profit and greed rather than meeting people's needs.

The Socialist Party is fighting for every possible improvement in working-class people's lives. The last year has shown that where workers fight back, victories can be won.

Nonetheless, we recognise that under this profit-hungry capitalist system, we will always face a constant struggle to defend and improve our living conditions. That is why we fight for socialist change.

Socialism

ALL OF the policies outlined here are only the first steps towards constructing a new type of society. Modern capitalism has created riches and innovations beyond the wildest dreams of our grandparents and great-grandparents.

Yet we are constantly being told that we have no choice but to accept erosion of our quality of life, increased poverty, worsening public services and longer working hours.

Capitalism's limits

HUMANITY IS capable of space exploration, has mapped the human genome, and can recreate the conditions of the big bang in the Hadron Collider.

Yet the world cannot be fed on the basis of capitalism. For most of human history it has not been possible to satisfy even the most basic human needs for everyone on the planet.

Now, as a result of the labour and ingenuity of working people, the potential exists to eliminate want forever. The barrier to achieving this is the capitalist

system itself.

Based as it is on the private ownership of the economy, capitalism creates immense inequality and deprivation when the potential exists for providing a decent life for all.

A socialist government would take the big corporations, which dominate Britain's economy, into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management, in order to plan the development of society for need instead of profit. This would only be possible with the active support of the majority of working people.

A genuine socialist government would not take into public ownership small businesses, such as local shops, many of which are currently forced out of business by banks withholding credit and by the competition of the multinationals.

Nor would it, as opponents of socialism claim, stand for the taking away of personal 'private property'. On the contrary, socialists are in favour of everyone having the right to a decent home and the other conveniences of modern life.

Making socialist ideas a reality: Organising and fighting back

THE SOCIALIST Party does not expect to be able to persuade the fat cats and the pro-big business politicians of the error of their ways. Working class people need to get organised to make change happen.

For fighting, democratic trade unions

THE TRADE unions, vilified in the media, are the largest, democratic, voluntary organisations in the country. They are the first line of defence when workers are attacked.

Nearly seven million workers are members of trade unions. These organisations need to be strengthened and expanded as workers resist increasing numbers of attacks. The number of high profile industrial disputes in the past twelve months shows this process is beginning.

The Socialist Party campaigns in the trade unions for the election of trade union leaders who stand up in the interests of their members.

Fearful of the potential power of the trade unions to defend workers, New Labour has maintained the Tory anti-trade union laws, the most draconian in western Europe. The usefulness to the bosses of these laws was demonstrated in the recent British Airways cabin crew and Rail, Maritime and Transport union disputes. The courts were used to overturn the democratic decision of thousands of workers to take strike action.

The trade union movement needs to put the repeal of these laws at the top of the agenda. Socialists are not in favour of unnecessarily putting the resources of trade unions at risk; however, there are occasions where, on the basis of careful preparation, the anti-trade union laws need to be defied.

If trade unions are then threatened with sequestration the whole of the trade union movement needs to be mobilised in their support. The construction workers' strikes last year gave a glimpse of how – if a movement is powerful enough – these draconian laws can be swept aside.

We call for:

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws!
- For trade union members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all officials to be elected, subject to recall and paid only a worker's wage.
- For unionisation drives in areas such as call centres, hospitality and retail, including among young and migrant workers.

For a new mass workers' party

UNLESS WE are organised politically as well as in trade unions, we will constantly be fighting with one hand tied behind our backs. The majority of trade unions still fund New Labour, yet the government is kicking workers in the teeth.

We argue for the trade unions to break the link with New Labour and to use their funds to build a new mass workers' party to draw together all those opposed to, and fighting against, the policies of the bosses' parties. To be effective such a party will need to adopt a bold socialist programme. We call on the few socialists in the Labour Party to leave and join us in the building of a genuine working class party.

The Socialist Party initiated, with others, the Campaign for a New Workers' Party (www.cnwp.org.uk). Building on this good start, the first significant step towards such a party was made in June last year in the European elections with the No2EU-Yes to Democracy coalition. Importantly, this had the backing of the RMT trade union. Many of the constituent groups are working together in this election with the formation of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

We call for:

- A new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and

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activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- Labour Party affiliated trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party.
- Unaffiliated unions to use their political funds to support anti-cuts election candidates and to aid the building of a new workers' party.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

THE SOCIALIST Party is standing under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC – www.tusc.org.uk). Again, RMT branches are at the forefront of building TUSC, standing their own candidates in some areas. Leading figures, such as Bob Crow, general secretary of the RMT and Brian Caton, general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association have given wholehearted support in a personal capacity.

TUSC is an important step towards offering a genuine alternative for the most militant and combative sections of workers and working class communities. After the general election, and regardless of the vote, the Socialist Party will work to see TUSC, or any new and expanded formation, continue to develop as an alternative pole of attraction for workers and young people.

Join the Socialist Party

THE SOCIALIST Party has a proud record. Our branches around the country involve themselves in the day-to-day struggles of working-class people, from campaigning to keep schools and libraries open, to supporting demands for more regular bin collections.

Our members in the trade unions and workplaces are among the most militant in campaigning and organising to improve the pay and conditions of workers. Our young members organise in campaigns and groups like Youth Fight for Jobs, Socialist Students and Youth Against Racism in Europe to help young people fight for their future.

International

OUR STRUGGLE does not stop at the shores of Britain. Capitalism is an international economic system. Multinational companies exploit the entire world in the pursuit of profit. Accordingly the struggle for socialism is an international one.

We are affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI, www.socialistworld.net) which organises in more than 40 countries worldwide. We stand in solidarity with the workers and oppressed of the world in the struggle against poverty, terrorism and war and for a socialist world.

A new workers' party, while crucial, is not the end of the struggle to change society, but an important part of it. On the basis of a democratically planned economy the vast wealth created by workers, the development of production, knowledge, science and technology could promise humanity a bright future. But first we must organise ourselves to end capitalism.

The Socialist Party is made up of people like you – of workers, pensioners, students and young people. We organise democratically and everyone's contribution is valued no matter how great or how small. To get rid of this rotten capitalist system, the cause of so much suffering the world over, and to bring about the socialist future, we need you!

If you agree with this manifesto, then join the fight for socialism – join the Socialist Party.

