

END LOW PAY! Fight 'til we win! Build for a 24-hour general strike

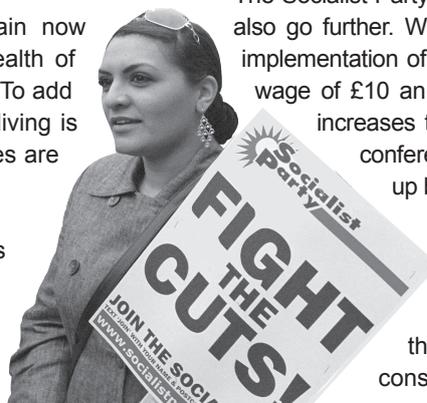
J10 – striking against low pay

Over a million public sector workers are taking strike action to demand an end to the pay freeze. Public sector pay has been virtually frozen since 2010, meaning inflation has cut 16% out of the value of a pay packet.

But the super-rich are not touched. Britain now 'boasts' 104 billionaires, with a collective wealth of £301 billion, up by more than a fifth in a year. To add insult to injury it's reported that their cost of living is actually falling. Prices for caviar and fine wines are dropping.

We pay the price

Almost half a million local government workers earn less than the living wage, set at £7.65 or £8.80 in London. This is not enough to live a decent life - but is more than the measly current £6.31 minimum wage level.



Unison, GMB and Unite are calling for a pay rise of £1 an hour for local government workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. That would mean that workers on the lowest scale wages would rise to £7.45 an hour.

The Socialist Party gives its backing to this campaign - but we also go further. We argue for a campaign for the immediate implementation of the living wage a step towards a minimum wage of £10 an hour with no exceptions, and with regular increases to cover price rises. At their recent national conferences the demand for £10 an hour was taken up by the BFAWU bakers' union and the GMB.

A higher minimum wage needs to be part of a programme of other measures, including a major investment in job creation, an end to zero-hour contracts, the introduction of rent controls and the construction of new council housing.

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Escalate the fightback

But, if we are to win, J10 must be a step in a determined campaign of action. Workers have shown their determination to struggle time and again. Two million walked out in defence of pensions in mass coordinated strike action on 30 November 2011.

But their courage has not been matched by the right-wing trade union leaders who, instead of building on the big success and popularity of the strike, settled for a few crumbs. That gave the Con-Dems and their big business masters the confidence to relentlessly turn the screw in pushing down workers' pay and conditions.

First step

The 10 July strike is another opportunity to launch a battle against austerity. In doing so, the unions could draw behind them millions of unorganised workers and all those suffering from these brutal cuts.

Unison has already named 9 and 10 September as the next dates for action in this pay strike. They should be the next steps in mass coordinated strike action, building for a 24-hour general strike that can smash the pay freeze. This will open up the prospect of defeating this government of the 1%.

It is understandable that some workers are sceptical about the prospects for this struggle given the woeful role of the right-wing trade union leaders in recent years. However, the only way to defeat the attacks of the employers and the government is to



determinedly set out to organise and fight until we win. The strike on 10 July is an important first step.

The best way to keep pressure on the union leaderships is by building the broad lefts, democratic fighting left organisations in the trade unions, through organising local strike committees and involving more members in the activity and structures of the unions.

National Shop Stewards Network • www.shopstewards.net

USA: Kshama Sawant shows what socialist councillors can do

Events in the US show workers can win battles against low pay. Seattle's council has just introduced a \$15 an hour minimum wage, which is now being taken up by several other US cities.

Vital to winning this demand was the trade union struggle, but the election of a Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) councillor, Kshama Sawant, clearly standing for '15 Now', has also been very important. Without a political voice arguing their interests in parliament and in council chambers, workers are fighting with one arm tied behind their backs.

Kshama will be speaking in Britain at

Socialism 2014 on 8 November.

Book your ticket today - www.socialism2014.net



TUSC AGAINST CUTS

www.tusc.org.uk

Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

It is not just the ConDems that are responsible for poverty pay, 80% of the councils under Labour control do not even pay the living wage. Councils have been hit by government funding cuts, but Unison found that they have £19bn in their reserves. Unison says that the extra £2.3bn they put in the bank in the last two years could fund the £1 an hour claim.

Socialists argue that councils should pay a decent wage and refuse to implement cuts. By using their reserves and borrowing powers any council on the side of the working class not the 1% could buy time to build a campaign to force the government - either this one or the next - to properly fund local government.

Standing candidates

This highlights the need to stand candidates in elections who are committed to opposing cuts and defending jobs and pay. It also shows the need for Unison, Unite and the other affiliated unions to break with Labour and form a new mass workers' party that could be relied on to stand up for workers. Labour has made it clear that it will continue with Tory spending plans if it wins the general election.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) along with the RMT transport union and key leading union activists. In May's council elections, Unison and Unite members were part of the 561-strong anti-cuts TUSC stand, the biggest left-of-Labour challenge in sixty years.



For Socialism:

a society for the millions – not the billionaires!

We live in a capitalist society – where the profits of a few always come before meeting the needs of the many. The Socialist Party argues for a democratic socialist society where the major corporations and banks that dominate the British economy are taken into democratic public ownership so that production can be planned to meet the needs of the population and the environment, rather than to line the pockets of a few billionaires.