



We must look beyond capitalism

Left unity needed in anti-cuts fightback!

If anyone had any doubts about the scale of the tasks facing us, George Osborne's spending review onslaught on our pay, conditions and democratic rights should act as a brutal wake-up call. The phoney war is over. Every gain working people have ever made has been won from, not granted by the ruling class. The challenge now to our movement is to defend - and advance - those gains by waging war on this reactionary capitalist government.

Part of the preparation for war has to be an honest appraisal of the state of our forces, the morale and fighting potential of our troops. And there's no room in this process for petty point-scoring or inflated claims from this or that small group. We have to ask if we - the workers' movement and, in particular, its organised left - are collectively ready to meet the challenge.

The Communist Party of Great Britain takes no pleasure in its assessment that we are hopelessly ill-prepared - politically and organisationally. Our already meagre forces are splintered along petty sectarian lines, with warring sects locked in a myopic pattern of competition for recruits and influence - something which is as true for the left inside the Labour Party as outside it.

There is no question that millions of people will protest and fight back in many different ways. But if mass explosions of spontaneous anger were simply enough to win, then we could have achieved socialism umpteen times in the 20th century. The key question is what forms of permanent political organisation can ensure that this anger is not simply dissipated once again?

Of course, the various left groups will present themselves as the finished article, the embryonic mass working class party of the future that simply needs recruits to fulfil its destiny. The CPGB is a little more realistic - and ambitious - than that. We call for the democratic unity of the different strands of the left in a party based on the politics we believe can genuinely

explain what caused this crisis and how we can win a world where such horrors are a thing of the past - *Marxism*.

Over the past 15 years or so, the left outside Labour has attempted to unite. But each unity project was ultimately sunk by sectarianism and futile attempts to concoct a shortcut to political influence by propagating versions of left Labourism - as if the natural home for these politics was not still in the actual Labour Party, cramped though the space was by the dominance of Blairism.

Predictably, all failed and we live with the consequences in the form of today's fragmented and politically disorientated left.

This, of course, also explains the number of anti-cuts campaigns that currently vie for influence. These have been established by various 'revolutionary' groups and - ironically - have more or less identical political platforms. (Simply reactive and defensive re-hashes of left Labourism and social democracy, unfortunately). There is no compelling reason why we are confronted with five such national campaigns (and this ignores the smaller 'broad fronts') instead of one, when all speak in the same terms about the same problems and offer the same 'solutions' - no reason except the unprincipled divisions between the different groups.

However, the sad fact is we have:

● **The Coalition of Resistance against Cuts and Privatisation** is the front of the Counterfire grouplet formed by John Rees' supporters post his expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party. Sadly, for some its main selling point appears to be that it is not directly linked to the SWP. This indicates the extent to which comradely working relations on the left have been soured - a bad situation for all of us.

Unremarkably, the comrades want to "fight rising

unemployment and support organisations of unemployed people”, “develop and support an alternative programme for economic and social recovery”, etc. Not a single concrete commitment appears in its whole platform and nothing distinctive politically.

● The SWP itself has its **Right to Work** campaign. The name may lead the naive to believe that it is a campaign against unemployment, but as time has gone on other ‘economic’ issues have been added to the RtW remit to make it more of an all-purpose ‘united front’.

● The Socialist Party in England and Wales is pushing its campaign **Youth Fight for Jobs** as well as the **National Shop Stewards Network**. Right to Work and the NSSN are likely to clash regularly - after all, they are principally fighting for the same constituency of trade union officialdom. The NSSN does not have a programme at this point; just a founding statement pledging “to offer support to TUC-affiliated trade unions in their campaigns and industrial disputes” as well as non-interference in “established organisation and recruitment activity [and] in the internal affairs and elections of TUC-affiliated trade unions”.

● The ‘**People’s Charter**’, set up by the Morning Star’s Communist Party of Britain. This started life as a grab-bag of mundane left-Keynesian minimum demands, and so, in a sense, it remains. Circumstances have given it a second life as a point of organisation against cuts. Early support came from various union officials in and around the CPB, along with sundry left of Labour comrades.

And this is even before we take into account the myriad local campaigns against cuts - partially absolved from having nothing substantial or distinctive to say about national politics because of their local nature.

Strikes and demos are going to be important weapons in this fight. But remember, 100,000 people protested

against austerity on the streets of Dublin – a huge percentage of the population. It didn’t halt the attacks. A truly mass movement of opposition must also articulate a programme of what is it positively *for* - what is its political alternative and what organisational form must it take to be realised? Instead of jockeying for short-term sect advantage, that is key question that all socialists and Marxists must address.

As *immediate* practical measures we must:

- Unite the existing anti-cuts campaigns into a single organisation
- Set up democratically organised, united local anti-cuts groups throughout the country. No secret back room dealings, no bureaucratic leaderships imposed from above
- Win effective national coordination and common purpose. For this, a national conference must be convened to democratically thrash out a programme opposed to capitalist austerity and with a positive agenda of moving beyond the paradigm of what this system tells us it can afford towards what we need to live full human lives. A vision that can inspire millions.

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