

Miliband's fruitless dreams of a 'better capitalism'

Ed Miliband has said very little since becoming leader of the Labour Party. Many working class people, struggling to make ends meet, would have hoped that he would set out a sympathetic agenda at the Labour Party conference.

But instead he announced that the next Labour government will only spend what it can afford and that we would have to 'live within our means'. He added that: "Most of the cuts implemented by the Con-Dems will not be reversed!"

Many would ask why they should support Labour and give them their vote if it just means the continuation of Con-Dem policies? For others, because there is currently no mass workers' party which puts forward a real alternative to the Con-Dem cuts, there is a hope against hope that Labour will be able to get rid of the Tories, and stop at least the worst of the cuts.

Even though Miliband never mouthed the word "socialism" at the conference, we were told by his supporters that socialism was "implicit" in his speech!

Labour peer Stewart Wood even described Miliband as "leading a leftward shift from New Labour and with Socialist Democracy as the core principle."

But in fact Miliband is looking towards a

new, better capitalism. He implied that there are good and bad capitalists (producers and wealth creators are 'good' while predators and asset strippers are not).

Miliband claimed that his alternative is a kinder capitalism, one that is not so aggressive. He argues that it was neoliberalism that caused the current crisis and not capitalism as such. But in reality capitalism will always ensure that the wealthy will make profits at the expense of ordinary workers.

There can be no return to the period of social democracy after World War Two when there were uniquely high levels of productivity and growth and workers were able to win some reforms including the NHS. Today capitalism is in its most profound crisis since the 1930s. The capitalists have no real solution, and as a result are divided on the way forward, but there is agreement that it should be the working class that pays for the crisis.

There is no possibility of Miliband opposing this, as was confirmed by his reaction to the suggestion by most of the capitalist media that he had moved leftwards and wanted to attack predatory bankers. Had he actually done so it would have been popular with workers, but he spent the next day vigorously denying he had said any such thing!

Incredibly Miliband also spoke about

'good' and 'bad' social housing tenants. With a shortage of social housing he stressed that "choices have to be made". He argued that people in work should get priority for social housing, thereby punishing the unemployed and poor.

He also said that benefits were "too easy to come by for those who don't deserve them and too low for those who do". This approach will potentially create divisions among the working class and worsen the plight of the most vulnerable.

Public sector union PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka opposed this at a conference fringe meeting. He explained that this would lead to a "different kind of welfare state with working people getting priority over the unemployed." He pointed out cold facts like in Merthyr Tydfil there are 1,500 people on job-seeker's allowance chasing 39 vacancies!

Many families are already relying on food donations from charities to survive. One charity reports that the number of people that it donates food to has gone up from 41,000 to 61,500. This is the result of job losses, low pay and rising prices.

Unlike the Tories' rich donors, those unions who generously fund the Labour Party and were key in electing Miliband as Labour leader last year get little for their money. Mili-

band told the TUC conference that strikes are a 'mistake' and opposed the planned public sector strikes over pension attacks on 30 November.

Both Len McCluskey, general secretary of the Unite union and Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison gave support to Miliband. But Prentis received a standing ovation when he demanded that Labour should support the strikes if they went ahead.

Miliband even praised Margaret Thatcher for ending the 'closed shop' (where workers could only take up a job if they were in the union) and forcing trade unions to hold strike ballots before being able to take action.

Those unions who fund the Labour Party will face increasing anger from their members about union money going to a party that won't support their strike to defend their pensions or commit to repealing the anti-trade union laws.

Miliband also called for "cooperation not conflict in the workplace". Yet trade unionists know that it is the bosses and management who have to be dragged to the table by the unions in order to negotiate.

The trade unions set up the Labour Party. They will need to pay a key role once again - in founding a new party that stands in the interests of the working class.

London union leaders call for electoral challenge

In July, the London Transport regional council of the transport union RMT unanimously passed a resolution stating that the 2012 elections for the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and mayor present an opportunity for a trade union based anti-cuts challenge involving community campaigns. It was agreed that one option would be for this to take place under the name of Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts, a registered name of the Trade Unionists and Socialists Coalition (TUSC). The regional council was instructed to approach other trade unions and campaigns to raise the idea of such an electoral challenge.

A meeting took place in September of leading members of the RMT, FBU and NUT in London, together with members of the TUSC steering committee, the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party. Interest was also expressed by leading CWU, POA and PCS members.

Ed Miliband's statements at the TUC conference, and since at the Labour conference, have simply served to underline the necessity of a trade union-based anti-cuts challenge. The Labour Party is clearly not about to support the mass action of millions of workers in the generalised public sector strike action being prepared for 30 November.

In the local elections all over England in May 2012 Labour councils will shamefully be attempting to defend their record of callously passing on Tory cuts, weeping crocodile tears as they send hundreds of thousands of workers down the road.

With the GLA elections taking



Steve Hedley speaking at the TUSC launch rally photo Alison Hill

place with a form of proportional representation, there is the potential for a trade union based anti-cuts alternative to attract angry voters.

To build support for such an initiative, we are calling on trade unionists to add their names to an appeal from Steve Hedley and John Reid of the RMT, and Ian Leahair and Ben

Sprung of the FBU (in a personal capacity).

You can download the letter and petition sheet from www.tusc.org.uk or www.socialistparty.org.uk. Return to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London E1 4JP. To add your name contact jjpreidie@yahoo.co.uk.

Greater London Assembly elections May 2012 A call to support anti-cuts candidates

Dear Sister/Brother,

We believe that in next year's Greater London Assembly elections there must be trade union and socialist candidates who oppose all the cuts being forced through by the Con-Dem government. We cannot support Labour's policy that some cuts are necessary but should be implemented more slowly. We deplore Ed Miliband's criticism of millions of trade union members who are ready to strike over pensions.

The recession is causing untold misery. Already four in ten children (650,000) in London live in poverty, a higher proportion than anywhere else in the UK. Unemployment in the city has passed 400,000 for the first time in 15 years. These cuts, whether implemented more quickly or more slowly, will have a devastating impact on the lives of the vast majority of people who live or work in London...

...We cannot afford these cuts. Everything that makes life tolerable is being destroyed. We need an alternative policy - one that puts ordinary people before bankers' bonuses and big business profits.

Following discussions involving the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and representatives of our unions in London, we have decided to appeal for your help to ensure that there will be candidates we can support in next year's GLA elections.

With the expenses scandal and attacks on working class living standards, is it any wonder that only 26% of voters trust MPs? We want candidates people can trust; who will fight against all cuts and defend the interests of ordinary Londoners.

We ask for your support. Please print and sign this statement. We will be calling further meetings to plan our campaign and want you to get involved. We are stronger when we stand together. Together we can make an impact next May.

Yours in solidarity,

Steve Hedley - RMT London organiser, **Ian Leahair** - FBU executive member for London, **John Reid** - RMT assistant regional secretary, London Transport, **Ben Sprung** - FBU regional organiser for London.