

the Socialist postbag

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Marching for hope

I was honoured to join the Jarrow March for two days through Derbyshire. I was boosted not only by the historic recreation of the original 'crusade' but by the enthusiasm and determination of the mostly young participants.

Inspired by the reception from people in old mining areas, now riddled with mass unemployment, in turn the marchers gave hope to the local population.

Just outside Chesterfield, Alan, an examiner, came out to applaud the march. Pete, another marcher, and I stopped for a chat. Alan pointed back into town to show us where the original Jarrow march had stopped for lunch 75 years previously. Before we left, we asked if he could make a small donation. Alan thrust two £20 notes into our hands which he then shook and went on his way with tears in his eyes.

Youth Fight for Jobs gives hope and confidence to a new generation of working class fighters. Those MPs who denigrated the marchers will never understand this - it's called solidarity.

Dave Gorton

1.7 billion speedboats

'Cuts are necessary'. 'There's no alternative'. That's what we hear constantly. However, listening to the new Rory Bremner radio programme Tonight provided some graphic stats to the contrary.



According to a recent Merrill Lynch report the number of high net worth individuals (HNWIs - ie millionaires) went up by 10% last year. They now have a net worth of \$42.7 trillion. If all those HNWIs pooled their collective wealth they could buy 1.7 billion speedboats, a speedboat for one in every four people on the planet.

Of course speedboats are not our top priority. But clearly there is no shortage of wealth in the world. With democratic planning of how that wealth is used, under working class control and management (compensation paid on the basis of proven need), we could be talking about ending poverty, hunger and homelessness, not massively extending those features of capitalism.

No to ALL cuts. Fight for socialism.

Emma Smith



Clearing the streets

Congratulations to the nine people proven innocent over politically motivated 'conspiracy' charges (the Socialist 690). But as the article says, there are still dangers of similar charges being used in the future.

In the very week of that case, the coalition government announced plans to give police powers to pronounce a curfew in what they deem a riot of serious disorder. The Home Office said that if a senior police officer made a decision to clear the streets based on "credible intelligence" of serious threat of disorder, it would be an offence to refuse a police instruction to leave.

Civil rights campaigners correctly criticise "blanket powers to impose curfews on peacetime Britain". The ruling class will undoubtedly try to use such swinging powers to attack peaceful protests against job losses and cuts.

Keith Whitehead

War is progress

Recently a technology feature on BBC News began with the statement: "for the highest of high tech, you have to look to the armed forces".

What a damning verdict on capitalism that the talent of the world's best scientists is wasted on creating equipment to bring death and destruction. What a contrast to the way a socialist society would be run, with investment in new technology to shorten the working week and improve the lives of ordinary people. All the more proof that it's time to get rid of capitalism and the misery it brings through war!

Nick Hart, Birmingham



Solidarity appeal: Stop Kazakh state brutality

A protest against state brutality and imprisonment of trade unionists and their representatives in Kazakhstan was held outside the Corinthia Hotel in Whitehall Place on 20 October. The protest coincided with the opening of a two-day conference of the Kazakhstan Business Forum.

The wealthy Kazakh elite around president Nursultan Nazarbayev are seeking business deals to add to the \$100 billion that is invested to exploit Kazakhstan's natural resources, including oil, gas and uranium.

In western Kazakhstan, over 2,500 oil workers have been sacked for taking strike action to win a living wage and reasonable working conditions. During four months of strike action, workers have endured great brutality from the state forces including a trade union shop steward being killed, the daughter of a union leader being raped and killed, and houses being burnt down.

The lawyer for the oil workers' independent trade union, Natalya Sokolova, was sentenced to six years in prison in August for 'incitement of social hatred' and 'illegally organising trade unions'.

Other workers' representatives are facing similar accusations and harsh punishments. These include Ainur Kurmanov, deputy chairman of the Vozrozhdeniye (Rebirth) trade union and Esenbek Ukteshbayev, president of the all-Kazakhstan independent trade union federation, Zhentau. Both are also leaders of the Socialist Movement Kazakhstan and have been involved in a tremendous struggle against brutal housing evictions. These outstanding and courageous workers' leaders have been imprisoned many times for the 'crime' of resisting poverty and repression. Now, once again, criminal charges have been fabricated against them.



'No time to talk - I've got business to do' photo N Byron

Gathered at the Kazakhstan Business Forum were representatives of both the oil company KazMunaiGas and evictors BT Bank. The protest (including speeches and chants through a megaphone) caused a welcome stir of shock and consternation among the Kazakh business and government representatives going into the plush hotel. Some tried to photograph and film the protesters but weren't so happy when photographs of them were taken in return!

Instead of foreign investments lining the pockets of Nazarbayev and his clique, these authoritarian and parasitic leaders should be boycotted internationally!

For regular updates on the defence and solidarity campaign for

socialist activists in Kazakhstan, see www.socialistworld.net

Please send protests to:

1: Head of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan - Alina Bulatovna Rakhimbekova
Email: rahimbekova@supcourt.kz with copies to: kulumbetova@supcourt.kz and pressa@supcourt.kz
or Tel ++7 7172 747570

2: Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Email: mid@mid.kz
3: The Head of the President's Administration
Tel: ++7 7172 74 55 24
Please send copies of all protests to KazakhstanSolidarity@gmail.com

Electric support for London anti-cuts challenge

Paula Mitchell

At their Blackfriars protest last week several electricians put their names to the appeal for anti-cuts, trade unionist candidates in the Greater London Assembly elections next year.

They are nearly all members of Unite, which provides the Labour Party with a quarter of its union funding. But the workers I spoke to had had enough of Labour pledging to continue with Tory cuts, and with the last Labour government's failure to repeal the trade union laws. "It's

about time" was a common refrain.

"We, the undersigned, support the call for trade unionist and socialist candidates to stand in the Greater London Assembly elections in 2012, committed to opposing all cuts, privatisation and PFI."

Unite signatories include, in a personal capacity: **M Bunyan; E Daniels; S Russell; A Morre; R Charman; P O'Rourke; P Parankerat; E Parris; Andy Gordon; Kevin Ferguson; Howard Hailey; Arti Dillon** assistant branch secretary Unite le1111; **Suzanne Muna** vice-chair

Unite housing workers branch

Other new signatories this week include, in a personal capacity: **Hugo Pierre** Camden Unison CSF co-convenor; **John Dolan** vice-chair Haringey Unison LG; **Fidel McClean** PCS DWP local office rep in Peckham and regional young members officer

Anti-cuts council elections initiative, led by public sector trade unionists, agreed in Scotland: see www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

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Haverfordwest says:

"Keep up the good work"

On Saturday 22 October, the Socialist Party held its first campaign stall in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

Socialist Party members sold 32 copies of the Socialist, raised £35 fighting fund, gave out a selection of leaflets and had 'join' cards filled in by people who wanted to get involved.

Overall the reaction was positive

and some of the people we spoke to told us to "keep on fighting" and to "keep up the good work".

With two other stalls running, in Carmarthen and Llanelli, it was a successful day for the Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party branch.

Gareth Bromhall
Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party