

Socialism 2011

This year young Socialist Party members, alongside other youth, trade unionists and campaigners, organised a 330-mile march for jobs. This played the important role of providing a clear programme of what we are fighting for, as well as opposing all cuts.

The Jarrow march culminated on the weekend of Socialism 2011. This huge achievement gave confidence to everyone who attended that the next generation will not be found wanting in the fightback.

The weekend was a showcase for socialist ideas. With a huge choice of workshops during the weekend, there was a real thirst for an understanding of Marxism and for debate.

Reflecting the mood many participants have now joined the party. And a fantastic £25,365 was raised in the finance appeal.

Below Bob Severn reports on the opening rally.

Crucial preparation for the fightback



The Jarrow marchers injected massive energy into the rally photos Senan

“If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine.” Opening the ‘World in Crisis – Fight for Socialism’ rally on Saturday 5 November, editor of the Socialist paper, Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, quoted Che Guevara, a line she had been reminded of by a young person she had marched alongside on the Jarrow March for Jobs.

Across the world millions are ‘trembling’ – with movements of protest developing throughout 2011. Many of those attending the rally have been intensely involved in a huge number of campaigns.

And yet, rather than tiredness, the rally was electric with support, confidence and enthusiasm for the socialist alternative to the system based on injustice, capitalism, in which we live.

Key to creating this mood was the presence of the Jarrow marchers who, to a loud and lengthy standing ovation, stormed the stage and belted out the chants they had penned during their 330-long march against unemployment.

Socialism, hosted by the Socialist Party, is an annual event, but most people said this was the best they had ever attended. All the excellent speakers contributed to the clear understanding that we are now in the fight of our lives. There was also a confidence that the working class, equipped with the best methods and ideas, can win.

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, summed up the situation. He too had been on the Jarrow march – but the march from Jarrow to Sunderland in 1972. What was then the threat of one million unemployed has now been transformed into the reality of a million youth and a million women unemployed – proof if ever there was that capitalism is rotten to the core and cannot meet even the basic needs of humanity.

The movement now developing towards the mass strike action on 30 November (N30) was a main theme. It could see up to four million workers out. Public sector workers are being balloted over their pensions but this will be seen as an opportunity to



Friends Meeting House was packed with working class fighters

challenge all the cuts, a crucial step in the fight of all our lives. But if the government does not grant concessions as a result of a one-day strike, then there must be an escalation of the action with another one-day general strike involving the private sector. Then, if the government does not relent, a 48-hour general strike should be mounted.

But we must learn the lessons of Greece, Peter warned, where working class people are seeing their living standards obliterated as the ‘Troika’ of the EU, the ECB and the IMF demand they pay for the economic crisis they had nothing to do with causing.

Greek workers and youth have fought, and fought heroically, with strikes, workplace occupations and the biggest demonstrations in post-war history. Such has been the ferocity of the struggle on their part that there could have been three revolutions to overthrow the rotten emiserating system by now – had their determination been matched by that of their trade union and political leadership. Tragically no mass socialist revolutionary party exists. This must be built. And the same is true in Britain.

Peter described how there is a shortage of yoghurt in Greece – not because it has been consumed but because workers use it to throw at the MPs who have betrayed them. Also there is colossal opposition to the trade union leaders who are failing

to put forward a serious strategy for the fightback that could bring down the government and allow working class people to take control of society and plan it in the interests of the overwhelming majority.

Confidence and support

Reflecting the huge support for the analysis and programme for action put forward at the rally was the finance appeal. A key Socialist Party organiser in Wales, Alec Thraves, explained that N30 will provide a massive opportunity to raise socialist ideas among workers fighting back, but funds are needed to print the leaflets and placards that will be part of this task.

The appeal raised a fantastic £25,365, made up of hundreds of contributions from people all suffering rising costs, pay freezes and even redundancy but feeling confident that this would be money well spent for ensuring a better future.

All the speakers contributed to the picture of a world in crisis and the potential and need to build a socialist alternative to capitalism. Jarrow marcher Lizi Gray described how working class communities had shown huge support for the young people fighting for their future, including with food and accommodation.

Fellow marcher Matt Whale described what the march was about: “We don’t want much. We want decent jobs; we want decent homes;

we want the right to health care if we’re sick; we want the right to retire in dignity at a reasonable age with a reasonable pension. If capitalism can’t afford this, we can’t afford capitalism.”

PCS civil service union president Janice Godrich (personal capacity) gave a marvellous and inspiring contribution about N30. N30 must be the start of a massive campaign. Janice made a powerful case, including for membership of the Socialist Party, as this was the best way to fight against all cuts.

Clare Daly, elected in February as a Socialist Party TD (MP) in Dublin, Ireland, almost made people feel sorry for her pro-capitalist opposition in the Irish parliament, so formidable was her contribution. She painted a picture of the pain being inflicted on the Irish working class and youth that was shocking. 8% of the population – 280,000 people – cannot afford the basic costs of living, even before another €3.8 billion of cuts lined up in the next budget. But, despite a treacherous trade union leadership resistance is growing.

Sharon MacLean spoke of her experience as an Occupy St Paul’s participant. She explained that she had joined the protest because her daughter, who wants to be a midwife, faces annual university fees of up to £9,000. Her appeal for support for the Occupy protest was warmly met by the rally.

After a film clip that recapped on the revolutionary struggles in North Africa and the Middle East this year, the rally heard from Serge, who has participated in struggles in Tunisia.

Serge explained that the new assembly, formed after the recent elections, does not represent the revolution, with none of the parties who stood having a socialist or anti-capitalist programme. The revolution is a process that does not end with the overthrow of dictator Ben Ali, but the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The final speaker, Emily McArthur, brought solidarity from Occupy Boston and Socialist Alternative, Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) supporters in the US. Slogans



Peter Taaffe



Lizi Gray

such as “Fight like an Egyptian” indicate where the inspiration for the Occupy movement comes from, but people have also joined occupations in US cities due to the global recession and the failure of the two corporate parties, the Republicans and Democrats, to provide anything but cuts and misery. Emily argued that the movement needs to build its own political organisation.

Struggle, solidarity, socialism; these were the themes that were packed into the rally. In closing, it was pointed out that the event had gone a little over time – because of the large amount of claps of support for all the contributions. Even the footsore Jarrow marchers were not shy to stand in support of socialist ideas that chimed with their struggle for a future.