

## Baby feed death

# NHS: Private profit kills

**People have rightly been horrified and outraged at the recent tragic death of a premature baby in St Thomas's hospital in London. The baby's death is believed to have been caused by septicaemia contracted via contaminated liquid intravenous feed. It is also reported that another 21 babies are being treated after contracting the same infection.**

**While right-wing newspapers carried front page headlines condemning the "NHS drip", profiteering private companies' control over medical supplies is the real issue here.**

**Claire Job, a nurse in Wales, explains the situation.**

The type of feed used in this case is called Total Parental Nutrition (TPN) and it can be tailored to the specific nutritional needs of the patient who is unable to eat food in the normal way. In this specific case the feeds were manufactured to feed premature babies as yet unable to sustain themselves from breast milk alone.

TPN must be completely sterile before administration to the patient. In order for this to be achieved they are made in a special air filtered environment. Many hospitals throughout the UK have their own manufacturing units and products such as TPN and chemotherapy are made by NHS staff working for the hospital pharmacy manufacturing departments.

The feeds linked to the sad death of this baby and the ill-health of many more were produced by a private company called ITH Pharma which has been commissioned to manufacture these products for several NHS trusts. Is this another example of private sector commissioning in the NHS putting lives at risk?

The NHS in England is being dismantled by the Con-Dems with 70% of all NHS contracts being won by private sector bidders. This barrage of privatisation actually drains money from the NHS and frontline services. ITH Pharma is a company on the rise and it is reported by the Sunday Times to have made £12.1 million worth of sales in 2011-12 from NHS services.

The Con-Dems are so blatant in their ideological approach to privatisation in the NHS they have even been considering exempting private suppliers to the NHS from paying tax, to put them on an 'equal footing' and help them be more competitive.

ITH Pharma has not shared the specific details of how a contaminant found its way into the feeds of those babies, but we do know that the 'profit motive' very often leads to compromising safety and health.

Competition in the private sector is driven by keeping costs down; this is achieved through low pay, poor conditions for staff and a huge temptation to cut corners.

Privatisation does not deliver improved healthcare or an improved patient experience as promised by the Con-Dems.

It delivers medicines that are extortionately expensive, it delivers products that are less robustly regulated and it means extra expense for the NHS... but have no doubt, it delivers large profits to the bosses.

We do not want health to be a market place for cut-throat capitalists seeking to profit from ill-health. The lives of our family, friends and those most vulnerable in society need to be protected.

The best protection we can offer is to fight to fully nationalise the NHS and all its suppliers - products, medicines and equipment. Health services should be planned based on the needs of everyone.

But Cameron and Clegg are more interested in protecting private companies' interests than in providing decent healthcare for the majority. And Labour is no different - privatisation in the NHS ballooned in the 13 years of Labour rule.

Health trade unions must fight against the dismantling and privatisation of the NHS, including with strike action and linking up with other unions.

Such a campaign would receive the support of millions across the UK and have the potential to remove the weak Con-Dems from government.

- No privatisation, cuts, closures or job losses in the NHS. For a publicly funded service, free at the point of use, to provide for everyone's health needs
- End big business profiteering from the NHS! Scrap the costly Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes. No to private polyclinics and GP consortiums
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries and private health providers, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Bring them under working class control and management
- For mass action to defend the NHS, including a 24-hour general strike
- For a new mass workers' party to fight for the NHS and against cuts and privatisation. For socialist policies and a planned economy to end poverty, bad housing, unemployment, pollution and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill-health

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**Editorial from the Socialist issue 814**

## **Newark byelection: capitalist parties in crisis**

The Tories are claiming the Newark byelection as a complete victory. Much of the capitalist media has also suggested that it marks the start of the bursting of the Ukip bubble. Neither claim is matched by reality.

Newark has been a safe Tory seat since 2001. The Tories put in gigantic efforts to try and make sure it remained so on 5 June. Cameron visited Newark four times. In the final week of the campaign there were over 40 Tory MPs on the streets of Newark every day.

In addition the government tried to bribe the population with a few crumbs - extra flood defences and a new railway service. The only serious opposition that the Tories faced was from Ukip. The Lib Dems continued their descent towards oblivion with a pathetic sixth place and 2.5% of the vote, losing their deposit.

Pathetically Labour let it be known beforehand, that as it didn't expect to win Newark and the Tories were more likely to defeat Ukip, it was 'soft-peddling' in the campaign. This shows how Labour is not even trying to offer an alternative to workers angry about their falling living standards. Labour leaders have repeatedly pledged to maintain the Tories' cuts if it forms the next government.

### **Unpopularity of big three**

For further evidence of just how not serious Labour actually is about providing a genuine opposition to cuts or to Ukip, just look at the goings on in Portsmouth council. Labour has linked up with Ukip to back the Tories against the Lib Dems.

Despite the factors in their favour, the Tories lost 10,000 votes in Newark and Ukip was able to take 25% of the vote. This was not a decisive breakthrough for Ukip, but the byelection showed again the profound unpopularity of the three major parties, and the potential for the right-wing populists of Ukip to take advantage of that.

### **Ukip's vote**

The main reason for Ukip's surge is that voters are using them as a means to punish the traditional capitalist parties. In fact, on many issues most Ukip voters stand not just to the left of Ukip, but to the left of all of the establishment parties.

One YouGov poll showed 78% of them support renationalisation of the energy companies, 73% renationalisation of the railways, 57% want zero-hour contracts banned and the same number want to see the 50p tax rate re-introduced. Another poll showed that 81% of Ukip voters think big business takes advantage of ordinary people.

Yet Ukip is a party led by millionaires and stockbrokers with policies to the right of the Tories. At the time of Thatcher's death leader Nigel Farage said he was the only politician "keeping Thatcherism alive". Ukip's policies until a few weeks ago included support for 'a flat rate of taxation', so that everyone from billionaires to workers on the minimum wage would have to pay the same amount of tax.

Like all populist parties, however, Ukip is capable of bending in the wind to try and harness more votes. The flat rate tax has been dropped, although the new policy of a top rate of 40% is still a 5% tax cut for the rich compared to the current government's policy. Farage is also now attempting to distance himself from Thatcher's legacy which he has discovered was "divisive".

Part of the reason Ukip has gained an echo is because it plays on the fears workers have over increased immigration, falsely trying to blame immigrants for the problems workers face. It is no surprise that this gains an echo. All three major parties - alongside the capitalist press - have to one degree or another used anti-immigrant propaganda to divert attention from the real reasons workers' living standards have been driven down.

### **Super-exploitation**

At the same time big business has blatantly used super-exploited migrant workers as a means to maximise their profits.

As Seumas Milne reported in the Guardian (4 June 2014) the two biggest employers in Newark - a cake factory called Bakkavor Desserts and a Dixon's owned electrical warehouse - both employ a majority of workers from Eastern Europe. Bakkavor Desserts uses EU law in order to pay agency

workers less than the permanent employees and often to recruit them directly from abroad without advertising locally.

The same story could be repeated in many other towns across Britain. However, the divisive policies of Ukip offer no solution. On the contrary, their leaders include greedy bosses who have themselves used low paid migrant labour as a means to increase their profits. Ukip MEP Nathan Gill, for example, runs a care home that has employed dozens of Eastern European and Filipino workers, accommodating them in primitive 'bunkhouses'.

The only way to stop the bosses using migrant workers as a means to lower overall wage rates is for the trade union movement to launch a major campaign that every worker - regardless of their country of origin - receives the rate for the job.

## **Campaign**

This should be combined with a campaign to outlaw all the brutal anti-worker practices that have become commonplace in recent years - zero-hour contracts, paying agency workers less, exploiting migrant workers by charging them a fortune for sub-standard over-crowded accommodation, and so on. The workers' movement should also fight for all jobs to be advertised locally, regardless of where else they are publicised.

In 2009 workers at the Lindsey oil refinery organised strike action at a time when the employers were attempting to use Italian migrant workers to undermine wages and conditions of the whole workforce. They succeeded in winning their demands for the benefit of workers from Britain and Italy alike. This is a model for what is needed nationwide. Read more about Lindsey on [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

Alongside an industrial battle there is an urgent need to build a mass workers' party ready to fight austerity. This is the only force that would be capable of cutting across Ukip's divisive lies.

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## **Birmingham schools**

# **'Trojan Horse': who is attacking education?**

**Jane Nellist Coventry NUT and National Executive Member (personal capacity)**

For the last two months, news headlines have been dominated by the so-called 'Trojan Horse' story relating to schools in Birmingham. It started with accusations in an anonymous letter, widely now thought to be a fake, that a number of schools were being targeted by Muslim extremists for takeover.

This has ignited a massive row within the Tory ranks between two leadership contenders, Michael Gove and Theresa May. Thousands of column inches are being dedicated to this absolute mess. However, the school debacle is a direct result of the increased deregulation and breaking up of our state education through Academies and Free Schools - started by Labour, but accelerated under the Con-Dems.

At the heart of this debate are young people and their families who are looking towards education as a key to improving their life chances. The story has peaked at a time when thousands of young people

are taking exams and has undoubtedly left young people and parents worried about their choice of schools.

## **Academies**

There has been much anti-Muslim bias surrounding the allegations made in Birmingham. But the case also contains a warning of the inevitable way the Free School and Academy model can be used by groups and individuals to unfairly promote and disseminate, in a one-sided way, religious ideas in schools.

Michael Gove has long-held views of the supposed threat to Britain from an Islamist route and how to address it. In his terms, he favoured "draining the swamp" rather than his characterisation of May's approach of fighting off the crocodiles one by one!

But Gove has encouraged religious groups to run Academies. The BBC reports him saying that the 'freedoms' that come with academy status would mean a religious school "can place itself permanently out of range of any such unsympathetic meddling" of the "moral and cultural relativism" imposed by some local authority educationalists.

## **Ofsted**

Provocatively Gove sent Ofsted inspectors into 21 schools in Birmingham. Five of the schools have been graded 'inadequate' and placed in special measures, three of them run by the Park View Educational Trust. Others may follow - including schools which only a few months ago had been rated as 'outstanding' by the same inspection process.

The deployment of Ofsted, supposedly an independent body, has been used by Gove as a political sledgehammer.

Alongside these measures, Birmingham Local Authority set up an investigation headed by pro-big business politicians and various groups, including the Bishop of Birmingham. Given the sensitivities about religion in this debate, you have to ask yourself - was this a wise choice?

This whole debate is very complex and fraught with overreaction and contradictions. A minority of the large Muslim community in Birmingham is accused in the letter of seeking to 'take over schools' and turn them into Islamic schools with the introduction of more conservative religious practices.

It is alleged that these practices include segregation of girls and boys, strong encouragement of girls to wear a scarf to cover their hair, along with Islamic religious worship and a denial of sex and relationships education. A section of the Islamic community is also being accused of targeting head-teachers, senior leaders and governors with the aim of replacing them.

## **Gove's DfE**

But let's just ask a question: which organisation has sacked the most head-teachers and governors and has been instrumental in setting up more faith-based Free Schools, including Muslim schools? Yes, the Department for Education, headed by Michael Gove!

In Coventry there are two new Free Schools opening this year - a Sikh Free School and the Muslim Leadership School for Girls. The city's first Academy conversion, Grace Academy, was created as a result of the closure of a comprehensive school and replaced by one that is founded on 'Christian values and standards', and is sponsored by committed Christian, Lord Robert Edmiston. Edmiston

vehemently opposed the legalisation of gay marriage and recently the school was forced to review its policy on sex education because it did not teach about homosexuality.

Those of us who have been fighting the Academies and Free Schools programme from the very beginning warned what would happen if governments started to allow schools to be run by unaccountable groups of people (see right).

The problem is that even if the 'Trojan Horse' crisis in Birmingham is based on a false premise, capitalist politicians are going to exploit it for their own ends which inevitably will not be in the interests of the working class and all those many thousands of families who are seeking a good education for their children.

We need to step up the fight against these attacks on our education system. The publication by the Department for Education of 'model documents to help church schools converting to Academies' on 9 June show the government's intention to continue the privatisation of education.

## **Cuts**

The cuts have also made the situation much worse - as a Birmingham councillor acknowledges: "We saved the children's social care budget last year but had to slash the education budget to do it. We don't have support staff for schools any longer and governors' support is abysmal."

But Labour started off these attacks with the introduction of Academies. Tristram Hunt, shadow education minister, is unambiguous in stating that Labour has no intention of adopting policies to re-establish strong, democratic, accountable Education Authorities locally.

More than half of all secondary schools are no longer under the control of a Local Education Authority and an increasing number of primary schools are becoming academies. The Guardian reports in passing that the Tories hope they can use this debacle to remove all 400 schools from Birmingham council control.

We need to ensure that all local communities feel that they have a stake in education and that their religion and culture is taken into account in the schools where their children attend. We need to also ensure that all our young people are given the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep them safe, tolerant of other communities and groups of people, whatever colour, sexual orientation, gender and regardless of religion including no religion.

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## **Bring academies back into democratic local control**

**Martin Powell-Davies**

Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw's claim that inspectors have uncovered "a culture of fear and intimidation" in some Birmingham schools is breath-taking in its hypocrisy.

Schools right across England operate under exactly that kind of culture - but through fear of an Ofsted regime that is used as a political tool to force schools into becoming Academies.

The heavy-handed response to the supposed 'Trojan Horse' will only have increased that fear. Now David Cameron is threatening 'no-notice' inspections which will further ratchet up the already intolerable pressures on staff.

If politicians are serious about improving morale - and about encouraging local accountability - then they should bring academies back into democratic local control and support the demand raised in my general secretary campaign - to abolish Ofsted.

- Martin is standing for general secretary of the National Union of Teachers on a programme of defence of comprehensive education, of teachers' rights and against all of Gove and the Con-Dems' attacks on education. See [electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk](http://electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk) for more on the campaign.

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## Faith schools

**Here we reprint a short extract from a 2006 article by Martin Powell-Davies (pictured, inset) in which he warns of the dangers posed by New Labour's faith schools policy, which the Con-Dems have built on. Read the full article at: [www.socialistparty.org.uk/issue/443/5258](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/issue/443/5258)**

In opposing privatisation and selection, teachers and trade unionists also have to tackle the broader question of whether faith schools should have any place in our school system at all.

The teachers' unions need to win the argument in local communities, including faith communities, against Church schools having a separate status to community schools. Our policy should be to encourage all faith schools to become fully integrated in the state sector.

That doesn't mean that socialists and trade unionists shouldn't carefully explain why they support secular education, while also defending the right of every individual to practise their religion. This should include supporting the granting of special leave for religious festivals, not just Christian ones. It also means defending the right of Muslim girls to choose - or to choose not - to wear a headscarf.

## Curriculum

However, we must oppose religious views being used as an excuse to prevent young people from gaining access to a thorough health and sex education or to allow discriminatory or scientifically false ideas such as 'intelligent design' to find their way into the curriculum.

The correct approach is for the teachers' unions to clearly state policies that should apply universally - for inclusive, well-resourced, non-discriminatory, genuinely comprehensive schools teaching a range of religious and non-religious views as part of a wider humanities curriculum that encourages solidarity across the globe.

## Community schools

By uniting support behind these aims, the union can strengthen its campaign against the imposition of business and religious sponsors and help encourage existing

faith schools to become fully integrated within local authorities as community schools.

The trade union movement has to strongly warn against the dangers of faith schools segregating and dividing working class communities whereas multi-faith, comprehensive education,

while it cannot alone overcome all the problems of society outside the school gates, enables youth to accept and recognise differences of faith and race, fostering a unity that will be built on in the wider community outside the school gates.

## **Division**

This is particularly important at a time when, in the absence of a clear socialist alternative, poverty, wars and oppression have created the conditions for the growth of more fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity, Islam and other faiths.

Unchallenged, these ideas could contribute to increasing religious and ethnic tensions that can dangerously divide workers and youth.

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# **World Cup carnival cannot hide corruption and social injustice**

**Tom Baldwin**

It is impossible not to notice that the World Cup has begun. While it may send some people scurrying for the TV remote, billions of football fans across the globe have been looking forward to one of the world's greatest sporting tournaments.

It is estimated that nearly half the world's population will tune in at some point to watch the best players clash in Brazil. Sadly though, the World Cup has revealed once again how corruption and profiteering have tainted the beautiful game.

Football is not just a passion for millions, it's big business. It is expected that \$1 billion will be bet on every match at the World Cup. With the drive for profit, corruption follows close behind and the interests of fans and workers fall by the wayside.

Emails uncovered by the Sunday Times add weight to widespread allegations of corruption in Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 World Cup. Mohammed Bin Hammam is a former vice-president of Fifa, football's world governing body, but was forced to step down over separate corruption claims. Qatar denies Bin Hammam had anything to do with the bid but recent emails appear to show he spent £3 million bribing other officials to win their backing. There is now growing pressure for the process to be re-run, with several big corporate sponsors voicing concerns.

Many fans questioned the decision to hold the tournament in Qatar where heat could force it to be played in December, not June. But the effect of heat is not only a concern for the footballers. Migrant workers building infrastructure in conditions of virtual slavery were dying at a rate of one a day last summer. Qatar is an autocratic monarchy with an appalling record on workers' rights.

## **Whose interests?**

None of these problems are unique to Qatar. Brazil is famously football-mad but the World Cup has been the focus of enormous opposition movements as the rights of ordinary people have been steamrollered in the interests of big-business developers and sponsors.



Billions of dollars have been spent on new stadiums, workers have been forced out and property prices and rents have skyrocketed.

In response to this, the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST) has led huge demonstrations. 4,000 families are occupying land close to a stadium in Sao Paulo, referring to their actions as 'the People's Cup' and demanding that housing be built.

The Socialist Party's sister organisation in Brazil, LSR, is playing a leading role in developing this struggle along with the teachers' strike in Rio de Janeiro.

Public transport is another big issue there. Last year a mass movement successfully pushed back proposed fare hikes but the government's neoliberal programme of privatisations has continued. Metro workers in Sao Paulo have taken strike action (currently suspended, pending negotiations) over pay, despite police repression including the use of tear gas.

Many fans will see the excitement of the World Cup as a bit of escapism from their day-to-day problems. But like every aspect of workers' lives under capitalism, football is also damaged by the continual drive for profit. It used to be seen as a working class sport but now many ordinary fans are priced out while billionaire owners treat clubs as their plaything. Wherever sport becomes big business, corruption has reared its ugly head from athletics to rugby.

Football and all sports should be run by and for the fans, not by unaccountable bodies like Fifa acting in the interests of big business.

- A future issue of the Socialist will carry feature material on Brazil, the World Cup and the class struggle

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## **Them & Us**

### **PFI profit machine**

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes in the NHS, schools, councils, etc, are notorious for being a gigantic rip-off of the public purse. Introduced by the Tories and rapidly expanded under Labour, PFI schemes are simply a license to print money for big business.

In the latest twist to this public finance disaster, companies have been selling on their original 25+ years' contracts - a practice known as "flipping" - after only a few years, allowing them to make huge financial gains. Four such companies - Balfour Beatty, Carrillion, Interserve and Kier - alone have made profits in excess of £300 million from flipping.

Moreover, many of these contracts are being bought up by front companies based in offshore tax havens. So while profits are going offshore to avoid corporation tax many health trusts are being driven to the wall by crippling PFI service charges.

Chair of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, Labour MP Margaret Hodge, admitted Labour's multi-billion pound 'error'. "I'm afraid we got it wrong. I was a supporter at the time but I have completely gone off the whole concept. We got seduced by PFI", she said.

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## **Ukip scoundrel**

'Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel'. The Samuel Johnson adage fits well the behaviour of care home provider businessman and Wales Ukip MEP Nathan Gill. This odious xenophobe while railing against immigration is, it seems, quite happy to exploit migrant workers to benefit his business.

Gill is cited as charging workers from Poland and the Philippines £50 a week out of £200-£300 weekly wages for "bunkhouse" accommodation. He lamely defends this rip-off saying: "I wish I had that proportion of spending money left after paying my mortgage". As an afterthought Gill said: "I can see how this could look bad"!

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## **Big six rip-off**

Toothless energy 'watchdog' Ofgem has pointed out that the 'big six' energy suppliers in the UK are expected to more than double their profits this year to £96 for every dual-fuel energy customer as a result of falling wholesale prices.

Industry fat cats are always vocal in regurgitating the argument of rising wholesale prices to justify ramping up customer prices, but they are silent when world energy prices tumble. The Tories, unsurprisingly, as champions of the 'free market,' have also kept their heads down as they kowtow to the big six.

Labour leader Ed Miliband has said an incoming Labour government would freeze energy prices for 20 months. Hey Ed, why not reduce prices? But that would require public ownership of the industry which pro-big business Labour won't consider.

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## **Child poverty**

As reported in the Socialist last week millions of children in Britain will be condemned to poverty by 2020 due to welfare cuts, flatlining wages and soaring living costs. Now the government's own Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission admits that targets to reduce child poverty by 10% by 2020 are "doomed" to failure.

The Con-Dems' plan was always wishful thinking, based on an expanding economy providing well-paid jobs. The commission also pointed to the devastating effects of welfare cuts on families' living standards.

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## **Tiananmen Square 1989: Counter-revolution crushes China's democracy movement**

**On 3 to 4 June 1989, Deng Xiaoping and other aged leaders of China's so-called 'communist' party, ordered 200,000 troops to crush a two-month long movement of workers and students**

against bureaucratic rule and for workers' democracy. At least 1,000 people were killed in central Beijing and 40,000 arrested in the following weeks.

We reprint an extract from the **Militant** editorial (forerunner of the **Socialist**) written at the time, followed by an eyewitness account of the fatal counter-revolution. There is also an introduction from a longer article from [www.chinaworker.info](http://www.chinaworker.info) on prospects for change in China today.

## **Workers and students put up heroic resistance**

Thousands have been arrested and thrown into jail. Thousands more have gone into hiding. Students' and workers' leaders have been rounded up, including the founders of the autonomous trade union organisation.

Telephone hotlines have been set up for informers. Every day prisoners are paraded on the television, chained and obviously beaten, to create an atmosphere of fear and despair.

In true bureaucratic style, Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng, and their henchmen are denouncing their opponents as 'counter-revolutionaries'. Strange counter-revolutionaries who sang the Internationale as the tanks tore into them on Tiananmen Square!

The hardliners are reviving the Stalinist language of the so-called Cultural Revolution, during which Deng himself was denounced as a counter-revolutionary and purged by the Maoist faction.

According to the old guard, the movement against them was a plot led by "a very small number of political hooligans and evil-doers".

As in the Cultural Revolution, the leaders also point to the 'black hand' of American imperialism, and are attempting to whip up xenophobia, hatred of foreigners, to bolster up their regime. Yet day after day, the 'small group of hooligans' numbered hundreds of thousands on Tiananmen Square.

Such a mighty wave of opposition can arise only from deep social roots.

It was triggered off by the bold action of the students. But the movement, which drew in wide sections of the workers and other strata, was stimulated by accelerating inflation and unemployment, growing inequality between a prosperous elite and the majority of workers and peasants and rampant corruption among managers and party bosses.

The protest expressed a profound hatred of the bureaucracy. The bloody repression of 4 June evoked no celebrations from a populace saved from 'counter-revolution'. On the contrary, the massacre provoked mass protest and clashes throughout China.

For a whole week, 15 major cities were convulsed by mass demonstrations, a blockade of roads and railways, extensive strikes and clashes with the police and army, with the virtual paralysis of the main industrial centres.

Step by step the regime has clamped down. Yet in Shanghai, the country's biggest industrial centre where there has been an extraordinary movement of the students and workers, the mayor has so far been very cautious in carrying out repression, though he does not rule out more drastic measures as the movement ebbs.

The hardliners are now firmly back in the saddle. They are trampling on the mass movement with steel studded boots. This is their revenge against a movement which shook the bureaucracy to its rotten core.

From the start, the bureaucracy was split. The commanders of the 38th Army based in Beijing refused to move against the students and workers. For two weeks, behind closed doors, Deng, Li and the old guard fought a bitter struggle for control of the key levers of the state apparatus and the army. They were suspended in mid-air, powerless to enforce their rule.

The students' call for democracy and an end to bureaucracy and corruption drew out hundreds of thousands of workers onto the streets. Even sections of the bureaucracy and members of the ['communist'] party were affected. When the army first moved against them, the human barricades fraternised with the soldiers and the army cracked, with many soldiers throwing off their uniforms and some handing over their weapons.

Had the students and workers organised committees of workers, soldiers and students and peasants... for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the introduction of workers' democracy, the army could have been split from top to bottom.

Decisive sections could have been won over to the workers. All the conditions were there, apart from a clear Marxist programme, for the overthrow of the bureaucracy.

But as in all revolutionary situations, the movement reached the point of either/or - either the overthrow of the bureaucracy, with power being taken into the hands of the workers, or a bloody counter-revolution, with the bureaucracy re-establishing its rule by naked repression.

Without the decisive winning over of the troops, most of the military commanders, faced with a challenge to the rule of the bureaucracy, fell in line with the hardliners...

The hardliners are now tightening their grip on the regime and over society. The head of the security apparatus, Qiao Shi, appears to be a key figure in the new leadership.

Deng, once hailed as the great reformer, has abandoned reforms and his reformist allies like Zhao Ziyang who has disappeared. Zhao and the reformist wing of the bureaucracy may well have favoured further economic liberalisation and a relaxation of political control within the party and the state. But their position was fatally undermined by the economic chaos which resulted from their reform policies.

## **More repression**

Significantly, Deng's first appearance on television was with the generals, "the iron great wall of the state", gratefully thanking them for their success in suppressing the 'counter-revolution'.

But by the same token, the generals have been brought nearer to the centre of power. The military bureaucrats will want their say in running the state. The factions within the military will be embroiled in new struggles within the leadership which will inevitably break out again in the future... Their only policy now is repression, repression and more repression.

But the economy is in crisis, in spite of the rapid growth of the recent period. The reforms, which opened the door to foreign firms and let loose an element of private enterprise in the countryside, have produced inflation of over 35%, shortages of basic food products and mass unemployment...

Although Deng is still saying the reform policy will continue, in reality there will be a period of re-centralisation. There will be re-centralisation and curbs on private enterprise, in a desperate effort to control inflation and bring down unemployment.

But this in turn will produce new problems. Under modern conditions the industrial sector cannot develop in isolation, without the import of technology and specialised products from the world market. Curbs on foreign investment, moreover, would undermine the development that has taken place recently, especially in the industrial centres on the East coast...

But the inevitable contradictions will sooner or later produce another zig-zag, when the bureaucracy, with new leaders coming to the fore, will lurch back in the other direction...

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## **Eyewitness to massacre**

**ON THE eve of the 3-4 June 1989 bloody massacre in Tiananmen Square, Steve Jolly, a witness and participant in the April-June events in China (who was then visiting from Australia and is now a Socialist Party councillor in Melbourne), was invited to address the formation of the Beijing autonomous trade union.**

**Because of the previous arrests of a number of worker activists, the meeting was switched to Tiananmen Square and Steve ended up speaking to a meeting of 500,000 people!**

"I expressed solidarity from workers and students in Britain... to the movement in China and how they had captured the imagination of the workers and students and peasants internationally.

"I said: 'You are being called counter-revolutionary and pro-capitalist. But any government that calls itself communist, arrests union leaders and stands against democratic rights is not a real communist government - you are the real communists, you are the ones who hold the banner of revolution, not this government.'"

Later Steve recounts the moments when Deng Xiaoping's regime launched its counter-revolution.

"During the course of the day [3 June] 3,000 troops moved to one of the buildings next to Tiananmen Square...

"Workers and students were so confident that they could persuade the 27th army not to move against them. But at midnight it all started. They came first with tear gas followed by troops with electric batons. After that it was troops on foot, then tanks and army personnel carriers.

"Students lit up the barricades all over the city and they had street battles. But because they hadn't armed themselves and had refused on previous occasions to take arms from soldiers who had offered them, they suffered the consequences." (from Militant 16/6/89)

Eyewitness in China, The events in Tiananmen Square May-June 1989, by Steve Jolly, is incorporated into Tiananmen 1989 - Seven Weeks that Shook the World compiled by chinaworker.info (see book advert)

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# China's dictatorship haunted by the prospect of a new mass revolt

Vincent Kolo , chinaworker.info

On 4 June this year, 180,000 people filled Hong Kong's Victoria Park for the city's annual commemoration of the 1989 events. Less than one hour's train ride away, however, in mainland China, no protests will be tolerated and all mention of the 1989 movement has been erased from the media and internet.

As Chen Mo explained in our book, *Seven Weeks That Shook the World* (chinaworker.info 2009): "It is almost as if '89', 'June 4th' and the 'Tiananmen Incident' never happened, and the subsequent generations have unfortunately been given amnesia-at-birth."

Xi Jinping, the current 'strong man' heading China's misnamed 'communist' party (CPP), has made it clear that there will be no political relaxation or 'democratic reform' on his watch, but rather a fortification of one-party rule.

At the same time, pro-capitalist policies (the early effects of which were an important trigger for the 1989 protests) will continue and accelerate to give the market a 'decisive role'.

## Crackdown

In recent weeks there has been a further crackdown on prominent dissidents in China as the regime pre-emptively exorcises the ghosts of the 1989 movement.

Since the 4 June massacre, China's economic growth achieved 'miracle' status and, despite its current slowdown, is widely tipped to overtake the US as the world's biggest economy before the end of the decade.

The CCP's model of 'state capitalist' development has created more dollar billionaires than anywhere outside the US, most of whom hold strong connections to the dictatorship and even sit in its auxiliary organs.

In the months and years immediately after the Beijing massacre, many Chinese dissidents and democracy activists believed the regime was doomed to imminent collapse, like the USSR and other Stalinist one-party states.

When this did not transpire the advocates of 'bourgeois democracy' in China began to adapt politically to the CCP, seeing 'compromise' and 'gradual change' as the only realistic strategy and regarding revolution as dangerous, a threat to capitalist interests and 'stability'. This also describes the flawed approach of Hong Kong's pro-democracy leaders.

In so doing, these layers have moved further and further away from the actual tradition of struggle established by the 1989 movement, which as we socialists explain, posed a revolutionary threat to the dictatorship, albeit without the crucial ingredient of a clear programme and leadership.

In the intervening years the capitalists internationally have also rushed to do business with the Chinese dictatorship (despite brief and token sanctions imposed after the massacre) as it opened up to mass-scale sweatshop production on a scale never before seen in history.

The CCP cashed in on the accelerated globalisation wave of the 1990s and 2000s, placing itself at the centre of the worldwide 'race to the bottom' in terms of wages, pensions, social insurance and environmental standards.

This was accompanied by measures to separate and break-up the old planning model, while strategic companies remained under state control. World capitalism has rewarded these policies with over US\$1 trillion in foreign direct investment over the past quarter century.

Rather than weaken the repressive hold of the dictatorship, however, the opposite process has emerged from these capitalist policies. The Chinese state's internal security bill is now of a similar size to Vietnam's GDP. The country has nearly 30 million security cameras and two million internet police.

However, Xi Jinping recently announced that slower GDP growth was the "new normal" - raising concerns that even the official 7.5% growth target may be missed.

And a growing number of commentators believe the CCP regime is unlikely to survive another 25 years. The increase in state repression and surveillance, while mass protests are also on the rise, is a recipe for explosive social movements in the coming years.

At the same time, the sharpening of international tensions and deepening military antagonisms in East Asia can produce new threats to the CCP's grip on power.

It is not sufficient, however, to wish for or predict the demise of the CCP dictatorship; we must build a mass socialist alternative that can influence and solidify coming mass struggles for democracy and against capitalism.

This is what the CWI in China, also organised in Hong Kong and Taiwan, is attempting to do today.

- An analysis of the build-up and bloody crushing of the movement is contained in our book, *Seven Weeks that Shook the World*, published by chinaworker.info, (96 pages,) available from Socialist Books.

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## **From Socialist Books**

### **Tiananmen 1989 - Seven Weeks that Shook the World**

compiled by chinaworker.info

(Includes Eyewitness in China, The events in Tiananmen Square May-June 1989, by Steve Jolly)

£4.50

### **China - Sweatshop of the World**

The Coming Revolt, by Vincent Kolo and Chen Lizni

£5.00

**For background historical material on the 1925-27 revolution see:**

- Problems of the Chinese Revolution by Leon Trotsky, 354 pages £5.95
- Leon Trotsky on China introduction by Peng Shu-tse, 874 pages £26.00

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## **30th anniversary of the historic miners' strike**

### **The battle of Orgreave**

On Saturday 14 June 2014 there will be a celebration of struggle and resistance marking the 30th anniversary of the great miners' strike. In particular, there will be a mass picnic and festival commemorating events which occurred at the Orgreave coking plant.

The 'battle of Orgreave', on 18 June 1984, involved nearly 10,000 pickets and 4,000 police. Police, including mounted police, attacked the pickets and made 93 arrests, including NUM president Arthur Scargill. Many miners sustained injuries from police truncheons.

Taken to court in 1995, 15 mineworkers proved that the South Yorkshire police - echoing that of the Hillsborough stadium disaster - had significant parts of their evidence dictated to them by another police officer and that an officer's signature on an evidence statement was not genuine.

The 1984-85 miners' dispute was the major episode in the Thatcher government's planned and phased onslaught on the organised working class.

As Ken Smith says in the Socialist Party publication 'A civil war without guns', the British capitalist state used all its resources to smash the powerful and militant NUM: "It was not long after the unprecedented violence at Orgreave, provoked by the police, that Thatcher referred to the miners as the "Enemy Within"... Once started, Orgreave was a battle that neither side could afford to lose.

"Thatcher and the Tories threw everything at it: state forces; propaganda: political pressure on the Labour and trade union leaders and the full force of the legal system against arrested miners.

"Police 'gladiators' were instructed from early on by police officers with loudhailers to "take prisoners".

"In reply the miners mobilised the biggest, most determined, pickets this country has ever seen."



## **Orgreave mass picnic and festival**

Saturday 14 June, 11am - 7pm

Admission free

Catcliffe Recreation Ground, Poplar Way, Catcliffe S60 5TZ

## **Orgreave truth and justice campaign**

orgreavejustice@hotmail.com

<http://otjc.org.uk>

Secretary Barbara Jackson 0114 2509510

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**Militant was the forerunner of the Socialist Party. During the course of the 1984-85 strike 500 miners joined Militant after drawing socialist conclusions. This edited extract from Peter Taaffe's book indicates the strategy proposed by Militant, as well as giving a taste of workers' reaction to the horrendous attack by the state on the working class.**

Revenge for the Tories' humiliation at the hands of the miners at Saltley Gate in 1972 and more recently in 1981 was taken by the police on the Orgreave picket line (outside Sheffield).

The most brutal methods yet seen in this or any previous dispute were played out in the full view of the world's media. The conflict gave the impression of a virtual civil war in the mining areas of Britain.

Eyewitnesses at an earlier battle reported: "The baton charge has returned. This brutal police method of attacking pickets, synonymous with the industrial battles of the 1920s, has become a standard tactic of today's police... The idea is to hurt people, intimidate people, frighten people."

Even Arthur Scargill was arrested on a trumped-up charge of obstruction...

On the day of the first Orgreave battle there were about 7,000 pickets assembled. Eyewitnesses said: "It was then that the real battle began. It was the most terrifying thing I have been through in my life... What made it worse for me was that this was happening in the village where I'd lived most of my life..."

"I saw an elderly miner of about 60 have his head split open by a baton... The riot police would march straight up to you shouting 'one two, one two' and provoking the miners: 'Come on then, have a go'..."

"And one snatch squad policeman went too far and got snatched himself! They had to send police horses in to get him back - he was in a far from healthy state when he emerged from the picket."

A group of miners from the North East writing later in Militant about their experiences at the battle at Orgreave commented: "They were treating us like animals, chasing us with dogs and horses. Some pickets outside the plant had been shoved into this field - it was completely flattened, concrete lamp

posts and walls crushed. Lads were coming away crying, heads bleeding, bruises all over their backs, some having to be carried..."

## **Brutality**

These brutal scenes at Orgreave, together with similar scenes that were enacted in numerous pit villages throughout the coalfields, laid bare before the miners and working class as a whole the nature of the capitalist state.

An army of occupation descended on the coal fields, particularly in the heartland of the strike, the Yorkshire coalfield.

Such actions changed forever the consciousness of workers, particularly the miners. Because of this Militant's ideas found a powerful echo.

It shared with and assisted in all the struggles of the miners but at the same time put forward a strategy which it considered was capable of ensuring victory.

Following the first battle of Orgreave (6 June) Militant advised that at local level, direct approaches should be made, backed up by arguments and mass leafleting, to steelworkers, lorry drivers and power station workers. The leaders of the TGWU and the ISTC (steelworkers union) should back up this campaign with a national internal drive in support of the miners.

Wherever possible mass meetings should be organised and a call for solidarity, addressed by striking miners... Conferences of shop stewards should be organised, specifically to prepare for solidarity action. These conferences should be called either directly by the NUM, by local trades councils or by the Broad Left Organising Committee.

This strike also now demands national action and a national coordinated drive for solidarity by the Trades Union Congress. It would be naive however to put too much faith in the TUC. The left unions should therefore come together independently to organise solidarity.

At the same time Militant believed that the NUM could put before such a conference in detail all that was needed in solidarity action, to stop the movement of coal and win this strike.

High on the agenda of such a conference would be the calling of a one-day general strike. It would result in a magnificent show of strength of the entire labour movement around the miners and prepare the way for an historic victory.

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## **Socialist Books - special offer**

**A Civil War Without Guns - the lessons of the 1984-85 miners' strike by Ken Smith, £7.00**

**The rise of Militant by Peter Taaffe, £9.99**

**Both books for only £15 including postage**

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# Spain: European elections redefine political map

**Below we publish a shortened translation of an article by Victor Egio (CWI member, local councillor in Santomera, Murcia, and member of Izquierda Unida, writing in a personal capacity) responding to the results of the European elections in Spain. Featuring a collapse of both the government party PP, and the former social democratic PSOE - which now hold less than 50% of the vote combined - the election's main success story was the eruption of Podemos, which came from nowhere to win 8% and five MEPs.**

**While the election results for the United Left (IU - which members of the CWI participate in) were a big improvement on its 2009 European election results, its vote (10%) was far from equal to its potential.**

The European election results constituted a political earthquake in Spain. These elections have confirmed the warnings of Socialismo Revolucionario (SR - CWI in Spain) that the failure of a political response of the bureaucratic right-wing leaders of IU to the elections and to the crisis in Spain, can spell disaster for the movement.

Willy Meyer, head of the IU list for the European elections, drew up a glowing balance sheet of IU's results, which saw the formation win one million new votes and go from two to six MEPs.

However, the eruption of Podemos, a force which in less than four months has won 1.2 million votes and five MEPs, not only minimised the potential growth of IU in these elections, but has changed the whole political equilibrium, threatening an end to IU's position as the main left reference point in the Spanish state.

## Political earthquake

The mainstream analysis of Podemos focuses exclusively on the strength of its campaign, in 'selling a fresh product' and capitalising on the high media profile of its main spokesperson, Pablo Iglesias.

But this is over simplistic. Iglesias and Podemos were able to cause a political earthquake by presenting themselves as radically different to everything else, emphasising the need for the people to become protagonists in political change, beyond the dated institutional politics of the main parties.

However, to build a mass movement to change society, it is not sufficient to appear daily on TV or in social networks. This must be combined with an intervention which carries a clear message, explaining the nature of the capitalist crisis, its causes and the necessary way out.

## Limitations

The leadership of IU has failed in this. It is impossible to credibly attack the two-party system, but then to use one's position to save it, in the name of maintaining "governability" - as the IU leadership does governing with PSOE in Andalucía and propping up the PP in Extremadura.

In reality, a section of the IU leaders, are more interested in ministerial positions than in the struggle to end the capitalist regime. They have thus become a part of the 'political caste' which so many rage against.

In the same way, one cannot in words oppose the 'dictatorship of the markets and the EU-IMF-ECB Troika' while at the same time putting forward a programme which does not go beyond touching up this system. However, in this respect Podemos does not represent an improvement. Beyond ambiguous statements of opposition to the rule of capital and the markets, Iglesias' concrete proposals are to limit privatisations, promote public participation in private companies, and democratise the ECB.

In both IU and Podemos, a struggle is necessary for a programme which responds to the reality of the crisis which can only be dealt with on the basis of a movement to break with capitalism, with socialist policies - repudiation of the debt, nationalisation under democratic workers' control of the key sectors of the economy.

## **Lost opportunities**

Following the 15 May "Indignados" movement in 2011 which led to a new wave of politicisation, IU had an opportunity to open the organisation up to the new mass of youth fighting against the system. However, within the IU leadership this was unfortunately subordinated to the fear of losing control of the situation. This failure to seize these opportunities opened up ground which Podemos has partially occupied.

SR renews its long standing call for a united front of the left (IU, Podemos, and left-nationalist forces) together with the workers' and social movements. We call on all those who voted for the alternative left to help to initiate united assemblies in neighbourhoods and workplaces. These assemblies should form the basis of the united front which the situation demands in order to unite our forces in struggle for a political alternative of the 99%.

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# **Greece: CWI councillors elected**

**Andros Payiatsos, Xekinima (CWI in Greece)**

Syriza, the left party in Greece, is now the first party - 3.9 % ahead of right-wing capitalist party New Democracy in the European elections. But this difference is mainly due to loss of support for New Democracy. Syriza's vote has actually decreased since the June 2012 elections by 138,000 votes.

So while Syriza 'celebrates' being the first party, the governing coalition parties New Democracy and Pasok (the traditional social democratic party) are relieved, saying that Syriza has insufficient support to form a government. Syriza campaigned heavily on the idea of using the elections to get rid of the government: "On the 25th we vote, on the 26th they go" - was the central slogan of the campaign. But the coalition government is not in danger of an immediate collapse.

Feelings are very mixed, particularly in the ranks of Syriza. People are glad that Syriza is the first party and can aim to win the government in the next elections.

But it's clear that Syriza is not strong enough to have a majority government or to cause the fall of the government in the immediate future as many were hoping.

Another factor that makes for a very reserved enthusiasm even among Syriza's rank and file is the high vote received by Golden Dawn, receiving close to 9.5% of the vote. This is despite the fact that Golden Dawn is now proven to be a murderous gang, with most of its first line leadership in custody

and well known to be a Nazi organisation with ample evidence provided by the media and the judiciary system.

Actually the rise of Golden Dawn is fundamentally a result of the depth of the crisis and the complete inability to show a way out by the parties of the left.

Syriza has been moving more and more to the right in the course of the last couple of years and the KKE (Greek communist party) and Antarsya (the 'anti-capitalist left' alliance) follow a sectarian policy of refusing to collaborate.

## **Unifying approach**

Local elections took place at the same time as the Euroelections. Xekinima stood a total of 20 members in different city, district and regional councils. We chose to stand with lists that had a militant profile and a unifying approach towards other forces of the left. One of the slogans we used frequently was "Vote for the Left - fight to bring the government down". In about 60% of cases, we stood with Syriza, in others with Antarsya and in the case of one local council with the KKE. Xekinima was the only organisation to stand together with all the parties of the left.

## **Our results**

Xekinima's campaign was an independent campaign, based on our own material and with our own positions. Our results have been very good.

Nikos Kanellis, standing with Syriza, was elected in the district council around the city of Volos with an exceptionally good vote - around 750 votes, which placed him fourth out of 56 candidates.

Costas Iatropoulos was elected in the city council of Volos, receiving around 650 votes which placed him second. Marianthi Kypridou came fourth in the same election with around 470 votes - it's not yet clear, as the official final results have not come out yet, but there is a good chance that she too will be on the city council of Volos.

Antarsya did badly in the Euroelections, but in the local elections it received a respectable 2.5%. In Zografou, Xekinima collaborated with Antarsya and the common list, called 'Zografou Movement' received around 4%. This is a success which is largely being put down to Xekinima's participation by left activists. Xekinima member Irene Ploumbidi received the greatest number of individual votes, coming first out of 38 candidates - an extraordinary 15% of the total vote received by the Zografou Movement.

These elections were the biggest campaign ever launched by Xekinima. We produced a total of 250,000 leaflets which went everywhere. And our intervention has had an impact - the best of our results will be noted by the left across the country.

Xekinima sold over 1,200 copies of its paper, had about 20 successful public meetings, and had a number of new members joining our ranks.

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# **10 July public sector strike: United action can beat austerity**

**Dave Semple, PCS union, recently elected on the work and pensions group executive committee**

Trade union members want action on the most basic demand of all: pay.

Since the onset of the economic crisis, the living standards of ordinary people have plummeted by an average of 15%. Tory Chancellor George Osborne tells us there is a recovery, but workers in the public or private sector are not feeling it.

A measly 1% pay rise for public sector workers is still a pay cut when inflation is at 2% and more. Meanwhile, the price of necessary goods has risen by 33% since the onset of the financial crisis in 2007.

10 July (J10) is the date being discussed by sections of Unite, Unison in local government, the NUT and the PCS for a joint strike on pay.

Members from the PCS, which organises civil service workers, meeting recently at our Annual Delegate Conference in Brighton, were very clear that we want action.

I'm sure the mood among other public sector workers is the same - that they will be prepared to enter into a determined struggle if they see their leaderships willing to organise it, as the PCS leaders are, and to press on until victory is achieved.

The 1% cap is a policy that is being applied across the public sector - except to MPs! It is central to the government's austerity policies. Workers must be united in taking them on.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is holding its eighth annual conference in London's Conway Hall on 5 July. I will be attending this event and I urge all fellow reps and trade union brothers and sisters to do likewise.

The NSSN has been consistent in its demand for joint action and for a one-day general strike against austerity. It has been a repository of rank-and-file activism, which helped bring about the N30 strike of two million workers in 2011.

As well as reports from the labour movement, such as the Fast Food Rights campaign, we will discuss how to ensure the success of any J10 strike.

J10 must be the beginning of a concerted campaign ready to go the distance against the Con-Dems and whichever pro-austerity government follows it - the NSSN will play a role in ensuring that.

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## **National Shop Stewards Network eighth annual conference**

**11am-5pm, Saturday 5 July, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL**  
**- Delegate/visitor fee £6 - [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)**

Confirmed speakers include a \$15 Won! Seattle minimum wage campaigner, RMT president Peter Pinkney, Ronnie Draper BFAWU general secretary, POA general secretary Steve Gillan and Janice Godrich PCS president

- Email [info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net) to book your place, as well as to order leaflets

- 
- [Bakers' union calls for general strike - click here to read more](#)
- 

## **Bakers' union calls for general strike**

"My message to Frances O'Grady and the TUC is this: We've done the marches, attended the rallies and got nowhere. Snappy sound-bites and raising awareness guff has achieved nothing. Stop beating about the bush and make the call for a general strike."

BFAWU bakers' union president Ian Hodson made this call when opening the union's annual conference on 8 June.

"To those employers who freeze or cut our pay, we will strike; reduce our terms and conditions, we will strike; attack our health and safety, we will strike; bring in slave labour workfare schemes, we will strike."

He said the Hovis workers' successful strike against zero-hour contracts last year and the global Fast Food Workers campaign are an inspiration. Ian got a massive ovation when he called for a £10 an hour living wage. The union, along with other groups including Youth Fight for Jobs, is leading the Fast Food Rights campaign in Britain.

The BFAWU also backs the NSSN, which with the Socialist Party, has led the call for a 24-hour general strike.

"The trade union movement will be judged as to how it responds to these challenges. The bottom line is there are close to seven million trade union members in the UK that would be virtually unstoppable if mobilised."

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- Email [info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net) to book your place, as well as to order leaflets
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## **Unison conference**

## **No waiting for Labour - fight the job cuts**

## **Glenn Kelly, Socialist Party member in Unison**

While low pay and the pay freeze are a major issue for public sector workers, job cuts are increasingly a threat. 450,000 council jobs have gone in England alone since 2010, a 17% cut in the workforce.

A survey has revealed that 40 councils alone are planning another £700 million of cuts with 18,000 more jobs to go.

What councils can't cut or shut, they are looking to privatise. A staggering £1.5 billion of services has been handed over to the profiteers in the last three months. In Bromley, where I work, the chief executive aims to reduce the 4,000 directly employed workers to 300.

Unison members have been fighting for the leadership to act on their promise to take action on pay and are now being balloted for action. There is the potential for much-needed coordinated action on 10 July.

## **Strategy**

Members will also demand to know the union's political and industrial strategy to defeat these cuts. But the union's national conference has been barred from debating the strategy on cuts put forward by my branch and others.

Councils sit on £20 billion in reserves and they have access to borrowing at cheap rates so we called for Unison to demand that "councils set a one year balanced budget using reserves and borrowing to guarantee no cuts in jobs and services and then for councils to use this time to launch a joint campaign with the workers and community to demand the return of the £7.6 billion stolen from the councils by the Con-Dems".

Surely Unison members have a right to demand it of Labour councils - given we hand Labour £3 million a year. But this proposal will not only not be debated, it couldn't even be printed on the agenda. Why? Because according to the Unison leadership setting a lawful balanced budget using reserves and borrowing is "illegal".

## **Daylight robbery**

The Unison leadership was "particularly concerned" that we referred to money having been "stolen" from councils by the Con-Dem government! From where I'm sitting, on the front line, it's daylight robbery.

At the moment Unison's strategy appears to amount to leaving branches to fight the avalanche of cuts alone. This is a strategy that is clearly failing.

In an attempt to address this Bromley branch put up a motion calling on the union to lodge a claim for a guarantee of no redundancies to the national local government employers.

We said, if they refused then we would have a national trade dispute and could have a national strike against cuts. This was ruled out of order as it was calling for 'illegal action'! When I then amended the position to say we should seek legal advice to see if it was possible, even this was ruled out.

The reality is the union leadership has no strategy to defeat the cuts other than to wait for a Labour government. Any hope that a Labour government will bail us out is pure fantasy and they know it.



Last week the Labour shadow minister for Local Government Chris Leslie made clear what's in store for local government if Labour wins the next election when he openly said that "we won't be able to undo the cuts".

That's because a Labour government has pledged to stick to the Tory spending cuts that will see the job slaughter rise to 1.2 million by 2018.

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## **Unison Bureaucracy Unmasked: The Defend the Four Story**

In 2007, four trade unionists from different Unison branches were publicly and unjustly accused of racism. Yet all were committed anti-racists and led well-run union branches.

All four are well-known members of the Socialist Party. But this provides only part of the explanation; the bureaucracy was also driven by a desire to make the union safe for its full-time machine, and safe for the Labour Party.

This book tells the story of the ultimately victorious campaign and legal challenge that cleared them of all charges, and which exposed the true nature of Unison's bureaucracy.

Available for £5 (plus p&p) from [www.leftbooks.co.uk](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk)

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## **"I'm Bryan": Housing workers strike against rep suspension**

**A Unite housing workers' branch officer**

Between 6 and 9 June, commuters on Camden's Chalk Farm Road were treated to the familiar sight of union members with Unite flags and placards outside One Housing Group (OHG) headquarters. This time round, members were protesting about the suspension and disciplinary action against lead convenor Bryan Kennedy.

Bryan was allegedly suspended over performance issues, although none of the allegations warrant his removal from the workplace. Bryan's treatment is also far harsher than that of others accused of underperformance within OHG.

Unite housing workers' branch and Unite members at OHG believe the suspension is motivated solely by management's growing fear of the union, and desire to prevent Bryan's highly effective union organising.

On previous occasions, strike action was a response to frontline staff pay cuts of around £8,000 per year, and other attacks on terms and conditions.

Unite members led by Bryan and a team of reps, successfully forced the employer into a retreat on several key proposals.

**One Housing, one setting**

Yet it appears OHG has one setting: attack. This is perhaps not surprising from an organisation that considers nothing wrong with slashing the wages of frontline staff, or illegally refusing to pay the minimum wage to essential overnight care despite a recent law change which requires it to do so.

OHG amassed surpluses of £36 million in 2013 (up from £13 million in 2012), and has given CEO Mick Sweeney a pay increase of £31,000 then publicly denied doing so.

The OHG leadership's behaviour is maverick and divorced from reality. They have become indifferent to their staff, and by extension their tenants and service users.

It is a brutal commercialisation of an organisation that was established to assist the homeless and vulnerable; a social purpose that many dedicated, hard-working, but increasingly overworked, underpaid, and ill-treated staff still support, despite the naked corporate greed of their most senior management team.

The Unite housing workers' branch is dedicated to supporting the 'I'm Bryan' campaign, so named because an injury to Bryan is an injury to all reps. We will continue to exploit all our industrial, organising, political and campaigning strength to ensure that OHG gets no peace until it treats all its staff with the dignity and respect they deserve.

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## **Firefighters to walk out for 24-hours**

**The FBU union plans a 24-hour strike across England and Wales to protect firefighters' pensions, following 12 shorter strikes since September 2013.**

**The strike is planned for Thursday 12 June, to be followed by a walkout from 10am-5pm on Saturday 21 June. There is also a voluntary overtime ban between the two strikes, and strikers will refuse to train strikebreakers.**

**Salford FBU fire station rep Paul Davies spoke to the Socialist:**

"All that's on the table now is the original offer that [Tory fire minister] Brandon Lewis came out with when the changes to pensions were first proposed. He plans now to impose those changes in 2015 with no further negotiations. So this 24-hour strike is a step in the right direction as far as I'm concerned.

Pension contributions have already gone up, a staged progression of contribution rises over the past 18 months. And they'll continue to go up.

On top of that, the pension age has been raised to 60 from 55. The pension that you're going to get will be less. In simple terms we'll be putting more in, getting less out and having to work longer to get it.

Every strike up to now has been absolutely solid among the membership. I think there's quite a big appetite for a fight in our brigade.

When you speak to people about the strike the support's been really good. They look at it in simple terms - you can't expect a fireman to work until they're 60 and they're right.

There's also a massive cuts agenda going on in our brigade as well. A victory on pensions would get the confidence up, get on the front foot again and start to change things round.

It'll be good for unions to link industrial action up more with other unions who are facing attacks as well - like on 10 July.

We're having a demo on 12 June, the day we're out on strike, in Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester, with speakers from the FBU and other unions, starting at 12.30pm."

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## Care UK workers continue dispute

**Alistair Tice**

The inspiring Doncaster Care UK workers, having taken 34 days of strike action against pay cuts and NHS privatisation, voted at the end of their last strike on 18 May to take another 14 days of action in June.

But now into their fourth month of industrial action, under the anti-trade union laws, their legal immunity from dismissal expired after 12 weeks.

Given the "un-caring" nature of their employers, workers were worried that they could all be sacked without any legal redress.

So the 80-odd strikers, who remain absolutely solid, are re-balloting to declare a new trade dispute against the dismissal notices they have been sent for refusing to sign up to the new contracts.

In the words of their strike song: "Care UK, you're a farce. Stick your contracts, up your arse!"

Strike committee members continue to speak all over the country with donations still pouring in, but understandably the workers are frustrated at having to jump through hoops to continue the dispute.

Half a dozen strikers will attend the Unison national conference, where they will welcome the union's continued support but press for the union to lead a national campaign against Care UK with protests, demonstrations and a unionisation drive.

This way, a famous victory can be won that will start to turn the tide against the race to the bottom and the privatisation of the NHS.

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## Workplace news in brief

### Sun don't shine

The Sun newspaper continues to attract deserved opprobrium from those affected by the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster when 96 Liverpool FC fans died. Along with the establishment at the time who smeared Liverpool supporters for the disaster, the Sun falsely accused fans of robbing dead victims and other lies, and consequently was subject to a lengthy boycott on Merseyside.

This week postal workers in outer Merseyside districts have refused to deliver free promotional copies of the Sun to coincide with the football World Cup finals, while thousands have signed an online petition calling for a nationwide boycott.

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### **3 Cosas job losses strike**

University of London workers started five days of strike action on 6 June, with action continuing from 9 June, against 80-plus job losses at the Garden Halls of residence near King's Cross.

The Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB) members voted 100% for action. They work for cleaning, portering, security, and maintenance company Cofely, and catering firm Aramark.

Many of the workers threatened with redundancy were prominent in the 3 Cosas campaign, which won improved sick pay and holiday pay after a November 2013 strike.

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### **Tilbury Docks**

National Shop Stewards Network supporters travelled to Tilbury Docks in Essex to support an eleven-day strike by Unite members against employer SCA Logistics imposing zero-hour contracts. The strike started on 5 June.

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### **EDF strike**

EDF workers are due to take a third day of strike action on Monday 16 June, unless Acas talks bring an agreement.

The strike, which is over pay, will mean delays in fixing and installing meters. Revenue protection will also be hit.

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### **Defend Paul Langley**

Birmingham's Labour council has been embarrassed by growing street piles of garden refuse following its withdrawal of free collections.

But it decided to start clearing the refuse in the week running up to the local elections. Such was the volume that bin crews were offered weekend overtime to clear it by election day!

GMB rep Paul Langley spilt the beans to the local paper and has now been suspended.

Birmingham's Labour council's contemptuous action shows the depths it'll sink to in order to minimise resistance to the cuts it enthusiastically supports.

## Occupational Therapists

As we go to press, occupational therapists at Greenwich council are due to strike for 48 hours from 11 June.

The Unite members, striking over bullying, harassment and the suspension of a worker, also took action on 21 May. They voted by 100% for strike action.

On 11 June the therapists will also protest at Greenwich council's annual general meeting.

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## Now is the time to join the Socialists!

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

On Sunday 8 June, Observer comment writer Will Hutton wrote: "Last Monday, the mayor of Seattle signed into law a city-wide minimum wage of \$15 (£8.90) an hour. It will be phased in over the next three to seven years, but nonetheless it remains a path-breaking commitment. More amazingly, Kshama Sawant, Seattle's first socialist councillor since 1916, had been elected last year with the \$15 wage as her key pledge."

Regular readers of the Socialist will know that Kshama is a leading member of Socialist Alternative (SA), co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US. And that the mayor was put under big pressure to deliver on \$15 by Kshama's election campaign and the 15 Now campaign which SA and Kshama then built.

Hutton acknowledges the earthquake that this represents: "This does not happen in the US. Socialist candidates in city elections don't win 93,000 votes." But this is not the full picture. SA linked the anger over low pay, poor housing to the anger released by Occupy about the huge inequality inherent to capitalist society.

At a 6,000-strong Left Forum in New York, Kshama was invited as the featured "surprise guest" to speak alongside Harry Belafonte, Angela Davis, and David Harvey.

To loud applause Kshama said: "Our primary task is to challenge capitalism. We must create an alternative". "To do that, we need mass movements to challenge the state and strong organisations to run in elections."

### Strength

At a 15 Now workshop during the Left Forum independent journalist Arun Gupta explained: "It was impressive to see how effective SA was at combining inside/outside tactics. It was like a chess game, with every move by the Mayor and business met with a counter-move by 15 Now. Sawant's position at the negotiating table was strengthened by rallies and protests."

The \$15 campaign is set to spread to Chicago and could spread like prairie fire across the US and to everywhere that income inequality is provoking enormous anger and hunger for action. The interest in socialist ideas among all those forced to fight for their future can also spread rapidly.

Glen Ford, the executive editor of Black Agenda Report, introduced Kshama and also praised the role of SA's leadership in the \$15 struggle in Seattle. Socialist Alternative has "doubled its membership since Sawant's election," Ford informed the packed hall.

## **Britain**

While not yet at the same level as Seattle, there are also opportunities for Socialist Party branches in Britain to grow as bigger numbers see the need for an alternative to capitalism.

From 14 to 21 June the Socialist Party is hosting a 'recruitment week' to put special emphasis on building our party.

If you are a member already please think about the people you know through work, family, campaigns, etc, who may be interested in finding out about your party. Have they expressed anger over the falling living standards, disgust at all the capitalist parties, interest in the many struggles going on in Britain and internationally?

The recruitment week involves organising bold public stalls to invite people to find out about our ideas and campaigns.

We will also use the week to make extra effort to contact anyone who has expressed an interest in the Socialist Party but not yet joined. And we will be organising meetings to, as we always do, invite discussion and debate on key questions and the socialist alternative. All members are needed to make these events a success.

If you are reading this but haven't yet considered joining the party - get in touch now! We need you too!

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## **Why I'm a socialist**

When I joined the civil service some years ago, staff from a higher education background such as I were respected professionals with career prospects. We took pride in our work. However, all has now changed.

We now work under the dark clouds of cuts, job insecurity, inadequate resources, performance targets, excessive workloads and an unjust, rigged performance management system (which now includes forced rankings). In summary, a race to the bottom.

I thought I was alone, but realised many workers faced similar circumstances. Increasingly frustrated, I felt I had to take a stand. I'd also become aware that none of the mainstream parties represented ordinary working people; it was under the Blair-Brown Government that my workplace starting getting like this. Only a new workers' movement could change things.

Earlier this year I was pushed to the edge, so took action and joined the Socialist Party and the PCS union. Now I'm happier to be campaigning alongside others against this injustice. I've found an island of sense in an ocean of madness!

Unfortunately union membership isn't strong on the site where I work, and the PCS branch rep is at a site eight miles away. Management has disallowed union activities in official time (we used to be permitted to do so). As a result, organising branch meetings is difficult. However, I'll do all I can to support the local branch.

**Andrew Wilkins**

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## **Stevenage: EDL not welcome here**

**Stevenage Socialist Party member**

The far-right and divisive English Defence League (EDL) came to Stevenage on 7 June. But a counter-march organised by Stevenage and District Trades Council (SDTC) sent a clear message that the EDL's divisive methods will not go unopposed.

Over 200 people including trade unionists, members of the Socialist Party and local youth marched together, determined to voice their opposition to any attempts to divide the working class.

The EDL say they targeted Stevenage because of an upcoming court case involving the grooming of underage girls. The EDL's hate campaign was focused on the local Muslim population, seeking division despite the fact that the vast majority of Muslims and of the Pakistani community are horrified by this crime.

But SDTC responded, leafleting workplaces, shops, the town centre and a local mosque to explain the need for a counter-demonstration.

The leaflets said that "such hatred cannot go unchallenged and the division created between working people must not be allowed to grow."

SDTC received a good response together with messages of support and solidarity.

When EDL members arrived in Stevenage they found they were not welcome with most pubs closing their doors to them. A pub outside Stevenage had to be found for their customary pre-march assembly.

The counter-demo ended with a rally including speeches from PCS, Unite, Unite Against Fascism and Socialist Party members.

The speakers said that targeting the Muslim population will only lead to divisions within the working class. The only people who benefit will be the bosses if our ability to resist is weakened.

The lack of housing and suitable jobs in Stevenage does breed discontent but only a united working class is capable of defending the interests of the overwhelming majority of people.

- Stevenage Socialist Party has organised a public meeting on Monday 16 June, 8pm, Bedwell Community Centre, Stevenage
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## Cuts consensus: Labour Joins with Ukip to back Tory council in Portsmouth

Any illusions in the anti-establishment credentials of Portsmouth's new Ukip councillors were swiftly dashed when they joined forces with New Labour and the Tories to support the newly installed Tory minority council.

Last month's election results left the Conservatives with 12 of the city's 42 seats, while the Lib Dems had 19. This meant the Tories were forced to rely on the support of the six Ukip and four Labour candidates, who readily provided it.

The new council is to be led by former HBOS banker Donna Jones, who so struggled to find any policy differences between her and her allies in the other establishment parties that her flagship election pledge was to attract car dealerships to sponsor public toilets closed by cuts.

While the election cost the Lib Dems control of the city, it was Labour who fared worst. They were defeated by Ukip in every ward, losing a councillor in Paulsgrove, their only electoral stronghold in the city.

Labour continually refused to address the issue of austerity, instead choosing to focus their campaign on closing a local swimming complex, the Pyramids Centre, while attacking disgraced MP Mike Hancock.

Portsmouth Labour's trade union liaison officer, and Socialist Appeal supporter, Sion Reynolds went so far as to call a position which opposed all cuts 'imbecilic', perhaps forgetting that it is the official position of Portsmouth Trades Council. Similarly, when challenged on cuts to education, Labour leader John Ferret described himself as 'agnostic' to free schools and academies, refusing to take a position.

The decision by Labour to unite with Ukip behind the Tories simply officialises what has long been true. The role of official opposition must now fall to the city's trade unions and community anti-cuts groups.

Portsmouth Socialist Party, working with its allies in the RMT and other unions, challenged the cuts consensus by standing 14 community-based candidates across every ward in the city. It is now vital that the campaign continues to unite all those who demand an alternative to austerity.

Find out more at [www.socialistportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.socialistportsmouth.co.uk) or follow Portsmouth TUSC at @TUSCPompey

**Portsmouth Socialist Party**

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 6 June 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.



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## Film review

# Ken Loach's Jimmy's Hall

**Niall Mulholland**

Dramatic, inspiring and full of life, 'Jimmy's Hall', based on the true story of left-wing worker-activist Jimmy Gralton, is in many ways director Ken Loach's sequel to his outstanding 'The Wind That Shakes the Barley'.

This depicted brothers torn apart during tumultuous events in Ireland from 1918 to 1922 - the struggle for Irish independence, civil war and partition. Jimmy's Hall is set in the aftermath, when victorious reactionary forces changed the country's flag but maintained capitalist property relations and class exploitation.

Jimmy (played brilliantly by Barry Ward) leaves behind Depression-era America to return to his native County Leitrim to help his mother run the family farm. Soon he is urged by young people to reopen the 'Pearse-Connolly' dance hall built by him and other activists on Gralton family land and named after two executed 1916 Easter Rising leaders (Pearse, a radical nationalist, and Connolly, the Marxist thinker and workers' leader).

### Conflict

Jimmy is reluctant to do so because ten years previously it led to conflict with the local Catholic Church hierarchy, big landowners and reactionary forces of the new Irish Free State - told in dramatic flashbacks - and ended with his expulsion from Ireland at gunpoint. But Jimmy relents after visiting the derelict Hall, inspired by a dusty copy of James Connolly's classic Labour in Irish History and memories of the Hall in its prime.

The reopened Hall is quickly a success; a free venue for music and dancing (Irish and Jazz), boxing, singing lessons, poetry and art classes. It also hosts discussions about workers' rights (Jimmy Gralton was an activist in the Revolutionary Workers' Group, a forerunner of the Communist Party of Ireland).

Running through the film is Jimmy's rekindled passion with another organiser, Oonagh, the girlfriend he was forced to leave behind ten years previously and who is now married with children. The Hall's re-opening soon earns the ire of Jimmy's old adversaries in the local establishment, led by Father Sheridan.

### Threats

They regard the Hall as a dangerous subversive challenge to authority. From the pulpit, Father Sheridan lambasts Jimmy's "atheistic" teachings and names and shames those who attend the Hall. Shop owners are threatened with a boycott if their children keep attending Gralton's classes.

Jim Norton, who plays Father Sheridan, presents a complex character; he compares Jimmy's convictions to the early Christians but is determined to smother the potential attraction of Marxist ideas to the poor and hungry.

The Hall's success leads to Jimmy being asked to campaign on behalf of a tenant farmer evicted by a big landlord. This provokes a robust round-table debate amongst Hall activists: are the recovering forces of the Left and radical nationalism strong enough to take on the establishment?

In the end, the landlord's thugs are physically faced down and the evicted family returned to their home. Jimmy makes a rousing speech, paraphrasing James Connolly and with allusions to today's inequalities.

## **Optimism**

Inevitably the forces of reaction take revenge against the Hall and Jimmy. They fear the example of Catholic and Protestant workers' unity in the Northern statelet (the 1932 Outdoor Relief Strike in Belfast) will spread South. Éamon de Valera's government issues a deportation order against the "alien" Jimmy Gralton. Jimmy is forced to go on the run, while unions mounted a nationwide campaign in his defence.

In the end, the forces of reaction do prove too strong for Jimmy and his comrades. There are some minor flaws in the film (some dialogue is a bit wooden and too modern - the Hall as a "safe space"?) but overall Jimmy's Hall is another Loach triumph; humane, moving and bursting with optimism, showing the irrepressible capacity of working people to recover even from terrible defeat and to strive for self-emancipation.

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## **Obituary: George Duff**

George joined the Socialist Party around the time I became branch secretary of East London branch in January 2013. He was an upbeat and treasured member of the branch.

Growing up in a Protestant household in Belfast during the 'Troubles', before moving to London, shaped his politics greatly. His experiences led him to strongly oppose sectarianism and all forms of bigotry and injustice. He followed with great interest and admiration the work of our sister party in Northern Ireland.

The poor treatment of disabled people in society today was also a driving force behind his political activism. George loved his job at a disabled charity. As a disabled man, he knew how little and just what poor quality services are available for disabled people.

Sadly he also felt the impact of the government's austerity first hand when he lost his job due to funding cuts at the charity. These cuts were passed on to the charity by Tower Hamlets council.

When the cuts were announced, with the help of Socialist Party members, George recruited a number of colleagues to the Unite union and tried to fight the redundancies. His efforts managed to postpone but sadly couldn't stop the redundancies going through.

I was always impressed by his warmth and confidence especially in political settings. He used his powerful Ulster brogue to great effect on street stalls and paper sales, ensuring passers-by were well aware of the branch's campaigns!

We had hoped he would be a branch delegate to congress this year for the first time but sadly he was already too unwell having just lost his job. But despite our best efforts to re-immense George back into political activity he succumbed to acute depression and tragically took his own life.

While George was a very strong individual and class fighter, he was also a victim of government austerity and this uncaring capitalist system. Nonetheless, George's struggle to overcome great difficulties and to fight for a better world will always inspire comrades who knew him.

**Helen Pattison**