

# Super-rich flash cash at Tory bash

**Elaine Brunskill, Socialist Party northern region secretary**

Cameron and his Tory chums can shout that "we're all in this together" until they're even bluer in the face - but nobody believes them.

The Tory summer bash said it all. Guests included the world's haves and have yachts! Russian oligarchs rubbed shoulders with hedge fund managers. They, alongside Greek shipping tycoons and others from the world of the pampered, elite schmoozed with Tory government ministers.

Filthy rich individuals forked out £160,000 to play the "ultimate game of tennis" with Cameron and Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson; £40,000 for a bottle of champagne signed by milk snatcher Margaret Thatcher; and double that for a day's shooting in Oxfordshire!

For the mere millionaires a table could be booked, presumably on the fringe of the event, for £12,000. They could then bid for a jar of honey - going for a sweet £15,000, otherwise known as a year's pay for many workers.

Beyond the glister, attacks on the working class and middle class are relentless.

Our wages have stagnated, our benefits are sanctioned, but most importantly our patience is running out! Now is the time for fighting back!

Up and down the country a wealth of industrial disputes are erupting: Tyneside Safety Glass workers fighting ruthless bosses who offered a 0% pay 'rise'; Doncaster Care UK staff demanding a living wage; occupational therapists in Greenwich striking against bullying bosses; and an indefinite strike in Lambeth College.

The billionaires think they can hang on to their luxurious lifestyles by trampling on workers and paying into the coffers of pro-capitalist parties. But those same donors will tremble when workers take decisive action against austerity.

The 10 July public sector coordinated action should mark the start of mass working class action against all cuts, especially with public and private sector workers acting together in a 24-hour general strike.

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## After 10 July- build workers' movement

**Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary**

As we go to press, up to two million public sector workers will strike against rotten poverty pay on 10 July (J10). Firefighters are launching eight days of action against the pension robbery. Thousands of other workers are taking local action to defend living standards in this so-called economic recovery.

This day of coordinated strike action is long overdue. Pay restraint has been combined with the decimation of public services. The last four years of pay freezes have left public sector workers £3,700 a year worse off on average. Now the government has announced that the pay freeze will continue until 2018.

But, given this strike comes ten months before the next general election, it has even more significance. It is a warning to whichever pro-cuts party or parties form the next government that workers want to fight.

Some capitalist commentators seek solace in the lack of a more generalised struggle against austerity so far. Janan Ganesh, for example, commented in the Financial Times that "the right" have got away with "cuts, already bigger than those attempted by Thatcher." (8/7/14)

But to think that means struggle is off the agenda is utterly mistaken. True, the right-wing trade union leaders have derailed the struggle, after the magnificent movement that developed in 2011. And true, this has inevitably increased the confidence of the government to step up austerity, and decreased the confidence of workers that it was possible to stop it.

Nonetheless, enormous and visceral class anger has been building up below the surface of society and will, at a certain stage, find an outlet.

After J10 there is no alternative to stepping up the fight against austerity. There is no prospect of the so-called 'economic recovery' leading to a real recovery in workers' living standards. Only the super-rich benefit as credit bubbles and the dominance of the finance sector raise the prospect of a new crisis.

J10 needs to be a launch pad for further coordinated action, building for a 24-hour general strike, involving unions in both the public and private sector.

Alongside opposition to cuts, privatisation and pay restraint such a strike should clearly call for an end to zero-hour contracts and for a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour.

This would enthuse and draw in the millions of young people who have not yet been touched by the trade union movement.

A general strike should also demand the repeal of the existing vicious anti-trade union laws.

Labour's appeals to big business are just more proof that it would also act in the interests of capitalism. It would not even carry out all of the incredibly modest measures it is currently proposing to improve workers' living standards, unless it was compelled to, like any other capitalist party would be, by a mass movement.

The historic victory for the \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle shows that workers can win. But it also shows the importance of the workers' movement building its own 'political wing'.

The election of socialist Kshama Sawant gave the movement for \$15 an uncompromising voice in the decision-making chamber to act on its demands.

Socialists appeal to trade unionists to join the fight to make sure J10 marks the start of a new phase of rebuilding such a movement.

The working class is the majority in society, with enormous potential power, capable not only of defending our pay and public services, but also of changing the world.

To do so, however, the working class needs to increase its level of organisation both industrially - via building a fighting trade union movement - but also politically, by building a mass party that represents the interests of our class instead of those of the 1%.

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## **National Shop Stewards Network - Organising the resistance**

**Bob Severn**

"The biggest shop stewards gathering of the year." This was how BFAWU bakers' union general secretary Ronnie Draper accurately described the eighth annual conference of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) in a tweet. The main room in central London's Conway Hall was packed out with over 300 trade unionists and young people.

Held under the title 'strike together for a pay rise', the meeting looked at maximising the turnout for 10 July (J10) and building on that public sector strike over pay (with firefighters also striking over pensions), for generalised anti-austerity action.

The general election is less than ten months away. The trade union movement needs to make clear to whichever capitalist party forms the next government - their common consensus of continuing the austerity agenda will be ferociously fought.

Speaking in the opening session, NSSN chair Rob Williams welcomed J10, the biggest one-day strike since 30 November 2011 (N30) with up to two million workers taking part, and the further action dates already proposed by Unison.

"We want another day like N30, but we don't want another D19". On 19 December 2011 Trade Union Congress and other right-wing union leaders, especially from Unison, agreed to pension cuts with small government concessions that were already on offer before N30.

N30 saw almost two million public sector workers on strike and marching over pensions in what was "more than a strike". But the D19 agreement was seen by the Con-Dems as a green light to charge ahead with austerity and privatisation. J10 represents a big step in rebuilding the union fightback that has the potential to stop austerity and overthrow the government.

Directed at the TUC and conservative union leaders, PCS general secretary Janice Godrich said: "No more leading us up the hill to go straight back down. The PCS will do all we can to build for united struggle with other unions."

Rob said: "We will call on trade union leaders to meet after J10, broaden the action, involve everyone in the public sector, then bring in private sector workers."

BFAWU bakers' union general secretary Ronnie Draper said that: "Coordinated action can get results, and every single workplace in this country has a problem."

When giving the annual report, NSSN secretary Linda Taaffe said that one issue that separates the Network from many other anti-cuts platforms is that the NSSN raises the central role of trade union joint action in defeating austerity.

Unison executive member Roger Bannister, in a personal capacity, explained how although his union originally provided 'no recommendation' on the 1% local government pay offer, pressure from below resulted in rejection of the rotten offer and a successful ballot for J10.

NUT teachers' union executive member Martin Powell-Davies called for his union to also have a clear calendar of action beyond J10.

Janice said that the Con-Dems were right on one thing: "There is no alternative - no alternative but to fight." Otherwise we'll suffer more and more austerity, with 60% of government cuts yet to come.

Janice also warned that future generations would look at how the NHS was privatised and be disgusted at the lack of action by health union leaders to stop it.

Many spoke of the results of austerity, including food banks and pay day loans.

Brian Caton, retired POA prison officers' union general secretary, explained other ways workers experience austerity - or planned poverty. He reported that prison officers made redundant through cuts had been offered back their old jobs at understaffed prisons. But on two-thirds of the pay!

The POA has been calling on the TUC to organise a general strike for years. Prison officers don't have the legal right to strike, but that hasn't stopped POA members from walking out.

The NSSN campaigns for a 24-hour general strike against austerity. Its campaign helped push the TUC to support a POA motion calling on it to consider such action at the 2012 Congress in Brighton. But nine months after the TUC voted to keep 24-hour general strike 'on the table' in 2013, the TUC has done nothing.

Some right-wing leaders' excuse is 'workers aren't ready', but Ronnie reported that a BFAWU consultative ballot found 70% in favour of a general strike.

"We need a general strike," said Peter Pinkney, president of the NSSN's founding union, the RMT transport union. "The TUC should listen to the millions who marched and have taken strike action."

Peter also said he was proud that his union voted at its 2014 conference to remove Labour Party affiliation from its rule book and spoke of the need for an alternative to capitalism.

Janice explained the importance of the socialist leadership in the PCS. The trade union movement needs to have three words in its slogan, she said, 'Struggle, solidarity and socialism' to fight for workers to live not just exist.

In closing the conference, Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, spoke of the need to maximise members' participation and control within unions, for which the NSSN plays a pivotal role. "It's not just about union membership - it's what we do." The NSSN has a proud record of converting rank-and-file anger into union action.

On the 30th anniversary of the miners' strike, Chris said the lesson of that heroic strike against Thatcher must be linked to fighting for a future. Just like today, if the TUC had given a lead and organised a general strike backing the miners, that struggle could have been won.

Chris said workers' victories show the latent power of the trade unions. "They attack us, attacked Bob Crow, give bad press, use anti-union laws, because they fear trade union power... We need to reach out to the old, young, disabled - draw millions into the movement against austerity..."

This means a sustained programme of action up to and beyond the general election."

## **Reps report their struggles**

The conference heard from trade unionists involved in the Tyneside Safety Glass dispute over pay, now in its third week; the indefinite strike at Lambeth College against attacks on conditions; and the Doncaster Care UK disputes against pay cuts. A collection at the conference raised £360 to share out equally in donations to these campaigns.

A London Underground rep spoke on Transport for London's cuts and management renegeing on agreements made since the last RMT strike. More strike action is likely, he said, with the need to convince the TSSA to again join action and for every single member of staff to take part.

Former RMT president and NSSN steering committee member Alex Gordon reported that outsourced train cleaners, working for Mitie at Paddington station, had won a pay increase meaning they now received the London living wage of £8.80.

A TfL worker in the RMT, victimised by contractor Sodexo, reported that he had defeated this predatory contractor. He appealed for a common struggle against victimisation with GMB, Unite and Unison members.

The conference also heard from Unite housing workers involved in disputes including at LookAhead, where workers will start a seven-day strike on 10 July following a 100% vote for action. LookAhead had refused to recognise Unite union membership - but management said they wanted to talk when the strike was announced.

The conference also heard from victimised One Housing rep Bryan Kennedy, sacked after leading successful strike action which recruited to Unite. A lobby of Bryan's redundancy appeal had been organised for 9 July. The conference gave support to Leeds Ambulance

workers in Unite, striking on 5 and 6 July over safety issues, during the 66th anniversary of the NHS's foundation.

Firefighters, as well as joining the strike on 10 July, are also due to walkout for eight consecutive days from Monday 14 July. Each day will see two strikes, both lasting two hours, apart from Sunday 20 July which will see one two hour stoppage.

## **\$15 won in Seattle**

15 Now campaigner Ginger Jentzen reported how the \$15 minimum wage had been won in US city Seattle through a grassroots campaign.

A wave of strikes by fast food workers popularised the \$15 demand. Socialist Kshama Sawant took this up and won a seat on Seattle council with over 90,000 votes. This forced Seattle's Democrat mayor to take up the issue.

But Kshama then exposed the pro-big business Democrats who voted through loopholes in the legislation to benefit big business. Nonetheless it's estimated that 100,000 workers will be lifted out of poverty, with \$3 billion being transferred from bosses' profits to workers' pay.

\$15 an hour is now being proposed in other cities including New York and San Francisco.

"But", Ginger said, "\$15 is only the beginning: poverty is a measure of how useful a system is, and the popularity of socialism is growing in the US."

## **£10 an hour needed in Britain**

The NSSN backs the call made by the Socialist Party and now BFAWU and GMB for a £10 an hour minimum wage in Britain.

Speaking from the GMB, organiser Martin Smith said that the 'living wage' measure of £7.65 an hour (outside London) is not enough to live on as workers still have to claim benefits. Every year the £20 billion in benefits paid to low-wage workers is a subsidy to poverty-pay companies.

## **Scrap zero-hours**

Helen Pattison from Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) described how workers' rights have gone back 100 years. "One worker reported how he has to get up early, waiting for a text to say there's work. Everyone who gets that text has to then go to work.

"You all have to go, or you'll never be hired again. But only the first one there gets the job."

But zero-hour contracts can be beaten. Ronnie Draper reported the victory of 210 BFAWU members at the Hovis bread factory in Wigan in September 2013, with coordinated action playing a part.

Drivers refused to cross the around-the-clock 100-strong picket lines. Strikers and supporters marched through Wigan, many boycotted Hovis, the website was brought down, directors were hit by hundreds of people phoning to complain.

Jaime Davis said it was a lie that zero-hour contracts give flexibility to workers. The day before the conference, he was ready for work in the morning when he received a text: "Don't come in until five today". "We want flexibility on our terms... Workplaces like these need to be unionised - that's why I joined BFAWU."

## **Remembering Bob Crow**

A minute's applause was held in memory of Bob Crow and all trade union members who died in the past year. In tribute Ronnie Draper remembered how Bob recognised the strength in the unions, remarking once that workplace shop stewards, doing the ground floor union organising, are the real heroes of the trade union movement.

## **Steering committee**

A steering committee to oversee the NSSN's work for the next year was elected. New members to the committee included Ronnie Draper, Chas Berry from the Napo probation officers' union that has recently taken action against privatisation, and Oktay Sahbaz from the Turkish-Kurdish group Day-Mer. There was also an open place agreed for a YFJ representative .

Oktay brought greetings from Day-Mer. Tragically the 'official' death count at May's mining disaster in Western Turkey was 303, but hundreds have still not been found and protesting miners' families have been attacked by the state. Oktay thanked the NSSN for its support of workers in Turkey, struggling against attacks over pay, conditions, trade union rights and through privatisation.

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### **Video shown at NSSN conference**

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Editorial from issue 818 of the Socialist

## **Junk Juncker, Cameron and the anti-worker EU**

"Cameron's defeat was dire." [Andrew Rawnsley, Observer]. "He f\*\*\*\*ed up." [Private comment of Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish foreign minister, leaked to the press.]

These are just some of the milder criticisms made by his alleged 'friends' about the Tory British Prime Minister, following his handling of the 'Juncker issue'. He suffered a humiliating defeat by 26 votes to 2, with only extreme right-wing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán backing his attempt to block Jean-Claude Juncker becoming the next EU president. Of course, this stand met with boundless praise among the 'deranged' nationalist, eurosceptic right wing of his own party in the House of Commons.

But the mood of the main movers and shakers of British capitalism is one of deep foreboding for the future, including the fear that the government has set on a path which could see it ultimately forced out of the EU. In turn, this could have far-reaching consequences for the Tory party - which is already riven with toxic divisions - even splitting into rival parties in the future.

This incident once more underlines the 'slow and inglorious decay' of British capitalism. In the past it was able, on the basis of its colossal economic and military resources, to pursue a balance of power policy towards Europe, playing off one country against another. No more! It is now German capitalism, the dominant economic power of the EU, through its chancellor Angela Merkel, who 'balances' Cameron and his government against the others. Cameron's futile pleas to Merkel, now the 'decider', in the language of George Bush, for support to block Juncker were ultimately rejected.

### **Cameron deserted**

Cameron's campaign included a farcical 'discussion' in a rowing boat in Sweden to persuade her and others to come to his rescue and block Juncker. She, however, despite sympathetic noises, bowed to domestic pressures from her German coalition partners the Social Democrats, and consequently hung Cameron out to dry. His former allies, like the prime ministers of Sweden and the Netherlands, also deserted him, because "they didn't want to be on the wrong side of Germany".

Seemingly undaunted, Cameron and his few allies left within the EU pursued an unprecedented smear campaign against Juncker, citing his 'excessive drinking' and smoking during meetings! But behind this 'falling out' are posed serious issues as Cameron, backed by his baying parliamentary band of eurosceptics, objected strongly to Juncker's 'federalist' tendencies.

Juncker was the candidate for EU president of the right-wing bloc in the European parliament, the European People's Party (EPP), largely Christian Democrats, who emerged as the group with the biggest number of seats in the European Parliament. Cameron accused the Parliament of a "power grab".

### **Uncharted territory**

Up to now, the selection of the president had come from the heads of the 28 countries in the EU, which indicated a determination to concentrate decision-making powers in the national governments. But now, for the first time in its history, they endorsed a candidate recommended by the largest party in the European Parliament and overruled the objections of a big country like Britain. This has taken "the running of the EU into uncharted territory". [Financial Times]



Juncker's selection has led, potentially at least, to "a historic rebalancing of power among the EU institutions in favour of the European Parliament". Consequently there is much talk among EU parliamentarians of establishing a real 'pan-European democracy' to supersede the powers of national governments. But this will not materialise on the basis of capitalism. It is more likely that this will open the possibility of a fracturing of the EU.

Even Juncker declared: "I am rather allergic to this term 'the United States of Europe' because it's an obstacle. It's certainly offensive to people."

The European Parliament and the elections which decide its composition have even less authority among the peoples of Europe than their own increasingly discredited parliaments and the often out of touch and corrupt 'representatives' which inhabit these institutions. Participation in European elections is much lower in general than those for national parliaments. Just 7% in Germany even knew that Juncker was the EPP's candidate!

Notwithstanding Juncker's election, the majority of real power will still reside in governments and parliaments. The possibility of the present EU leading to some kind of 'superstate' is ruled out on the basis of capitalism. The EU Commission and Parliament spend a budget that accounts for just 1% of EU gross domestic product.

That does not mean that we do not have to fight energetically against the undemocratic structure of the EU and its anti-working class measures.

The clashes over Juncker go to the heart of the insoluble contradictions of the 'European project' and particularly the attitude historically of the Tories towards this. Such is the scale of production and technique today, with giant multinationals and transnationals increasingly predominating, that it cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of the nation state.

The capitalist markets are of a continental and worldwide character, not just domestic. The foundation of the EU seeks to give expression to this as, in its own way, the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) does, and as is the intention of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

However, capitalism will never be able to peacefully overcome the nation state, with its separate governments, bureaucracy, police, etc. During periods of economic upswing, the different national powers can collaborate, share out the swag arising from a growing market and combine to super-exploit the working class. This the EU has done very effectively in systematically underpinning and reinforcing neoliberal measures, such as the Lisbon Treaty, which adversely and profoundly affects the working class.

### **Big business opposition**

To this aspect of the EU, right-wing parties like Ukip and the Tories have no objection. Nor do the British capitalists - the financial sharks of the City of London or the giant corporations - as they seek to exploit the 500 million people in the EU, already the biggest market for the export of British goods and services. But the dominant sections of big business view with horror any idea of Britain separating itself from the EU. If a serious campaign to leave the EU was initiated by the Tory party, then they could expect to meet with ferocious opposition from their current big business backers.

The same applies to foreign capital, which is now entrenched in Britain, having taken over whole swathes of industry. Many of these multinationals currently view Britain as a launch pad for penetrating and exploiting the EU market as a whole. All of this could drastically change if British capitalism found itself outside the EU, with investment switching to countries still within the EU, which in turn would severely impact on the economic fortunes of Britain itself.

Opponents of Cameron, including Labour leader Ed Miliband, warn him that three million jobs could disappear from Britain if it was outside the EU. This is just a taste of the kind of campaign that will be launched if a referendum on EU membership is held in Britain.

Seeking to reinforce this message, the TUC and right-wing trade union leaders argue that the EU is 'progressive' and somehow a 'force for good'. Unable to defeat the capitalists at home, they have looked to the EU and its institutions to do the job for them. What the right-wing trade union leaders are incapable of doing through union power and organisation, such as cutting the working week, improving workplace conditions, increasing wages, etc, they expect the EU to achieve.

## **Class opposition**

But, from its inception as the 'Common Market', the EU has sought to 'legally' prevent governments from acting in workers' interests, for example by outlawing the nationalisation of industries that have been ruined by the capitalists, resulting in mass unemployment. It also energetically supports privatisation.

It is therefore vital that the working class intervenes in the discussion raised by Cameron for an 'in-out' referendum, which he has promised for 2017. Events may push Cameron to bring this forward, with suggestions that he could make this an issue up to and during a general election.

It is therefore incredible that Ed Miliband has rejected the idea of a referendum on behalf of New Labour. Unite and Len McCluskey were right to oppose him at their recent conference and demanded that the whole labour movement should support the democratic right for a vote on this issue. Failure to do this will play into the hands of Cameron and Ukip, who pose as 'friends of the people' and upholders of the democratic will of the British people.

They can only be countered effectively with a fighting class programme. The EU has become a lightning conductor for the manifold discontent of working people, which capitalist parties seek to exploit for their own ends.

The left of the labour movement has always been opposed to the EU 'project', a vicious vehicle for enforcing anti-democratic as well as anti-working class measures. But the Socialist Party never opposed the EU on narrow nationalist grounds.

It is not possible to turn back the wheel of history to a period of supposed national 'splendid isolation'. Modern production demands the organisation of science, technique and the organisation of labour on a continental and worldwide scale.

The capitalists cannot achieve this. A victorious working class and Europe-wide movement can, through the voluntary organisation of a democratic Socialist United States of Europe,

with widespread national autonomy and the full democratic involvement of all the peoples of Europe.

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## **New Tory attacks on trade union strikes**

**Education minister Michael Gove has followed London Mayor Boris Johnson and other right-wing Tories to demand tighter new rules for strike ballots, which they believe would put an end to virtually all public sector strikes.**

**If the Tories win the 2015 general election, a legal strike could only take place if it was supported by a majority of the entire membership of the union concerned voting yes in a postal ballot.**

**DAVE NELLIST, who chairs the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and was an opposition MP 30 years ago when the Tories (in order to weaken workplace solidarity) imposed postal ballot requirements in trade union strike ballots, comments:**

"There isn't actually a legal right to strike in this country. The current law on postal ballots already makes it hard for unions to conduct a legal ballot, and if all those rules are not complied with employers can sue a union. The proposal of Michael Gove is to set a bigger trap to make it harder for unions to remain immune to that legal action.

It's not a question of union strike ballots lacking a 'democratic mandate'. Boris Johnson was elected as London mayor in 2008 on 19% of those eligible to vote and some Tory Police Commissioners won their elections in 2012 on votes as little as 7% of those eligible to vote! The Tory Party itself in the 2010 election got less than 25% of the 45 million people eligible to vote. Yet they want to impose on trade unions a higher threshold than applies to themselves in elections to public office.

Trade unionists always want a maximum turnout and a maximum yes vote for any action. And we had much higher turnouts and votes when decisions were made either at mass meetings at workplaces or by ballots issued and collected at workplaces.

The Tories brought in (and Labour never reversed!) a raft of requirements all designed to make it easier to trip up unions. And employers have been quick to go to court on the tiniest technical detail (including one infamous case when, despite a turnout of 78% and a yes vote of 87%, train drivers' union Aslef was taken to court, and employers initially won an injunction, because ballot papers had been given to two drivers who it turned out were not entitled to vote!).

On 10 July one and a half million workers sacrificed a day's wage to make a stand against years of pay freezes, attacks on pensions and living standards.

Those on strike represented millions more workers who feel the same anger towards the Con-Dem government.

As the prison officers have shown (whose right to strike has been completely removed) when that anger boils over and action is taken, it will take more than a new rule from Michael Gove to stop working people challenging austerity."

**TUSC is currently arranging trade union delegations to Labour Party prospective parliamentary candidates to see whether any of them are serious about reversing the austerity agenda.**

On the issue of trade union rights we will be asking them whether they support the provisions in the Labour MP John McDonnell's 'Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill', on reintroducing protections for participating in industrial action, (and on other union issues such as the reinstatement of facility time and check off rights removed by the Con-Dem coalition).

The nature of their replies will help decide whether local TUSC groups add those constituencies to the list of possible challenges in the 2015 general election.

- [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

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## Super-rich Tory MP profits from evictions

**Brian Debus, Hackney Socialist Party**

Market rents of £2,000 a month are the aim of rapacious landlord Benyon estates for the 90 flats on the New Era Estate in Hoxton, east London.

In the last year the rents have been increased by over £100 a month. The clear intention is to drive out the existing tenants and to make massive profits at their expense.

Benyon Estates is owned by Britain's richest Tory MP, Richard Benyon, who happens to be 'worth' £110 million. He also owns 300 properties in De Beauvoir town, a short distance from Hoxton.

The New Era Estate is about the same size as Richard Benyon's home, Englefield House in Berkshire, which has a slightly bigger back garden containing its own deer park and farmland of 20,000 acres. It also rakes in a significant farm subsidy from the European Union, totalling £2 million since 2000.

There have been some words of sympathy for tenants from the local Labour Mayor Jules Pipe who has criticised these rent rises, but his council is just as guilty.

On the Woodberry Down Estate, previously the biggest council estate in Europe, large sections have been knocked down and replaced with new private developments that local people cannot afford to live in. They are being used instead as investment opportunities by property speculators.

The only answer to these profiteers is rent controls and a mass council house building programme of hundreds of thousands of new homes to be built every year to house the homeless and knock the profit out of homes.

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## **Coulson faces prosecution over Tommy Sheridan perjury trial**

Convicted phone hacker Andy Coulson now faces perjury charges after giving evidence that led to the jailing of Scottish socialist Tommy Sheridan, also on a perjury charge, in December 2010.

Coulson, the former editor of the News of the World (NoW) and spin doctor to Tory Prime Minister David Cameron, was sentenced to 18 months in jail last week after being found guilty of phone hacking charges. His new (preliminary) trial will start in August.

Back in 2010 Coulson appeared as a prosecution witness, giving evidence over two days, in which he denied under questioning by Tommy Sheridan that he knew anything about the illegal phone hacking activities of NoW journalist Glenn Mulcaire. As a result, Tommy was jailed for three years.

Clearly, in the light of Coulson's subsequent conviction, Tommy's trial would never have taken place and he would have been a free man. But as the Socialist pointed out at the time, the political establishment was fully behind News International's vengeful campaign to have Tommy's original libel trial victory against the NoW overturned.

**More in a future issue**

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## **Emergency: Con-Dems don't care**

**Since 2010 spending on social care has fallen by 12% while the number of people in need of support has risen by 14%.**

**These figures come from the annual report from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (Adass) and show devastating cuts that local authorities have made in their adult social care budgets.**

**A 26% cut in department budgets, equal to £3.53 billion over the last four years has, claims Adass, made social care services 'unsustainable'.**

**The articles below show the impact such cutbacks have on service users and workers.**

## **Greedy government cuts hit hard**

### **A retired worker**

I'm a recently retired worker now living in a housing association retirement complex; 'retirement living with care and compassion', as they call it. But while we pay 'service' charge increases, a lack of funding from government means one part-time warden covering several housing sites. Previously, a full-time warden was on site.

Services are suffering. A gentleman aged 100 fell in his flat and could not get to pull the emergency cord. He was discovered by his neighbour three days later on the floor.

### **Injuries**

A resident aged 60 was discovered by his friend on the floor. She called for help from a sub-contract part-time cleaner who was on site. The cleaner rang the alarm number and was told: "Can you turn him over and see if he is dead?" She refused and was told to ring for an ambulance - he was dead before they arrived.

The property's landlord replied to our concern by saying they were sorry staff weren't available but: "We would expect residents to directly contact emergency services by telephone or pulling on your pull cord and not to wait for a member of staff to attend site." This resident was single and lived on his own. How could he ring for an ambulance?

An 80 year old resident was told the repairs service no longer changed bulbs in fixed lights in bathrooms or kitchens so she should do it herself.

### **No respect**

Millions of people who saw the BBC news item where an elderly lady was abused and beaten in a home will wonder whether that is what they have to look forward to as the 1960s youth generation approaches old age.

Retirement living complexes house people who worked hard, contributing their taxes and national insurance.

Now at the end of our working lives, the government denies us the most basic services. But we keep contributing through an increased charge for a pathetic service. We've no choice, we can't 'opt out' of this service.

There's no respect, no acknowledgement of the sacrifices most of us made in our working lives. With malicious government cutbacks to services, these are the real issues we should address. This greedy government needs to be kicked out. Who cares? We have to - now!

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## **Services suffer**

**Sue Powell**

Over 60% of the people aged 50-plus surveyed by charity Age UK think the government treats older people badly, mainly citing the poor standard of social care. 70% of 50-64 year olds are concerned that older people receiving care services are not treated with dignity and respect.

Age UK calls for more investment across a range of services. When they reported an "epidemic of loneliness among the elderly" Health Minister Jeremy Hunt called this a "source of national shame". Government care minister Norman Lamb said the elderly's plight reflected "Britain's neglectful society".

So if the elderly are isolated in their homes it is not due to transport costs, lack of council resources, cuts to the care system, the closure of lunch clubs and day centres, nor even to time limits on home visits and meals-on-wheels services (which put pressure on staff and makes personal interaction almost impossible). No - it's all the fault of the uncaring, indolent and selfish British public.

But these same ministers approve measures that will make life intolerable for the most disadvantaged and force many to stay in the confines of their home or potentially into residential care.

### **Shaming and blaming**

They have decided to stop the Independent Living Fund which helps around 18,000 severely disabled people lead a more normal life.

This move was successfully blocked in a Court of Appeal last year. But no expense is spared in pressing ahead with this mean policy.

Those food bank deniers in government would have us believe the crisis in care is not about money but morality and social conscience. Their class can easily afford private nursing homes, paid carers, nannies and employed 'companions'.

What's next in their game of shaming and blaming working class families - a public rendition of "There's not enough love in the world"?

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## **East London marches against NHS cuts**

On 5 July, the 66th anniversary of the founding of the national health service, 1,000 local people, community activists and trade unionists marched through Tower Hamlets and Hackney in east London. We were there to fight NHS cuts, save doctors' surgeries and make sure the NHS survives and prospers.

We were chanting slogans and handing out leaflets to drivers and pedestrians who wished us good luck and promised total opposition to privatisation. Many local people brought out all the family to show solidarity.

Local GPs opposed the cuts, along with hospital workers, trade unionists and trades councils from local boroughs and Waltham Forest, while flags from Unite the Union were noticeable.

The local Labour MP for Bethnal Green spoke against the cuts in doctors' surgeries. Unfortunately Labour MPs could say far less about opposing other attacks from the Con-Dems, such as the £77 million cuts at the local Barts Health Trust. This trust is saddled with huge Private Finance Initiative (PFI) debts attached to the old Royal London hospital.

How will big business-friendly Labour fight this assault on NHS workers and patients when they won't cancel PFI debt?

Socialists welcome this protest but will keep pushing for an all-out battle by the working class, fighting for a socialist alternative that will oppose the big business interests that threaten the NHS.

**Pat Atkinson, Unite LE 1111 branch**

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## **Them & Us**

### **Capita idea**

Big business continues to gorge on the public services honey pot, courtesy of the government's privatisation programme. Since 2010 the Con-Dems have handed over worth of public service contracts to the private sector, dwarfing the that the previous Labour government managed.

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### **Money talks**

The suggestion that the super-rich can buy political influence is, of course, just Bolshie propaganda. The fact that the multimillionaire Tory party donor David Ross (he of Carphone Warehouse and chum of Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson), is in line for the chairmanship of schools' inspectorate Ofsted, is mere coincidence!

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### **Bad advice**

Not to be outdone by Cameron in his close associations with wealthy and powerful people, former Labour leader Tony - the 'Messiah' - Blair continues to cosy up to the world's despots. Having 'advised' Kazakhstan's dictator Nursultan Nazerbayev, Blair has now agreed to 'advise' Egypt's blood-soaked coup organiser, and latterly president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

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## Boardroom pay

One and a half million public sector workers were obliged to take strike action on 10 July against another year of government imposed pay freezes, etc.

However, in the boardrooms of big business there has been no such pay restraint. In the last financial year 42 company executives enjoyed remuneration packages (pay and pensions, etc) of over £1 million. Two executives received total remuneration packages of over £5 million each.

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## Maximum minimum

'Affordable housing' is the much-hyped route onto the property ladder for first time buyers. In London, where a dilapidated garage will set you back £70,000, (the average salary of a nurse is £26,158) there are part-buy, part-rent affordable housing schemes with a £66,000 maximum salary upper limit for one or two bedroom flats.

However, to qualify for one recently advertised shared ownership two bedroom property in Camden, a worker must be "earning a minimum income of at least £66,000". To avoid this qualifying/disqualifying conundrum you can always opt for a one-bedroom Pimlico flat, providing you earn "at least £64,000" but "under £66,000"!

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## Israel-Palestine: Netanyahu government fuels wave of protest

Extracts and updates from a series of articles on the website of Socialist Struggle Movement, the Israel-Palestine section of the CWI.

[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

**As this article is published the Israeli government has launched another series of air strikes and bombardments on the besieged population of Gaza under the name operation "protective edge". The death toll in Gaza since the beginning of the present onslaught has reached 11, among them two children under five years of age. At least 75 Palestinians have been injured since Monday. This is yet another step of escalation by the Israeli government that brings closer the threat of a wider conflict.**

Israeli prime minister Netanyahu and other government ministers felt compelled to condemn the appalling murder of east Jerusalem Palestinian teenager Mohammad Abu-Khdeir, but they shed crocodile tears. The tragic developments of the last few weeks reflect first and foremost their policy of the ongoing repressive occupation of the Palestinian territories, and their aggressive programme of Jewish settlements.

Israeli nationalist incitement to revenge following the brutal murder of three Israeli teenagers, whose bodies were found on 30 June, has been voiced by Netanyahu and other representatives of the ruling parties, who want a means of distraction from the failure and catastrophic consequences of their policies. This government of big business and settlements is now struggling to keep control of events that have arisen as a result of its actions and words.

A series of racist attacks in Jerusalem by far-right Israeli nationalists against Palestinian workers and pedestrians - including the killing of Abu-Khdeir on 2 July - sparked a wave of outrage, protests and riots in Palestinian communities across parts of Israel - the most widespread protest movement among Arabs in Israel for years. There have also been joint protests and rallies of Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa against the far-right attacks and government's inflammatory stance.

As the Palestinian protests spread, the Israeli media rushed to cover the most disturbing instances of property destruction and attacks on Jewish people, while downplaying the background of incitement, discrimination, racist attacks and anger at the occupation that led to the outrage in the streets.

From the continued occupation and blockades in the Palestinian territories, through to the severe discrimination in all spheres of life suffered by the Arab community in Israel, and the incitement to incessant racial attacks, government policies have created a gunpowder of anger, some of which is exploding in the current events. Palestinian youths, their future crudely trampled on by this right-wing Israeli government, have taken to the streets to demonstrate feelings of alienation, frustration and rage.

## **Government offensives**

After learning of the kidnapping of the three youths, the Netanyahu government exploited the tragic event by promoting their political agenda, fostering an atmosphere of nationalist propaganda, and efforts to dismantle the coalition government of Fatah and Hamas in the Palestinian Authority.

Israeli intelligence suggested that two murder suspects - who have not yet been caught - are junior Hamas activists from Hebron. Hamas denied any responsibility, and it is possible that some of its adherents acted without the knowledge or consent of its leaders or that non-Hamas members carried out the killings.

The government also pursued a military campaign of collective punishment in the occupied territories. Seven, mainly young, Palestinians were shot dead by the Israeli army in raids across the West Bank and at least nine were killed by air force bombings on the Gaza strip, including a child.

Threats to destroy the houses of families of the murder suspects, as well as the decision to demolish the family home of the killer of a police officer who was shot near Hebron, are brutal collective punishments against relatives who have not been convicted of any offence. In one of these attacks on families, a one-month old baby was injured.

The demolitions never "deter" terrorist attacks; in fact experience shows that they are likely to have strengthened motivation in the most desperate parts of Palestinian society to carry out

acts of retaliation. Such policy is mainly used to divert attention from the failure of the security strategy of the Netanyahu government in preventing attacks. Similar measures have never been inflicted on the families of convicted Israeli Jewish killers, like that of Baruch Goldstein, the far-right terrorist who perpetrated the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in Khalil/Hebron in 1993, killing 29 Palestinians and injuring more than 120.

Israeli governments' attempts to date to 'discourage' Palestinian perpetrators of attacks, kidnappings and rocket firings have proved their bankruptcy. Thousands have paid with their lives at the hands of the Israeli forces but no significant problem has been solved. All the 'war on terror' of the governments of big business and settlements up until today has only spilled more blood and brought about again and again a more complicated situation.

During the first Palestinian intifada, 1987-93, the Israeli government tried to strengthen the right-wing Islamist party Hamas to counter the secular Palestinian organisations that were demanding an end to the occupation. Now, the government is at war on Hamas, causing unimaginable distress and bereavement on Palestinians in Gaza in particular, and is laying the ground for the growth of new reactionary organisations, including al-Qai'da-type groups.

### **Danger of escalation**

Against the background of Ramadan, regional instability and international pressure on Israel it appears that a majority of the army leaders and the government would prefer at this stage to avoid a major military escalation. Nevertheless, despite this reticence, they have decided to pursue some further military assaults on Gaza, not least to be seen to be retaliating to increased rocket fire from the strip. Troops have been put on notice of "preparation for escalation", are mobilising along the Gaza border and some reserves have been called up.

In addition, the government may find ways to meet some of the demands of minister Naftali Bennett and the Yesha council (for settlements), by promoting another wave of settlement construction. Netanyahu spoke of establishing a new settlement in the names of the murdered boys, exploiting their deaths to promote the political agenda of right-wing settlers.

There is a great danger of the violence escalating further in the coming days and weeks, whether as a result of military attacks, police repression of the protests, incitement, or further terror attacks by individuals and groups.

Particularly resorting to nationalist demagoguery and incitement are right-wing government ministers Avigdor Lieberman and Naftali Bennett, in a racist effort to mobilise support by exploiting the feelings of shock and insecurity in the Jewish population. Both argue for a major military offensive on the Gaza strip, in other words more bloodshed that will solve nothing, but cause further loss of life and trauma. Gazans would suffer by far the most, but the Israeli public would not escape from the bloodshed, as the rocket attacks bear witness.

Lieberman, who is the foreign minister, has declared the end of his party's alliance with Netanyahu's Likud party over the disagreement on Gaza policy.

Lieberman has also utilised the present tension to return to promoting the idea of forcibly annexing Arab communities in Israel to a future Palestinian state. He does not want to recognise the rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel and doesn't want those communities to be

able to democratically decide whether to join a Palestinian state in the future. Rather his aim is an Israel with no significant Palestinian minority in it.

However, reflecting a strongly opposing view and worry among the Israeli elite has been former Shin Bet (Israeli security service) chief Yuval Diskin, who in a Facebook posting last Friday blamed the government for "the rapid deterioration in the security situation" and attacked "the illusion that everything can be solved with a little more force; the illusion that the Palestinians will just accept all that we are doing in the West Bank and not respond, despite their rage, frustration and worsening economic situation; the illusion that the international community will not impose sanctions on us; that Israel's frustrated Arab citizens will not ultimately take to the streets over the lack of handling of their problems; and the Israeli public will keep submissively accepting the government's incompetent response to the social gaps that its policies have only worsened, when corruption continues to eat away at all that is good, and so on and so on."

He warned that even if calm returns, "the combustible fumes in the air will not dissipate, and if we do not dispel them, there will be an even more serious situation."

## **Developing the protests**

Desperate acts of vandalism and nationalist attacks on civilians by a small minority of protesters will not help to bring about a change in government policy and improvements for young Palestinians. Such acts alienate the ordinary people who are victims of them and they are used by the government as an excuse for harsher repression of demonstrators in the name of "zero tolerance".

However, the scale of the Palestinian protests in Israel sheds light not only on the frustration and distress but also on the potential for a wider struggle against the big business and settler-serving government, against attacks on Palestinians and against the occupation. This struggle requires the building of a democratically organised larger protest movement of Jews and Arabs, with a programme and actions to seriously challenge the Israeli government and far right.

Establishment of action committees in the communities where demonstrations are taking place could help to organise bold steps to further the struggle, including democratically-run self-defence against state repression, and preventing protests descending into self-defeating rioting and nationalist physical attacks. These committees could develop a set of demands, including the requirements for peace and the solving of social ills, which could mobilise a broad layer of Jews and Arabs for joint demonstrations, drawing in workers' committees and student organisations as well.

Many Israeli people detest the barbarity of the far right, and have had enough of government policies that have only brought another round of violence in the national conflict while the social crisis in Israel deepens. A Knesset Channel poll in recent days showed rising support for the Labor and Meretz parties, indicating that despite the present nationalist reaction, parts of the Israeli public are interested in parties that are seen as being on the left.

Opinion polls continue to indicate that a majority of the Israeli population supports the dismantling of settlements and ending the occupation.

Socialist Struggle Movement argues the need for the establishment of a new 'struggle' party of workers, Jews and Arabs, to advance the interests of all workers and to put forward a clear socialist alternative to the future of tragedy that is inevitable in the hands of the capitalists and nationalist right.

### **Socialist Struggle Movement calls for:**

- Strengthen the protests against the far right and the 'capital and settlements' government of Netanyahu. Yes to joint demonstrations of Jews and Arabs - No to nationalist assaults. Establish action committees in communities where demonstrations are taking place in order to assist with organising the struggle.
- Support the right to protest, end the police brutality. For democratic control over the police, subjecting them to democratic supervision by community policing committees. Dismiss racist police officers.
- Remove the army from the Palestinian territories! End the occupation and the settlement enterprise. End the 'liquidations policy' and all the attacks and siege policy on Gaza. The national conflict will not be solved by military means!
- Release all Palestinian political prisoners. For a fair trial of both Israelis and Palestinians suspected of responsibility for atrocities as part of the conflict, through special public courts, under the supervision of representatives of workers and communities on both sides of the conflict, and with the involvement of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families.
- For an independent democratic socialist Palestinian state, alongside a democratic socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and equal rights for minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East and regional peace.

### **Uniting against racist violence**

- On 2 July, around 1,000 people attended a rally in central Jerusalem entitled "grieve not take revenge", organised by the coalition "Tag Meir - Light instead of terror". Afterwards, some participants marched to the prime minister's office to highlight the incitement that has come from Netanyahu, which has encouraged the violence of the far right.
- The next day, over 1,000 demonstrators gathered in Habima Square in Tel Aviv, also angry at the government's incitement, and the occupation.
- On 5 July, 300 Jews and Arabs demonstrated in the centre of Haifa in response to a demonstration two days before of 30 far-right demonstrators with a sign saying "death to Arabs" . Among the speakers at the counter demonstration was Shay Galy from Socialist Struggle Movement, who spelt out that during the failed, so-called peace talks the government had: "in less than nine months, managed to approve construction of 13,000 new homes in the settlements, destroyed over 500 [Palestinian] homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, killed 61 Palestinians and wounded 1,100." He went on to demand: "No to military attacks in Gaza and no to the continuation of oppression in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Yes to real and equal security for Palestinians and Israelis."
- The family of one of the three killed Israeli teenagers publically condemned the murder of young Palestinian Abu-Khdeir and contacted his family to give their condolences. In parallel, Palestinians from the Hebron area went to this same religious Jewish family's house (which isn't in a settlement) to give condolences.

The above article is a longer version of the one carried in the Socialist issue 818 print edition

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# Unite conference debates reflect growth of socialist ideas in union

**Kevin Parslow**

Len McCluskey, in his general secretary's opening address, said that Unite's major focus of the next ten months had to be the election of a Labour government.

But several delegates, including Socialist Party members, explained that a Labour government would not solve the problems of workers.

Labour has pledged to continue austerity and, in 13 years of government, didn't reverse the anti-trade union laws. Labour will not back trade unionists taking action on 10 July, including council workers in Unite.

Socialists argued that workers need a new mass party to represent their interests. As reported in the last issue, conference voted to back the executive council's (EC) statement backing Len's views. Nevertheless a sizeable minority voted against.

Yet on the same morning, prompted by socialists Danny Hoggan and Cathy Smith from Greenwich and Bromley local government branches respectively, conference voted to ensure that councillors who vote against the cuts would be publicly supported by the union!

## **Renationalisation**

Conference supported resolutions for the renationalisation of energy and transport. Conference also overturned the EC on fracking, rejecting its compromise statement and backing a composite that opposed fracking.

A major leverage campaign fighting NHS privatisation was also launched, designed to involve the union's entire membership and not just its health sector members.

Socialists elected as youth observers made powerful speeches during the week.

Glasgow underground driver Jamie Coccozza spoke in the political debate and explained how the election of socialist Kshama Sawant to Seattle city council had been the decisive event in winning a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Speakers, including assistant general secretary Steve Turner, mentioned this victory but failed to mention Kshama's effect on the process.

## **Zero-hour contracts**

Helen Pattison from London spoke in the debate on zero-hour contracts and outlined the development of the Fast Food Rights campaign. Tanis Belsham-Wray from Leeds outlined the role that Unite Community - comprised of students, the unemployed and retired - could play, building support for workers in struggle.

Conference rejected a right-wing backed motion that would have stalled any mergers, including with the PCS civil servants' union. However, Len McCluskey's remarks opposing the motion - he said that no merger was in prospect - need to be clarified with the PCS executive.

Thirty people heard Liverpool 47 councillor Tony Mulhearn speak at the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition fringe meeting.

The first Socialist Party meeting at a Unite conference was a success, with 40 present. We had delegates and youth observers from the CWI sections in Scotland and Ireland, as well as from England and Wales. This meeting reflected the growth of socialist ideas inside the union.

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## Argos workers strike for work-life balance

**About 1,000 warehouse staff employed by Argos at five distribution centres went on strike today, Friday 4 July, in a dispute over terms and conditions which will mean increased weekend working, adversely impacting on family life.**

### Basildon

There is a grim determination to resist the imposition of new contracts and performance management systems among Argos workers in Basildon. The new arrangements combine the worst aspects of 21st century control and monitoring technology with a ruthless determination to sweat the workforce in a way that would not be out of place in the 19th century.

In effect, even permanent, non-agency workers will be on a three month rolling contract, with shift patterns subject to alteration at the management's whim, making it impossible to balance work commitments with family or other commitments - Argos comes first.

A warehouse is a hazardous environment, as it is a space shared by humans on foot and large heavy trucks, lifts, etc. The requirement to meet unrealistic and inhuman performance targets (for instance, to maintain an average walking speed of 3-4 mph on the job, or to be actively meeting performance targets for 85% of the time) will make accidents far more likely.

Unite members on the picket line are fully behind their union's action and are supporting the call to escalate.

Socialist party members in Basildon will be working with union reps to mount a publicity campaign outside Argos stores exposing the exploitative practices of one of our town's major employers.

**Dave Murray**

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## **Wakefield**

On Friday 4th July, Argos workers at a Wakefield depot took part in the 24-hour strike involving over 1,000 workers across five sites altogether.

The dispute was over terms and conditions which will mean an increase in weekend working for workers on a 24/7 shift pattern.

At the Wakefield depot there was a vibrant and enthusiastic picket of around 30 Argos workers. Workers are not prepared to accept the new terms and conditions being thrust upon them by the company, and are opposing a one-off payment to staff of £2,400 which is wholly inadequate in the face of such disruption to family life.

The union rep for the site commented on the huge amount of support that their struggle has received from the community and other workers. "No one is unaffected by what is going on, the bus drivers have a dispute over pay at the minute and this action will affect other depots as well", he remarked.

He also commented: "If we had known the results of the public sector ballot earlier we would have come out together on the 10th of July", when over one million public sector workers will be striking over pay and the onslaught of local authority cuts. This highlighted a clear desire amongst union members to organise coordinated action against the cuts, austerity and this government.

This fight is not over, and workers are prepared to continue action if this strike does not bring the employer back to the negotiating table.

**Ben Mayor**

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## **Lutterworth**

Friday 4 July was the second day of strike action taken by Unite members in five Argos distribution depots to oppose attacks on their terms and conditions.

Management is trying to force through 12 changes, including compulsory changes to their shift pattern which will affect the work-life balance of workers, especially those with families.

Some workers on the picket line in Magna Park depot, Lutterworth, Leicestershire for example explained that it caused a problem with the access agreements they had to see their children.



They fear that the plan to bring in a new performance management system will make it easier to get rid of workers.

By contrast, in May this year three of the directors were given £1.5 million worth of shares.

Nigel Ruddy, Unite convener at the depot said: "Half the workforce find it difficult to work Saturdays and the shift pattern the company are proposing.

"It also involves splitting rest days when we have a break in our working week. The workforce find this unacceptable and there was an overwhelming vote for action.

"After the last day of action the company proposed an extra £400 on the one-off payment to accept one of the changes - the new testing system - which was rejected by 70%. The strike has been well supported over all five sites".

**Steve Score**

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 4 July 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## **Locked-out Northampton hospital pathology staff "cannot give in"**

**78 Unite members in the Pathology department at Northampton General Hospital have been locked out of work by a vicious management. Since 26 June they have maintained a protest outside the hospital. Steve Score went to support the protest on Tuesday 1 July, and spoke to Terry Lodge, lead Unite rep at the hospital who works in the department.**

"The management have imposed new terms and conditions and refused to properly negotiate. Out of hours payments have been slashed by 80%! At the same time workers are being forced to double the number of night shifts they have to work. Many NHS workers rely on enhanced pay for out of hours work to make up for their low basic pay.

There was an overwhelming vote for action short of a strike, but which was not going to affect patient lives. It began on 26 June, but the management response was to lock us out. We are banned from going into work, they want us to sign the new contracts. The 90-day notices are meant to start today (1 July).

This is the sort of thing you would expect to happen at a mill 150 years ago! They do not want to allow the union to take any kind of action. It is no longer a local issue. If they get away with this it will start to happen elsewhere.

They want to erode our pay and conditions so they can prepare for privatisation. They claim to have been cutting the "fat" from the NHS for years, but now they are cutting into the bone.

We cannot give in as it will mean workers going back under terrible conditions. We have an online petition accessible from the Unite website, have been into the town centre to build support, and continue to turn up to protest outside the A&E department everyday from 9 to 5."

Please send messages of support to [terrylodge@aol.com](mailto:terrylodge@aol.com)

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 2 July 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## **NSSN supporters back striking Tyneside Safety Glass workers**

An enthusiastic NSSN meeting supporting striking Tyneside Safety Glass (TSG) workers raised £110 in a collection for their strike fund, with the promise of more money coming in from trade union branches.

Mark Robertson, TSG shop steward, explained how the company had initially offered a 0% pay increase! Other speakers from the RMT, BFAWU and PCS gave invaluable insights into experiences from past struggles.

Speakers pointed out that on TSG's website they praise their workforce as being an, "experienced and knowledgeable team" with "specialist industry knowledge". The website also boasts of the company's "supportive culture" which has generated "employee loyalty".

However, on the picket line TSG strikers have mentioned increased bullying from the management. This has included a well-respected worker being sacked last week. His crime was to leave the factory floor for a few minutes to move his car within the factory grounds so someone else could park there car up. The union is fighting this dismissal.

Earlier in the day strikers joined Unite community activists in a demonstration against benefit sanctions and will also be joining public sector workers on their 10 July rally in Newcastle. By going to these events the strikers have demonstrated they understand the importance of working class unity.

Please send messages of support to 07761 421 607, and donations to Tyneside Social Fund: account number 20317689; sort code 08-60-01.

**Elaine Brunskill**

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 9 July 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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# Workplace news in brief

## Tesco's pittance wage increase

Tesco workers are getting a 1.4% pay increase - 11p an hour! Despite talk of a crisis in the retail industry, Tesco is still an expanding business, making around £3 billion in profit over the last year.

Usdaw's national forum rejected the initial offer. But when Tesco came back again with the same offer, it appears our leadership blinked first, and although not recommending the offer, have allowed Tesco to impose it.

This is the reality of partnership agreements- a dictatorship where Tesco says 'jump' and Usdaw leaders end up asking 'how high?'

During negotiations a campaign was being waged separate from the union to force the Tesco AGM to support paying staff a living wage. Why couldn't Usdaw have linked up with this?

Usdaw's leadership believes that retail workers will not strike. This is justified on the basis that workers can't afford to lose pay for striking. Well, we can't afford low pay!

We need a fighting union. In upcoming union elections, Tesco rep Amy Murphy will be standing for president and re-election to the executive alongside other candidates prepared to take on Tesco, including Activist supporter Scott Jones.

[Usdawactivist.wordpress.com](http://Usdawactivist.wordpress.com)

## Brighton college victory

UCU and Unison members at Brighton and Hove City College have won a partial, but significant, victory against compulsory redundancies as a result of two demonstrations and a one-day strike.

## Ferry workers get crumbs

The RMT is organising protests against Condor Ferries hiring people below the minimum wage.

Condor continue to recruit Ukrainian seafarers on pay as low as £2.35 an hour for ships to the Channel Islands from Portsmouth, Poole and Weymouth. Condor's latest accounts show a staggering 275% increase in pre-tax profits, entirely built on seafarers' exploited labour.

Protests will take place at Portsmouth Continental Ferry Port, Wharf Road PO2 8RU on Tuesday 15 July at midday and Saturday 26 July at 7am.

## **Reject BT pay deal**

BT workers in the CWU union are about to be balloted on a three-year pay offer. The first year will see a 2% pay increase plus a consolidated £200 lump sum. The second and third years will see a 2.5% increase with a proviso to reopen talks if RPI inflation is below 2% or above 3%.

BT made £2.3 billion profit last year. The offer has already drawn angry reactions from members on BT discussion forums. Some people have threatened to leave the union with others calling for a change of leadership.

The right wing led telecoms executive is beginning to undermine its base of support among ordinary members. If the offer is accepted it will likely be by a much smaller margin than in recent years.

CWU members should decisively reject this deal.

**Clive Walder, CWU Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester branch**

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

Read how four Socialist Party members defeated victimisation within their own union. Available for £5 (plus p&p) from [www.leftbooks.co.uk](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk) - 020 8988 8789

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## **NHS: No to cuts!**

**Drew Walton, Leicester Socialist Party**

The £200,000-a-year chief executive of University Hospitals Leicester, John Adler, is planning to cut maternity services at Leicester General Hospital, so that care for "low-risk pregnancies only" may be delivered at the hospital. He says that a full maternity service is not viable in the future.

Also, intensive care will be reduced from the three hospital sites in Leicester to just two. This is to avoid a projected £400 million 'funding gap' by 2019.

These cuts will inevitably cost lives as critically ill patients and women with complications in childbirth may have to travel across the city. A pregnancy can start off normally, but complications can develop. Under these plans that could be fatal.

The loss of beds will have a further impact on the hospital's ability to treat patients, especially in the winter. Locally, hospital services are already hugely stretched and the waiting time for A&E treatment is more than four hours.

At a recent public meeting on the state of the NHS, organised by Keep Our NHS Public, a nurse spoke of patients having to be sectioned under mental health legislation, not because they needed psychological treatment, but simply to ensure that they would get a bed!

The health Trust gives excuses for the cuts, talking about a move towards "care at home". When it was set up in 1948, the NHS was intended to provide a "comprehensive" healthcare service. This responsibility was torn up under the Tories' infamous 2013 Health and Care Act. But would Labour do anything any different?

Labour introduced Foundation Trusts, making hospitals compete with each other for funding and opening up the NHS to the private market, rather than cooperating to deliver the best possible care. Labour also expanded the use of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) - sarcastically dubbed 'Profit From Illness' - privatisation schemes. Such schemes have allowed private companies to take over the running of NHS facilities and services. PFI has generated enormous profits for companies such as Capita, Serco and Interserve, while leading to a 'debt' crisis in our hospitals.

The NHS is again experiencing a major underfunding crisis, despite promises made by the government in 2010 that frontline staff would not be affected by cuts. The government also promised that there would be no major top-down reorganisation of our hospitals - just before it pushed through a major privatisation of services, with billions of pounds of NHS funding going to the private sector.

That money could instead be invested to meet the needs of the people of Leicester and everywhere else. But this can only happen if the rapacious 'vulture companies' are kicked out of our public services for good.

The Socialist Party calls for the building of a mass workers' movement, including a political wing, to scrap PFI, kick out the profiteers, and rid the NHS of costly middle-men and reduce bureaucracy.

The Socialist Party further demands complete renationalisation of NHS services and democratic control, including by workers and patients in the NHS.

Socialist argue that if capitalism is not willing to pay for decent healthcare, then it's not the NHS we cannot afford but this rotten economic system itself, which puts profits before people.

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## **Help fund the fight against the 1%**

**Ken Douglas, Socialist Party treasurer**

With a magnificent final effort, raising just under £12,000 in the final two weeks of the campaign, members of the Socialist Party reached 97% of the national fighting fund target for the April to June quarter. £24,169 was raised, in addition to over £10,000 that has been raised so far for the election appeal.

Members in the North West held all-day campaign stalls in cities around the region - raising £123 in Salford alone and £120 in Chester, which they claimed could be an all-time record, at least since the Roman invasion!

## **Imaginative ideas**

Branches came up with many imaginative ways to raise money: South Tyne and Wear sold Bob Crow commemorative t-shirts, North Kent raised £28 with a World Cup sweepstake and £42 at a car boot sale, Swansea branch raised £106, also at a car boot sale.

In the middle of two weeks of sunshine, Waltham Forest branch managed to pick the only rainy day for a barbecue but still raised £170 amid a festival-style atmosphere, including an outside dance-floor!

Branches will now be planning their campaigns for the July to September summer quarter knowing that the money they raise is vital to building the public profile of the Socialist Party.

This finance pays for the materials - the leaflets, posters, placards, banners, etc - that will help us to try and get our message across to the hundreds and thousands of workers on strike on 10 July.

We need a one-day general strike against the cuts - this would be a step towards building an alternative to austerity based on the 99% who are paying for it rather than the 1% who are benefiting from it and piling up unimaginable wealth at our expense.

Only a socialist future can guarantee freedom from the misery of capitalism and our ideas are vital to helping to build and make it a reality.

We have no rich backers, we rely entirely on the support of ordinary working class people.

Can you help by making a donation to the fighting fund at [www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate) or by taking out a regular direct debit or by raising some money yourself with a loose-change jar, raffle or some other method? We can guarantee that it will all be used to help in the struggle for socialism.

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## **Why I joined the Socialist Party**

I have been searching for an alternative to the pro-austerity parties. After three long years I've finally found it.

As there is no political education within North East Lincolnshire schools, I took it upon myself to join my local youth council in 2009 to learn about politics.

North East Lincolnshire has the highest level of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) in the UK and I have struggled over the past five years to find employment. This is the reason I aspire to help those in similar situations and what made me realise that the Socialist Party was for me.

Before I joined in April 2014 I had been to many demonstrations where the Grimsby and Scunthorpe socialists had been present and had asked me whether I wanted to join.

I declined because I hadn't read much about the Socialist Party's policies and didn't understand the difference between it and the Labour Party (which had also asked me to join). It wasn't until I bought a copy of the Socialist that I agreed to join the Socialist Party. It is everything that I wanted in a political party.

It has been astonishing to see the presence that the Socialist Party has had in North East Lincolnshire and what presence it will continue to have. I was elected as youth organiser of my Socialist Party branch. In the future I hope to recruit many more young people and make the Grimsby branch as big as it could possibly be.

**Kieran Yeoman, Grimsby/Scunthorpe Socialist Party**

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## **Reading the revolution**

Once you delve a little deeper into socialism, the amount of learning and reading required, as interesting and exciting as that is, can be slightly daunting. As a fairly new member of the Socialist Party, the two London Socialist Party day schools I have attended have been invaluable for me.

The day starts with political discussion - one was on the Transitional Programme for instance. Personally I enjoy this part the most. To discuss some very complicated subjects with knowledgeable people in such an easy-going environment is perfect for a newcomer like me.

The second part is around an organisational issue like the Socialist paper or campaigning in elections. Again, hearing others' ideas and experiences is really helpful. I have come away both times with a better understanding and a few tips I can use myself.

### **Thirst for more**

The day ends with a general question and answer session which could easily go on for longer than the time allocated - one question will always prompt another one!

All in all, I would recommend everyone, newcomers or old hands, to try and attend as many as they can in London or maybe set up their own regional day schools.

**Richard Juby, Greenwich Socialist Party**

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## **Exposing Ukip's lies in Bracknell**

Recently a group of local activists in Bracknell went to a public meeting organised by Ukip. The meeting was in a posh hotel and featured our local Tory MP and the Ukip prospective

parliamentary candidate. The subject was our local NHS and cuts at Heatherwood hospital. There were about 30 people there.

The Tory MP was heckled from the word go because he came out in favour of closing Heatherwood hospital.

The Ukip speaker claimed to support the hospital and to be in favour of keeping the NHS public. I pointed out that there were two Ukip councillors in the hall who, before resigning from the Tories, had consistently voted to close the hospital.

### **All the same**

I got the biggest applause of the evening when I stated that Ukip and the Tories are all the same and that the only people who had fought to keep the hospital open were us, the Save Heatherwood Hospital Campaign.

We will continue to expose the lies and opportunism of Ukip.

**Terry Pearce, Reading and Bracknell Socialist Party**

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## **Fracking: short-term profit before safety**

**Matt Kilsby, Salford Socialist Party**

A recent major study - released by the British Geographical Survey and Environment Agency - has raised fresh concerns over the potential of fracking to contaminate our drinking water. Meanwhile scientists in the US have said that fracking wastewater wells are directly responsible for turning Oklahoma into the earthquake capital of America.

Fracking - or hydraulic fracturing, to give it its full name - involves drilling and injecting over one million gallons of water mixed with sand and chemicals - including lead, uranium and mercury - deep into the ground. This process fractures shale rocks to release natural gas.

Unsurprisingly, the fracking industry and its cheerleaders in government have rushed to dismiss the reports and still insist that the process is safe.

They tell us fracking will be heavily regulated. But at the same time, the Con-Dems, without a whimper of opposition from the Labour Party, are busy hammering regulatory bodies, such as the Environment Agency, and throwing workers on the dole.

### **Polarisation**

It appears that public attitudes to fracking are becoming more polarised. Promoters say fracking could make Britain energy self-sufficient, drive down gas prices, create skilled jobs and boost local economies.



But a YouGov poll last month found that public support for fracking has fallen below 50% for the first time, with 31.4% now actively opposed. And whenever exploratory drilling begins in a new area, the gas companies are welcomed with protests, marches and pickets.

On Sunday 11 July, more than 150 people marched through Beverley in Yorkshire to protest against Rathlin Energy's plans to begin exploratory drilling.

In Salford we are no strangers to protesting and marching against fracking. And while iGas have vacated the drilling site at Barton Moss for the time being, we must be prepared to launch another campaign when they submit plans to the council to start fracking for real.

Only a concerted and united campaign from trade unionists, campaigners, environmentalists and local people opposed to fracking will defeat it and force the Labour council to refuse the permissions and the government's bribes.

Fracking is also likely to feature prominently in the general and local elections next year, when the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is planning to stand in every council ward in the city and at least one of the parliamentary constituencies.

### **Socialist alternative**

Apart from the Reality Party, fronted by Happy Mondays music celebrity Bez, TUSC was the only party in Salford that was firmly against fracking and stood shoulder to shoulder with campaigners telling iGas that they aren't welcome in our city.

In stark contrast, the Labour council has granted licenses and planning permissions to allow iGas to drill in Barton Moss. Just like it cut every job and attacked every public service that the Con-Dem government has told it to.

As socialists, we think that the dash for gas and the fracking industry shows how broken and utterly crazy the capitalist system is. Even if fracking was 'safe', it is the most wasteful and insanely resource intensive process. This is because the bottom line for the capitalists - and the three main parties in Westminster that do their bidding - is short-term profit, regardless of any environmental and economic factors.

Only democratic socialist planning can properly safeguard the environment by building an economy based on our needs and by investing in sustainable and green energy sources.

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## **Labour rejects rail renationalisation**

**Ted Woodley, Rail worker and RMT member**

Back in April, Ed Miliband hinted that Labour would consider renationalising the railways. However, that idea has come to nothing as the Labour Party has indicated it will not commit to renationalisation if it takes power in 2015.

This should come as no surprise as Miliband and Ed Balls' pro-business party has also refused to renationalise Royal Mail which was flogged off cheap by the Tories last year. They have ignored the votes at the 2013 Labour conference for renationalisation of both the railways and postal service.

Labour Leaders have stuck the boot into the millions of trade unionists who pay millions of pounds into Labour's coffers. They've eliminated the miniscule influence union members still had on party decisions, and called in the police when Falkirk activists attempted to exercise their right to select parliamentary candidates.

## **Public ownership**

RMT, the transport workers' union, argues that a simple way to bring the railway back into public ownership would be to renationalise each franchise as it comes to the end of its term, saving additional millions of pounds by avoiding the costly bidding process.

Under public ownership any profits could be reinvested in improving the service rather than lining the profits of shareholders. In some cases, where franchises are owned by foreign state railway companies, UK profits are used to subsidise passenger fares on the state railways of other countries!

But the RMT's proposal is too radical an idea for 'Tory Lite' Labour. The party proposes allowing the public sector to 'bid' for franchises (it costs around £5 million simply to put a bid together) alongside bids from the parasitic private transport companies, potentially resulting in a continuation of the privatised mess we are in at the moment and more wasted money.

Unlike our sister unions in the railway industry, RMT recognises that for this and so many other reasons the Labour Party is now a dead end for workers who urgently need a party of their own.

RMT members, especially the late Bob Crow, were instrumental in setting up the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to stand candidates in local and parliamentary elections on a pro-worker and socialist programme.

At our recent annual general meeting RMT reaffirmed its support for TUSC and finally amended the rulebook removing the automatic support for Labour candidates in elections.

Labour supporters have tried to justify backing their rotten sinking ship of a party by saying we need to drive out the Tories.

## **Waste of time**

But while big majorities of the population enthusiastically support ideas such as renationalisation of the railways and energy companies, no mainstream political party offers this.

Labour does however promise a continuation of austerity and vicious cuts for the foreseeable future.

Labour backers in the trade unions are wasting their time and should help us to build TUSC as a genuine working class political alternative so workers are able to fight the bosses politically as well as industrially.

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## **Robert Service's historical prejudice on Liverpool**

**Tony Mulhearn, one of the 47 heroic Liverpool city councillors who fought Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher's cuts in the 1980s, sent the letter below to the Observer after Robert Service reviewed Tristram Hunt's book "Ten Cities That Made an Empire" on 8 June. This is an extract.**

"Robert Service's jaundiced view of those who challenge the neoliberal economic model is revealed in his characterisation of Liverpool city council in the 1980s.

That courageous defence against Thatcher is dismissed in the words 'Liverpool plumbed its nadir when its council bankrupted itself under the rule of Militant Tendency in the 1980s.'

Ironically he chides Hunt for historical inaccuracy but Service himself commits a seriously sloppy, inaccurate assessment of Liverpool in the 1980s. The nadir had been plumbed long before Militant were elected.

Between 1977 and 1983 65% of the Liverpool economy had collapsed. 100,000 jobs had disappeared, Tory minister Heseltine had slashed £100 million from the city's rate support grant; the outgoing Liberal/Tory alliance had lost millions to the city because of its crazed rating policy, and it left behind £10 million of unallocated cuts and provision for 2,000 redundancies.

The incoming socialist councillors made a courageous stand against that process: cancelled the redundancies, built thousands of houses, created thousands of jobs and expanded services.

Liverpool's current right-wing Labour administration has plumbed something beyond the nadir with its cuts of a third of a billion pounds of social provision. Militant in the 1980s opened six new swimming pools; the current administration is closing them down. I look forward to reading Mr Service's characterisation of such an administration."

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## **Britain's non-investing, cheap wage bosses**

**Iain Dalton, Leeds**

Recent research by two LSE professors confirms what the Socialist Party has said for a long time. It shows that Britain's capitalist class have failed in their historic mission to invest and develop the productive forces and have instead squeezed the incomes of workers.

Between the second quarter of 2008 and the third quarter of 2013, wages adjusted for inflation dropped by 8.5% on average. The professors argue that tougher lending restrictions on banks mean they have to retain greater levels of capital relative to loans.

The cost of capital investments has gone up despite low interest rates so companies are substituting cheap labour for investment in machinery and facilities and suffocating productivity growth in the meantime. This trend, they argue, was reinforced by attacks and cuts on benefit claimants, forcing them into low-wage jobs too.

The crisis-prone nature of capitalism in Britain (as elsewhere), means that extracting itself from one problem (over-extension of finance), it kept making profits by squeezing wages.

However, this is again storing problems for the future through cutting working people's consumption and allowing productivity to fall even further behind its economic rivals.

Only socialists offer a way out of this by removing the profit motive and planning the economy democratically to meet people's needs.