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2,380 dead after Tory attacks on disabled

Killed by benefit cuts

Simon Gomery

Thousands are dead. They were killed after forced labour or income theft while severely sick or disabled.

At least 2,380 disabled people died between December 2011 and February 2014 after being found 'fit for work' by bullying, Catch-22 'work capability assessments'.

Tory work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith tried to evade floods of Freedom of Information requests. But the full horror of his benefit system was finally revealed on 27 August.

This only days after his department was exposed for cynically fabricating quotes from people 'helped' by benefits sanctions.

'Workhouse'

Duncan Smith says disabled people are to be directed to the 'workhouse', fit or not. We are sent looking for often non-existent jobs, disability benefits withdrawn.

In a speech ahead of the figures coming out, he spoke about "life choices". As a disabled person, I can tell you I have not made a "life choice" to become disabled.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Disabled people often have several complex issues that prevent them from working. I do.

I also believe that disabled people who can, should be able to work. But this must be fully supported, in employment catered to our needs. Those who can't work need to be provided for properly by the state.

Duncan Smith closed the Remploy factories, first established to provide useful work to war wounded. He scrapped the Independent Living Fund, which gave those who need 24-hour care some kind of autonomy.

He cut back our 'access to work' scheme, slashed Employment and Support Allowance, and put disabled people at risk of homelessness with benefit sanctions.

Rigged

He sent very sick people back to work with his rigged work capability assessments. And of course, he brought in the dreaded bedroom tax, which hits disabled people who need 'spare' rooms for equipment and carers.

He says he could live on the £7 a day expected of jobseekers. Yet he's claimed £39 for a breakfast, and claimed money back for his y-fronts and wet wipes - paid for by us. And we, the poor, the disabled, the sick and suffering workers and taxpayers, are made to feel like the scroungers.

- Reverse all cuts to welfare and fully fund care services
- Scrap 'work capability assessments'
- For well-paid, fully supported jobs without compulsion

Made-up benefit sanction quotes

Tory lies no surprise to us

Karen Seymour

Tory work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith has been caught out totally making up quotes. Imaginary people subject to welfare sanctions - punishment by cutting benefits - say it actually helped them!

It's no surprise to those of us who deal with benefit problems that his Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has to lie about the effects of these attacks.

Sanctions, apparently, motivate and inspire people to update their CVs and use every spare minute to seek non-existent work. They are grateful to be forced into poverty and reliance on food banks.

The young girl who came in to the centre where I volunteer might disagree. She was struggling to feed herself, reliant on her impoverished parents for money.

Punishment

Her crime? In one Jobcentre adviser's opinion, not doing enough to find work. Her punishment? A three-year sanction.

Or the autistic man with no concept of time, who obviously struggled to get to Jobcentre interviews punctually. He was sanctioned for three months. We quickly got that one overturned.

If you work and make a minor error, you might be reprimanded. You wouldn't be made penniless.

If you've been sanctioned, you can and should appeal. Talk to Citizens' Advice or an unemployed workers' centre. A significant number of cases are overturned on appeal.

You could also be eligible for DWP hardship payments, and local council discretionary funds. Pressurised Jobcentre workers don't always tell you about these.

A strong campaign including claimants, Jobcentre workers and trade unions is needed to fight sanctions and cuts. Public service union PCS, which represents Jobcentre staff, has a proud record of campaigning on welfare.

If we are to ultimately defeat cuts, we need to take on the system which demands them. Capitalism in crisis tries to boost its profits by slashing jobs and wages, and cutting big business tax bills.

The alternative is to fight for socialism. Join the Socialist Party!

Two million bailiff calls as councils brutalise poor

Matt Whale

In the past year, councils in England and Wales have sent bailiffs in to collect debts over two million times.

Ordinary working class people are struggling to get by. Zero-hour contracts, poverty pay and sky-high rents are the norm. Now we face the increasing threat of our own councils - including Labour - calling in the bailiffs!

The most vulnerable in society are being further penalised, and for what crime? Being poor!

Research by the Money Advice Trust shows using bailiffs not only worsens a person's wellbeing, but actually deepens debts. Elsewhere in this issue of the Socialist, ordinary people respond to lethal benefit cuts. Increased use of bailiffs - up around 16% over the past two years - can only make things worse.

Cuts to council tax benefit are a major contributing factor. Taking property to cover such debts is the reason for most bailiff calls, although in repossession cases they can also evict tenants.

Councils are blaming central government cuts for the increase. This, however, is no excuse.

Instead of doing the Tory government's dirty work, local authorities should refuse to pass on cuts. The Socialist Party says they must use their platform to lead residents and workers in a fightback.

Local campaigns have already taken it up. Attempted evictions, as a result of the bedroom tax, have been stopped by community campaigners coming together and refusing to let bailiffs in.

Forced out

For instance, in Coventry, campaigners including Socialist Party members successfully stopped an eviction. The man was being forced out of his family home by the bedroom tax.

We have had successes like this elsewhere. Communities need to organise similar networks to defend themselves from bailiffs.

The chair of the Local Government Association's resources board, Labour councillor Claire Kober, reckons councils have tried to take a "sympathetic and constructive approach" to debtors. Sending bailiffs in is hardly sympathetic to the poor.

We don't want crocodile tears from councillors sending in bailiffs. We demand action to defend our communities.

- For councils which fight the cuts
- Stop attacking the poor with bailiffs
- Axe the bedroom tax
- For a mass programme of quality council home building

Bin crash tragedy shows pressure on sick to work

Jon Dale

Six Glasgow shoppers tragically died after a bin lorry ploughed into them last December. The recent fatal accident inquiry revealed the lorry driver had had previous black outs. He had not informed his employer or occupational health doctor.

Understandably, families of the victims are angry and want justice. If the driver had discussed his medical history, he would not have been passed fit to drive a large goods vehicle. He would not have been at the wheel that day.

However, the attacks on the driver in the media ignore the enormous pressures on disabled and ill people to remain at work. Those who don't work face benefit cuts.

Wrong

Many disabled people suffered at the hands of Atos, the private company that the last Labour government gave a contract to carry out medical examinations on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions. They were wrongly found 'fit for work' and lost their benefits. The jobs they are forced into, when they can even find jobs, are mostly low paid and insecure.

Atos has now been replaced by another firm, 'Maximus'. But bullying people off benefits, started by Labour and continued by the Tories, remains the same.

Tory minister Iain Duncan Smith says "we need to be relentless in our efforts to get more people into work and off welfare." So why did his government close Remploy's factories that provided suitable work for many disabled workers? Why did they privatise the remaining advisory service?

The poverty facing disabled people unable to work - and stigma from constant attacks, echoed by Labour's leaders - encourages many to conceal their problems. There will be more fatal accidents as a result.

Greed: bosses hike rail fares three times faster than wages

Laurel Fogarty

Rail fares have risen three times faster than wages over the last five years. Meanwhile, profiteering rail companies continue to neglect public safety, threatening to axe more essential guards and station staff.

The cost of season tickets shot up by as much as 25% - compared to a paltry wage increase of just under 9%, according to union research.

Private rail companies are holding workers hostage with higher and higher fares. They preside over a crumbling, understaffed service, wringing huge profits from ordinary people and government subsidies.

Assaults on passengers and staff have risen steeply. Violent attacks on commuters and rail workers reached a high of over 2,880 last year.

And a further 14,000 train guards and station workers are expected to be cut by 2019. This will put commuters who rely on rail, as well as those who work on it, in increasing danger.

Public ownership

Bringing the railways back into public ownership - a move supported overwhelmingly by ordinary people - could save as much as £1.5 billion by 2020. A third of this would come from recouping enormous shareholder dividends.

Running the railways for public good rather than private profit could reduce fares by 10% over the next two years, and reverse dangerous staffing cuts.

Them & Us

Sky pools

Super-rich bosses can now literally swim in the sky.

The ultra-luxury Nine Elms development in Battersea, south London, will boast a glass-bottomed pool suspended ten storeys up. With apartments costing up to £5.5 million, investors need not worry about sharing it with us plebs.

No more than an eighth of the thousands of new homes in 'Dubai-on-Thames' will be 'affordable'.

The Socialist hopes Battersea's aquatic capitalists at least remember their trunks.

Shut pools

Meanwhile, councils up and down the country are closing or downsizing public swimming pools. The Socialist Party is active in campaigns to save them.

Since 2008, grassroots participation in swimming has fallen by 300,000 people. The Amateur Swimming Association says over half of 7 to 11-year-olds can't even doggy paddle 25 metres. One in five British adults can't swim, and in 2012 there was a 35% rise in kids drowning.

Peer pressure

"Arise, Lord Moat!" Disgraced ex-MP Douglas Hogg, the Tory expenses fiddler who charged us £2,000 to clean his moat, has won a peerage.

Top Tory donors and filthy-rich fat-cats fill the list of new members of the House of Lords. Appointed for life, members of parliament's upper house are eligible for £300 a day - £1,500 week - just for turning up. Part-time housekeepers in the Lords can expect £163.87 a week - for 17.5 hours of scrubbing and polishing.

Two-chamber parliament is a relic of a time when feudal landlords wanted to keep both uppity capitalists and ordinary people in check. The Socialist Party says: abolish the House of Lords.

Bring in proportional representation and the right to recall MPs - and fight for socialism.

£500 million

Amount Tories have found to upgrade UK's Trident weapons of mass destruction, 31 August 2015.

£117 million

Amount Tories couldn't find to save Remploy factories, which employed disabled workers making medical equipment, cars, books and more, 2013.

"Unapologetic attack on austerity" at Southampton Corbyn rally

Nick Chaffey

A call for an end to austerity, from Jeremy Corbyn speaking in Southampton on 25 August, was met with a standing ovation and cheers from a near 1,000-strong audience. They were enthused by his unapologetic attack on austerity.

From the chair, Unite national political officer Jenny Formby welcomed everyone "to a meeting of socialists".

Once again the huge turnout nailed the lie that there is no support for an alternative to austerity or a willingness to fight back. Corbyn's calls for a £10 an hour minimum wage, affordable council housing and an end to cuts to local government were met with cheers.

In a limited discussion he gave backing to calls from the floor for opposition to fracking and support for council care homes and free national childcare.

The demand to defend local government and provide funding and borrowing powers for councils to tackle the housing crisis raises questions of what Labour councils and especially councillors who are backing Corbyn's campaign, should do to stop the cuts.

Southampton Labour councillor Cathy McEwing, speaking from the platform, said the fightback had to start now. This is in the face of further cuts to council services in Southampton of £40 million in next year's budget.

Pro-Corbyn councillors

What should councillors do to build this fight back?

Does this mean that councillor McEwing and others supporting Corbyn will now refuse to vote for further cuts? Opposition to cuts must include mobilising support in the trade unions and community to set needs-based budgets. If they do, Socialist Party members will give our full support, to build on the successful stand and re-election of Southampton Councillors Against Cuts, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas.

However last week, councillor McEwing and the Southampton Labour cabinet voted through £9 million of cuts, including cutting funding to five libraries. If this continues, Labour will continue to lose support and open the possibility of a return of the Tory council which was defeated by the strike action of council workers in 2011.

This support for Corbyn must be translated into a call for Labour councils to refuse to implement further cuts. However, those councillors who continue to say there is nothing they can do, who continue to vote for cuts, will need to be challenged again by anti-cuts candidates standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 28 August 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Nottinghamshire

Don't close our mental health unit

Chris Jackson

100 people came to the second public consultation on the threatened closure of Broomhill Mental Health rehabilitation unit in Nottinghamshire. Carers, service users and local people made knowledgeable, moving contributions.

Carers explained that Broomhill was a vital bridge between acute wards and community living. One person said she had just been with her son who had written a suicide note because of his distress about the threatened closure.

The Trust panel repeated their mantra that people want to be at home and could get care in the community as effective as Broomhill services. They even claimed that closing two out of six acute wards in Nottingham had had no detrimental

effect on mental health provision!

Gary Freeman, a member of the Unison union's Health Service Group Executive, pointed out this cut would not be the last. When Cathy Meadows, a TUSC parliamentary candidate in May's election, called on the Trust to back the anti-closure campaign and demand adequate central government funding she got widespread support.

The Friends of Broomhill campaign now plan to approach the Scrutiny Committee, report to the consultation, and call for a protest against the closure.

Lincolnshire

Save our schools!

Elaine Smith, former TUSC parliamentary candidate for Lincoln

Around 300 angry people attended a meeting in Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire recently, opposing proposals to close the town's main school.

Five years ago, when Tory controlled Lincolnshire county council pushed for wholesale academy conversion, a successful campaign kept many schools within the local authority. Now, however, three of the four local secondary schools are converting to academy status.

Mablethorpe has a high proportion of social deprivation and Tennyson School was not seen to meet the 'standards' required for an academy. Pupil numbers fell to a level where Tennyson school is now said to be no longer financially viable. Parents rightly feel this was the intention all along.

Communities

Fortunately, these parents won't sit back and let this happen. They believe schools belong to communities and closure would have a catastrophic effect on the town and its future.

The prospect of school closure has brought together a whole town to fight to keep its school. Parents are showing how, when organised, they are stronger. I am sure that Lincolnshire county council is not prepared for this collective strength.

Anger as promised women's museum becomes Ripper museum

On 4-5 August, protests were held in Whitechapel, east London, where a Jack the Ripper 'museum' is being opened. Dozens of activists and local residents protested with placards commemorating Jack the Ripper's victims and also the women that made history in the area.

Socialist Party members participated in these protests, distributing leaflets calling for Tower Hamlets council to close the museum immediately. We said they should instead fight for the funding of the original intention, a real museum of women's history.

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Thailand: Bomb explosion kills twenty in Bangkok

Country plagued by military junta and economic downturn

Per-Ake Westerlund, Rattvisepartiet Socialisterna (CWI in Sweden)

The horrific bombing in Thailand's capital Bangkok on 17 August killed 20 people and seriously injured 125. Most of those killed and injured were tourists from other Asian countries.

While no one has taken responsibility for the bomb, the explosion could have big repercussions for both the ruling military junta and the country's struggling economy.

Despite the failure of the police to solve the investigation it hasn't stopped the national police chief, General Somyot Poompanmoung, giving a £55,000 reward to his fellow police officers for the only arrest, so far, of an unnamed suspect. The general can afford it as he declared his assets at £7.5 million when appointed police chief after last year's coup.

Central Bangkok has not experienced any similar bomb attack before. It does not have the trademark of the Muslim/Malay separatists of southern Thailand, who have never attacked Bangkok. The bomb has caused widespread fear and speculation. A second bomb on Tuesday, at another skytrain station close to the river, however, was smaller and did not injure anyone.

The bomb explosion came a week after the military stated its goal of keeping power for as long as possible. And, at the same time, the country's economy has been hit by the devaluations of the Chinese yuan currency. However, terrorism is no solution but will be used as an excuse by the state for tightening measures that can be used against genuine oppositionists.

Military junta

Prime Minister and General, Prayut Chan-o-cha, has been the de-facto dictator of Thailand since May 2014. Anyone doubting that can just read the Bangkok Post or follow any media in the country to see his picture everywhere. He will now use the attack to strengthen the grip of the military, calling it "the worst incident that has ever happened in Thailand".

Since the military coup last year, the junta - the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) - has arrested more than 1,000 politicians and activists. Most of them are from the formerly ruling Pheu Thai Party. All protests and political meetings are illegal.

In late June, 14 students were arrested for holding a rally at their university, against military rule. They were charged with breaking the ban on political gatherings and held in prison, waiting for a military court trial. However, the Prayut regime, offered "talks" with the students in order to stem further protests.

Prayut told the Bangkok Post that he wanted the protest to stop "because he feels uncomfortable seeing them face legal action"! This threat, combined with a "check to see if political groups are behind it", was used to put pressure on the families of the students.

Originally, the junta stated there would be new elections this year, 2015. They were then moved to 2016, and now they are supposed to take place in 2017.

It also clear that Prayut has a 'road map' that will 'guide' any incoming civilian government. The draft charter for a new

constitution includes making "populism" illegal and having a Senate dominated by non-elected senators.

In addition, the Constitution Drafting Committee recently proposed a "special crisis committee" to oversee the constitution and its so-called reforms. "The panel, comprised of the PM, House and Senate Speaker, leaders of the armed forces and police chief among others, will remain in place for five years after the charter is promulgated." (Bangkok Post, 17 August).

Political parties

Over the last decade, Thai politics have been dominated by the struggle between two parties - Pheu Thai and the Democrats.

Pheu Thai was founded by the telecoms billionaire, Thaksin Shinawatra, who won elections on populist policies such as cheap loans, subsidies and an increased minimum wage. Through this, he won a stronghold in the populous rural parts in the north of the country.

Thaksin was overthrown by the military in 2006. The military, the monarchy and the Democrats, supported by a big share of the national capitalists, thought he had 'gone too far'.

In 2010, violent street clashes took place between supporters of Pheu Thai - the 'red shirts' - and Democrats - the 'yellow shirts'. The military intervened heavily against the red shirts, and more than 100 demonstrators were killed. The slogans of the red shirts were for equality and democracy.

The Pheu Thai Party continued to win elections after the junta had resigned in 2011. With Thaksin in exile, his sister Yingluck Shinawatra became Prime Minister until the new junta's coup last year. The Democrat Party supported the coup, and as in 2006, the US administration seemed supportive or at least was consulted.

Since the coup, the Pheu Thai Party, has adjusted itself to the military. The 'road map' of Prayut wants a "reconciliation government", with both parties. The two parties have also supported delaying elections for at least two years and a referendum to legitimise the new constitution.

Economy

The military junta has acted to reverse "populism" and step up capitalist neoliberalism. In June, Prayut stated that the free health care which Thaksin implemented in 2001 was "too costly".

The scheme covers 47 million Thais, two-thirds of the population, who pay only 30 baht (less than one euro) when visiting a doctor. Already, the junta has abolished subsidies on rice and gas. The minimum wage has been frozen.

These measures, however, have not led to increased growth. Instead, one result has been a cut in domestic demand. The pattern is similar to many other emerging markets.

The baht currency has lost value as capital has left the country, mainly because of the expected increase in US interest rates. The central bank responded with two cuts to interest rates in April, but the economy is still in technical deflation (falling prices).

The official prognosis for growth has been cut several times this year, from 3.8% to 2.7%. The central bank estimates exports will drop by 3.5% in 2015. The recent devaluation of the Chinese yuan will increase the pressure on the economy further.

The bombing in Bangkok threatens to have a big economic impact. Tourism accounts for 10% of the country's economy, and has been even more important, in the context of a falling currency. There are definitely fears in Thailand of another Asian crisis as in 1997, when the country's economy was severely hit.

It remains to be seen who was behind the bomb attack in Bangkok. Some suspicion is said to have fallen on expatriate Uighurs or their sympathisers. More than 100 were recently accused of being terrorists and deported to China.

However, the situation in Thailand shows the urgent need for a political party that fights for workers and poor people. Global capitalism and the present military rulers have only new crises in store.

Politically active workers and students in Thailand should study the history of previous struggles, and aim to form their own political voice with a socialist programme.

The CWI has raised these demands for Thailand:

- No to terrorism; yes to mass struggle
- For a united struggle of workers, poor farmers, students and other oppressed people
- No to the rule of generals; end the monarchy
- Organise the election of a genuine, representative revolutionary constituent assembly
- For the building of a mass workers' and poor farmers' party fighting for a majority government
- Trade union rights for the armed forces rank and file - win poor soldiers to the struggles of working people
- Full rights for the oppressed Muslim population in the South of Thailand and all other minorities
- No to neoliberal policies. For democratic public ownership of major industries, large private landholdings and banks
- For an economy planned to meet the needs of the working people and poor farmers, under the democratic control and management of elected committees from the working class and small farmers
- For a socialist Thailand, as part of a socialist federation throughout South East Asia

International news in brief

Ireland: Massive anti-water charges demo

On Saturday 29 August a massive protest against the imposition of water charges by the Fine Gael/Labour party governing coalition took place in Dublin, Ireland. Organisers say over 80,000 people participated.

Paul Murphy, Socialist Party member and Anti-Austerity Alliance TD (MP), said the turnout showed that the government is on the run over water charges and the boycott payment campaign.

A political vendetta by the establishment has meant that Paul along with other anti-water charge protesters, are facing criminal proceedings - including a ludicrous false imprisonment charge of the deputy prime minister - arising from a sit-down protest in Tallaght, south Dublin, last year.

Now there are revelations about a spying operation led by the Garda Commissioner's husband against anti-water charges protesters ('Operation Mizen').

And in a further attack on democratic rights, the AAA has been refused a permit for door to door collecting in Tallaght because: "The proceeds of the collection... would be used in such a manner as to encourage... the commission of an unlawful act"!

Lebanon: 'Garbage demos' shake ruling class

Interview with Tamer Mahdi, CWI member in Lebanon

"This issue has exposed the collusion between establishment parties and big business interests, and the rampant

corruption underlying it. Those who suffer from this crisis are ordinary residents in the capital, Beirut, and other cities, since the rubbish has not been collected for weeks."

Full interview and more reports on www.socialistworld.net

Hong Kong elections

Socialist Action (CWI in Hong Kong) members (above) campaigning for Sally Tang in upcoming District Council elections.

Corbyn campaign

Surges, purges and preparation

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

'Corbynmania' saw no let up throughout August. Rain or shine, thousands of people, both young and experienced, thronged to hear the left-wing candidate for the Labour leadership at meetings across the length and breadth of Britain. An estimated 30,000 people have now attended meetings, or tried to, queuing outside and cramming into overspill meetings.

Labour's membership, which had only increased by around 500 during the years of its me-tooism to the Con-Dem government's austerity, has risen to 299,755, by almost 50%. In addition, there are 189,703 political levy payers in affiliated trade unions who have signed up (for free) for the leadership contest vote as 'individual affiliated members', and 121,295 others who have paid £3 to be a 'registered supporter'. It seems that most have signed up to vote for Jeremy Corbyn. This represents a breaking into politics of some of those who have been denied a political voice since Blair's right-wing takeover of Labour.

Candidates

Meanwhile the other candidates, amid bickering among themselves, have been struggling to compete with Jeremy Corbyn's campaign. One report claimed that shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper 'almost' filled a room above a cinema. Another described former Blairite Health Minister Andy Burnham taking to the stage, pint in hand - a hat-tip to Nigel Farage as well maybe?

But both now are being forced to tilt left and seem to be attempting to slip on Jeremy's beige-jacket mantel. It does not fit however. Burnham has claimed he would fight the welfare bill, which promises wide scale impoverishment and misery, "line by line to prevent it becoming law". But he is optimistic of our short attention span - it was only a month ago that he abstained on the bill's first reading. In office Burnham fulfilled Thatcher's dreams and privatised a hospital. The 'anyone but Corbyn' candidates cannot escape their role in maintaining Labour as an austerity-lite version of the Tories.

Purges

August has been a month of purges as well as surges. In a desperate attempt to prevent Jeremy Corbyn winning an estimated 56,000 voters have been disqualified from voting in the selection. Outrageously the biggest section of them, around 15,000, has been excluded because they are not on the electoral register. In July, Labour attacked the Tories for removing people from the register in what Lord Falconer, the shadow justice secretary, described as "another example of how David Cameron's government is intent on rigging the game in its favour". Now they are hypocritically using the same methods to disenfranchise probable Corbyn supporters.

Labour spokespeople said the party had booted out 3,000 "cheats" who did not agree with the aims and values of the party. Acting leader Harriet Harman said: "Those people who don't support the aims and values of the Labour party are not entitled to vote. We will continue the process of verification right up until the last minute." Among those denied a vote are PCS civil service union general secretary Mark Serwotka and comedian Mark Steel on the basis that they have opposed Labour's right-wing agenda.

However such is the enthusiasm for Corbyn that even this giant purge seems unlikely to succeed. As the Labour right-wing faces the prospect of a Corbyn victory a fight has broken out among its chief protagonists over who is to blame. Miliband's Collins review which removed the trade unions - the organised working class voice - from the selection process was supported by all the Labour 'modernisers'. New Labour had become a reliable party for the capitalist class - but that is now under threat.

Blair

In February 2014 Blair said: "It is a long overdue reform that... was something I should have done myself." Now he is ranting in the Observer as he tries to come to grips with the processes in play. He admits: "people like me have a lot of thinking to do," and "we don't yet properly understand this. It is about to transform a political institution we spent our whole lives defending." Those the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.

In a very revealing article for the capitalists' mouthpiece the Financial Times (FT) about Labour's utter disdain for those who seek an anti-austerity voice and the fear of that process taking place inside Labour, former business secretary Peter Mandelson wrote that: "Recovering control of our party will mean tightening those rules again." Too late the representatives of capitalism in Labour have realised that their changes to the party leadership election process have allowed an opening for the very voices they wished to exclude.

'Wilderness'

An FT editorial prefaced this with a warning to the capitalists. It explained that, while there is jubilation among Tory MPs who believe, as most Labour MPs do, that a Corbyn victory will condemn Labour to decades in the wilderness, it also threatens to do "damage to the body politic". Labour had been made safe as an opposition party that can be relied on to carry out the interests of capitalism for when the Tories' attacks once again make them unelectable.

It is absolutely clear that if Jeremy Corbyn wins, the right of the party with the full backing of the capitalist class will struggle to remove him. There have been some hints of how the right-wing will do it - they vary from voting through his removal by Christmas, to forcing him to sign up to a re-election process mid-way through the parliament, to isolating him. One method of 'imprisoning' him would be to reintroduce the method of shadow cabinet election by the majority of Blairite MPs. Failed candidates and ultra Blairites Chuka Umunna and Tristram Hunt have launched Labour Group for Common Good - potentially in preparation for a right-wing split.

To counter these pressures Jeremy Corbyn would need to mobilise organised back-up from the working class in the trade union movement, anti-cuts campaigns and left organisations, and from among the youth. He would need to call an open conference of this support base - including of those who voted for him - to discuss how his left programme can be delivered and developed further.

Developing this programme will be essential if he is to effectively answer the attacks and smears that will inevitably be stepped up by the capitalist class.

TUSC

Whatever the course of events, Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters shouldn't return to being prisoners of 'Labour constitutionalism'. They should rely instead on the support of the many thousands who have been enthused by the Jeremy for Leader campaign and come together with the thousands of socialist and trade union activists outside Labour,

including those in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Since its creation around 300,000 votes have been cast for TUSC, many of those at council elections as working class people seek a way to defend themselves against the vicious austerity onslaught passed on by councils led by Labour as well as the Tories and Liberals - and Greens.

Jeremy Corbyn has rightly made the call for councils to stand together and refuse to implement government cuts. In the mass meetings around his campaign there has been enthusiasm for the idea of elected representatives who will simply not vote for austerity, starting with the council budget-making meetings that will take place in February and March 2016.

Over 450 councillors have signed up to support Jeremy Corbyn. This is significant, but it is barely 6% of the total number of Labour councillors. One of the battles that will take place after the Labour leadership contest will be over whether Labour councils continue implementing Tory cuts or decide to stand and fight.

Councillors

Local government budgets have been slashed by 40% since 2010 and now they potentially face another £30 billion of cuts. In eight months council elections will take place in many areas.

At the TUSC conference on 26 September the call will be made to stand no-cuts candidates against any councillor who does not commit to vote against cuts regardless of what party they belong to.

As we go to press there are ten days remaining in this contest. Whatever happens next, the situation that existed before the general election has been overturned and the angry millions who stayed away can start to glimpse how they could win a political voice.

That will take a battle and the Socialist Party is ready to fight alongside them for an independent working class political voice to take on the austerity mongers.

Youth Fight Austerity

Young and angry?

Helen Pattison, London Youth Fight Austerity organiser

Whether you are studying, working or unemployed in Britain today, you come up against the Tories' agenda. Austerity bites.

That's why Youth Fight Austerity is getting organised against the weak Tory government who want to heap further misery on our generation. We were part of the crowd who 'welcomed' in the new Tory government with angry protests in central London and around the country.

Since the economic crisis, young people have faced a battering. When the crisis first hit, young people found themselves pushed out of work. Youth Fight for Jobs organised a repeat of the Jarrow march on its 75 anniversary. Unemployed campaigners marched hundreds of miles from Jarrow to London, demanding the government stop the attacks on benefits and on services, and create jobs.

Zero-hour contracts

For those growing up in austerity Britain, stints of unemployment are the norm. But casualisation, temporary, zero-hour

contracts in low paid jobs with very few rights are also common. Rather than investing in public services and creating jobs, governments and big business opted to reduce people's rights at work. Using contracts which offered employers ultimate flexibility, millions of people get up every day and wait on the end of the phone for the possibility of work. Wages stay down while rents and the cost of living seem to be constantly on the rise.

Now the task turns to tackling the Tory government and the new attacks they want to heap on us. From the scrapping of housing benefit for 18-21 years olds to the exclusion of under-25s from the new so called 'living wage,' the budget represents a declaration of war by the Tories on youth. It's time for a national fight back against the government.

Protest

The protests that have happened since the election show the enthusiasm we can bring to the movement. And protests are important, they pull us together against a common enemy and show the Tories that there will be resistance. As part of a wider strategy protest can help bring down governments.

Ordinary people have a lot of strength when they fight together. There aren't enough bankers or politicians to fill the roads in central London but on the 20 June, hundreds of thousands of us did on the 'end austerity now' demo.

But people in their workplaces, organised together in a union are also extremely strong. The RMT (the union for London Underground and transport workers) can bring the city of London to a standstill and cost big business and capitalism huge amounts of money. For this reason the Tories are trying to limit trade union rights and stop them taking strike action.

Victory

Young people have used similar methods to the trade union movement when organising in schools, colleges and universities. Students at Prendergast School in South London organised huge protests against privatisation. They linked with parents and staff, who took strike action, to successfully block plans to turn the school into an academy. Students stood on picket lines with the teachers on strike days and protested on the days when school was open. It drew media attention and showed the school head that teachers, students and parents were united in opposition to academy status.

Students even held democratic ballots on academy status when the head blocked a parent ballot. The student ballot saw nearly half of all students vote and 98% were against privatisation.

We need to fight on the political field too; it's a lie that young people are apathetic. During the Scottish referendum on independence 16 and 17 year olds were allowed to vote. There were record turnouts in that election which showed that when young people see the real impact they can have on a situation then we grasp it. The main parties though are painfully similar, its understandable young people don't bother to go out and vote for them. What is the point in going out to vote for the Labour Party if it isn't even going to oppose the welfare bill? It abstained, gaining its MPs the nickname of 'Lab-stainers'.

Enthusiasm

Yet many of the people who didn't vote Labour in the last election have now signed up to vote for Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership election. When there are political parties or leaders who show a lead in the fight against austerity or campaigns such as at Prendergast School, young people have demonstrated they can play a vital role.

Through Youth Fight Austerity we can make our own links with those who are also fighting the Tory attacks such as the National Shop Stewards Network, who will be lobbying the Trade Union Congress in Brighton on 13 September, calling on it to take action against the Tories anti-trade union bill.

Colleges and universities are filled with people who can only remember austerity and crisis ridden capitalism, as do a huge chunk of low paid and exploited workers. This system has only ever failed our generation. If we want education, jobs and homes it means fighting for a different kind of system. Not one based on bigger profits for the 1% but one that

meets the needs of the 99%. Socialism is the only alternative. We need campaigns and parties that are prepared to challenge a system that has demonstrated its unwillingness to afford us jobs, education and housing. We can't afford that system.

Students attacked from all sides

Dáire Mag Shamhráin, Socialist Party West London and sixth form student

The UK's £75 billion deficit and £1.6 trillion debt were not caused by the disadvantaged, the poor, students or the working class, so why should we pay for a crisis we didn't create?

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been abolished in England. EMA was the grant paid to poorer students in further education. Former Liberal Democrat MP Phil Willis, said: "There are significantly more important things to do with £20m than give young people a Christmas bonus." But it was of great benefit to working and middle class families such as mine, who struggle despite both parents working. A BBC report suggested that even with the EMA, parents earning less than £30,000 a year still struggled to support teenagers enough to enable them to stay in education past 16.

Cuts

But this seems not to be enough for the Tory government, with the announcement of a 24% cut to the adult education budget in England. These cuts risk decimating further education provision, leaving new generations without. I myself am forced to look to Ireland for cheaper university fees, but this does not provide for accommodation or living costs.

Because of tuition fees students can be left with debts of up to £40,000. This may be seen as manageable by the Tories, but for students starting work it will remain a worry for years, especially when it is difficult to find jobs that pay much.

Grants not loans

Students like myself with learning disabilities such as dyslexia are entitled to Disabled Students' Allowance. But the Tories are also cutting this, placing the funding burden on individual students. These cuts will reduce access to higher education for students with disabilities thereby reducing the employment prospects for the disabled, and eventually leading to further inequality in society. These planned cuts face High Court scrutiny. But even without these cuts the inadequate loans would mean that disabled students would be left with even larger debts than other graduates at the start of their careers, making them more vulnerable.

Transport is a worry for young people as well. Where I live, Transport for London is set to make £220m in cuts, so public transport becomes less reliable. Car insurance can soar to levels of around £8,000 for young, new drivers.

Students and young people are threatened from all sides by this austerity assault. We need the trade unions, students and the working class to rally in support of student grants, not loans, and a society that is run for the benefit of all and not the interests of a few.

Zimmerwald Conference 1915

Lessons for the socialist movement - then and now

100 years ago, during the carnage of World War One, a small number of socialist delegates assembled at an

anti-war conference in Zimmerwald, Switzerland. As Robert Bechert explains, it marked an important step in rebuilding the international workers' movement that had been shattered by the earlier failure of the Second International of socialist parties to prevent world war.

Advances and retreats, victories and defeats, have characterised the history of the socialist and workers' movement.

This year's U-turn by the Syriza leadership in Greece - from opposing to implementing austerity - is not the first and, unfortunately, will not be the last example of 'socialist' leaders who refuse to break with capitalism and instead end up implementing anti-working class policies.

Activists must learn politically and organisationally from these experiences and use this understanding to help the workers' movement recover and move once again onto the offensive against capitalism.

By coincidence this is the 100th anniversary of a very significant step in the rebuilding of the socialist and workers' movement after a much more serious defeat, the plunging of most of Europe into the murderous World War One.

In early September 1915, 42 delegates from eleven countries attended the first international conference of socialist parties and political currents opposed to that war. The conference's 'Zimmerwald Manifesto', drafted by Leon Trotsky, played an important part in helping to build the struggle against the pro-war leaders of most workers' organisations, the war and the capitalist system itself.

In August 1914, at the outbreak of war, the vast majority of socialist activists were stunned when the leaders of most of the socialist parties in the combatant countries supported 'their own' ruling classes. They were shocked because up until then these parties, and the Second International they belonged to, had repeatedly declared that they would not support such an inter-imperialist war.

But instead, as war broke out a majority of leaders of the workers' organisations on both sides rapidly moved to cooperate with their own capitalists.

This capitulation mainly reflected the fact that these leaders had become absorbed within the capitalist system and had no desire to challenge it. (See '1914 - The capitulation of the Second International' www.socialistworld.net/doc/6850)

Opposition

Despite the shock of official leaders suddenly dumping the previous anti-war position, struggles broke out almost immediately as oppositions, often initially small, strove to reverse the pro-war policy.

The war had revealed how organisations painfully built up to help emancipate the working class had, in the hands of pro-capitalist leaders, become instruments to help the ruling class maintain their rule. The question was not just to change policy, but to remove pro-war leaders and forge workers' organisations seriously committed to ending capitalism and the repeated wars.

A sharp battle of ideas opened up. The workers' movement in many countries had an internationalist tradition which made many anti-war activists see their struggle as not just being against war, but as part of rebuilding an International that would fight capitalism.

In this political battle Lenin and the Bolshevik party in Russia clearly argued for drawing both political and organisational conclusions from the August 1914 collapse.

Politically this catastrophe flowed from an adaption to capitalism that led to the growth of pro-capitalist strata within the workers' movement leadership.

Principles

The ideological lines had to be very clearly drawn to establish a firm basis for rebuilding the workers' movement. The Bolsheviks argued that a new International was needed, one that had learnt the lessons of the Second International's collapse.

It was with these ideas that the Bolsheviks participated in moves to draw together the socialist opposition to the war and take concrete steps towards rebuilding the international movement. This included cooperating with other forces which did not really have a revolutionary opposition to war.

In 1915 the Italian and Swiss socialist parties called for an international conference of socialist parties to reaffirm the principle of opposition to war. The resulting Zimmerwald conference was preceded by international anti-war meetings of socialist women and youth in March and April 1915 respectively.

Left resolution

The conference, made up of different political forces, saw sharp political debates.

There was a right wing not wanting to condemn those socialist parties that had supported financing the war. And a Left, led by the Bolsheviks, that argued for a clear denunciation of those 'socialist' leaders supporting the war and for a "revolutionary struggle against capitalist governments".

This meant a complete break from both the pro-capitalist and hesitant 'centre' currents in the workers' movement and a determination to try to utilise the crisis caused by the war to end capitalism.

Although the Zimmerwald Left's resolution was defeated, the Bolsheviks and the Left voted for the Conference's Manifesto because it was a "call to action".

The Manifesto had a big effect, despite the attempts to crush it. Its publication was banned in Austria-Hungary, France, Germany and Russia. But this did not stop it becoming an important beacon of not just opposition to the war but of rebuilding the international workers' movement as a fighting, socialist force.

Within months it became a rallying cry in the struggle against the pro-war and pro-capitalist forces.

The Zimmerwald conference was a stepping stone in the building of the worldwide revolutionary movement that followed World War One and the 1917 Russian revolution. A movement whose experiences provide important lessons for today's activists struggling to end, once and for all, bloody capitalist rule.

Trotsky's assassination

75 years ago (21 August 1940) the greatest living revolutionary of the time, Leon Trotsky - an implacable opponent of both capitalism and totalitarian Stalinism - was murdered by Josef Stalin's hit man, Ramon Mercader.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), re-publishes an article on the subject from 2010 by Peter Taaffe (general secretary of the Socialist Party, England and Wales). See www.socialistworld.net

Kill the bill!

Join the National Shop Stewards Network lobby of TUC Congress

NSSN national chair and Socialist Party industrial organiser Rob Williams explains why all trade unionists should come to the NSSN lobby of TUC Congress on 13 September to build the pressure for mass action to defeat the Tories' planned new anti-union laws. This is an edited version of the introduction to the new Socialist Party pamphlet 'Kill the Bill'.

Cameron's Trade Union Bill is an extension and deepening of Thatcher's laws of the 1980s that were shamefully retained by the New Labour governments of Blair and Brown.

They would also enshrine many of the attacks that the ConDem coalition carried out on the PCS civil service union, like cuts to facility time and the removal of check-off - the deduction of members' union subscriptions from salaries.

This bill's main measures range from new tougher voting thresholds to effectively opening the way to criminalise union reps. The Tories are even weighing up forcing striking unions to give two weeks' notice if they plan to campaign via social media!

But attacks on the ability of workers to organise aren't new. The basic right of workers to organise in a union had to be won against brutal assaults by the employers and their political representatives.

There were massive battles and victories against the anti-union plans of firstly the Wilson Labour government and then Heath's Tory administration. 'Saltley Gate' in 1972 saw tens of thousands of Birmingham engineering and car workers walk out to support striking miners.

Militant (now Socialist Party) supporters in Birmingham played a key role in tipping off the National Union of Miners pickets in Birmingham that the Saltley works was being used as a collecting depot for "scab coal". The mass mobilisation forced the police to close the depot.

24-hour general strike

After their defeat, the Tories planned revenge, especially on the miners. But Thatcher and her laws could have been defeated if the unions had called a 24-hour general strike.

The Socialist Party warns of the stiff challenge that faces the unions and the working-class now. But we are implacable in our optimism that with the correct strategy, the determination of millions of workers, mobilised and co-ordinated in action the Trade Union Bill can be defeated and a new period of intense struggle will open up.

Come to the NSSN lobby - tell the TUC it's time to demonstrate and strike together!

- Email info@shopstewards.net if you want to attend

NSSN public rally and lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton

Speakers to include:

- Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary
- Mick Cash, RMT general secretary
- Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary
- Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary
- Steve Gillan, POA general secretary
- Dave Ward, CWU general secretary
- Suzanne Muna, Unite executive

1pm Sunday 13 September

Charlotte Room in the Grand Hotel, 97-99 King's Rd BN1 2FW (next to the Brighton Conference Centre)

Kill the Bill: defeat the Tories' anti-union plans

A new Socialist Party pamphlet

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Swansea: Rail and PCS strikers rally together

Ronnie Job

Swansea Socialist Party members took solidarity to picket lines of two unions in three Swansea workforces on Saturday 29 August before joining an excellent rally of RMT and PCS members, coordinated by Swansea Trades Council.

RMT members in First Great Western (FGW) followed up their action on the previous Saturday with a three-day strike over the bank holiday weekend. There were pickets out at the engineering depot and at Swansea station. FGW wants to cut guards and buffet cars from trains.

Addressing the rally, RMT branch secretary Owen Herbert pointed out that these proposed changes threaten the safety of passengers and the quality of service received.

Socialist Party member Ruth Williams in offering her support to the strikers, stressed the importance of keeping guards and other staff on trains for disabled people for many of whom train travel could otherwise become inaccessible. As the new RMT banner puts it, "defend jobs, services and safety".

PCS

Supporters of the PCS pickets at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency call centre seemed to far outnumber those going in to work. This was the second of three days of action (the third is on Tuesday) for PCS members in DVLA over plans to reduce unsocial hours payments.

Call centre worker Steph Bennett told the rally that managers drafted in to cover the strike, who don't work on the phones, will be severely struggling during the action.

The National Waterfront Museum was shut because of the strike action by PCS members at seven sites of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museums of Wales. Here management plan to get rid of unsocial hours payments altogether. PCS Amgueddfa Cymru branch secretary Peter Hill explained that this would mean an effective 25% pay cut for some workers. Like all the strikers in each dispute, Peter stressed the determination of the strikers to see the dispute through.

The Tories and bosses may have thought that they would be in for an easy ride after winning the general election but the determination shown by these and other strikers shows that they are mistaken. The votes for action in all three of these disputes would have met even the thresholds proposed in the Tories' new anti-strike bill.

Strikers drew strength from each other and from the pledges of support from trade unionists and others who had come to offer solidarity. Everybody felt that the best chance of winning in every dispute is if we all strike together.

Visteon pensioners' tribute to Swansea Trades Council

After the Swansea Trades Council strike rally Mike Gard, treasurer of the Swansea Visteon Pensioners Action Group, presented a cheque for £1405.27 to the officers of the Trades Council. Mike said:

"We have wound up our campaign fund and our VPAG officers agreed to donate the final amount to Swansea Trades Council in recognition of the support they gave us during our long campaign.

"Alec, representing Swansea Trades Council, attended almost every meeting over five years as well as joining us in solidarity on our numerous protests, lobbies and demos.

"Swansea Trades Council even put us at the head of their May Day march through the city centre one year which gave us a huge boost.

"We felt this donation would help the trades council to assist other workers in struggle in the same way as they helped us".

Plymouth - FGW strike

Over the busiest bank holiday weekend of the year, there were picket lines at stations all across the south west to as far as London, to oppose proposed job losses with the introduction of the new Hitachi high speed trains.

First Great Western's plan will see services downsized and jobs cut. This private company wants to see 'drivers closing the doors', suggesting that on-board staff won't be present.

It has also stated that it doesn't want a buffet car added to the new service.

On the picket line, one worker told me: "The railways are not run for the public, it's for the shareholders".

Another worker said, on the issue of ownership of the railways: "Renationalisation, it makes sense"; a view that the Socialist Party fully supports, along with the rail trade unions and a majority of the public.

Thomas Sloman, Plymouth Socialist Party

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 August 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

London tube workers force bosses to move

Tube unions RMT, TSSA and Unite suspended the 24-hour strike action which was planned to start on the evenings of 25 and 27 August but they have made it clear to London Underground (LU) the dispute remains ongoing. And, as we

go to press, further strike action is planned for 8 and 10 September.

Talks continue in the dispute over night-time tube working, which are making significant progress. The unions and their members will decide if any new offer from LU is sufficient to settle but it's clear that the action, that has already twice brought London to a halt, has forced management to move. Night Tube, which was due to start on 12 September, has now been delayed.

Unsocial hours

The dispute is over devastating increases in unsocial working hours, hundreds of job cuts and attacks on pay and conditions. Unions have accepted night trains from the off, but warn management's proposals will harm workers and safety.

There has been overwhelming public support for previous strike action which now needs to be mobilised with public meetings of tube workers, the wider union movement and the general public.

"Rock solid" strike

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said: "I want to pay tribute to the union members who have remained united and rock solid throughout this dispute. It is their determination which forced LU to begin talking seriously and which has enabled us to make the progress that we have so far. Our dispute is not with the working class of London and the RMT is not opposed to Night Tube - providing it is introduced properly with safe and robust staffing arrangements which recognise the substantial extra pressures that this expansion will inevitably create."

Royal Mail union rep sacked - reinstate John now!

A CWU member

John Vasey, a CWU (postal workers' union) workplace rep at Royal Mail Delivery Office in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, was sacked on 21 August on a charge connected with non-delivery of election material.

He had been removed from duty on 1 May during the general election, and then suspended for three months.

All this occurred during the Royal Mail Revision, ongoing since the latter part of 2014, which has just resulted in Royal Mail decimating delivery jobs and conditions.

It is no coincidence that with John out of the way, the Wakefield office is increasingly run by a threatening management, placing unmanageable workloads on a reduced number of postal workers.

Stitch-up

Having 25 years' service at Royal Mail, he has good support from the workforce in his battle for reinstatement. They understand that his dismissal is a stitch-up and his absence during suspension was used as a pretext to drive through cutbacks.

The CWU is right behind him and the local National Shop Stewards Network has added their help. Currently awaiting an appeal, his reinstatement campaign is gathering pace.

Messages of protest

- Messages of protest to Jon Millidge, Royal Mail Group HR Director, c/o Tallents House, South Gyle Crescent,

Edinburgh, EH12 9PB. (Copies to Paul Clays, CWU Regional Secretary, 6 Concept Court, Kettlestring Lane, Clifton Moor, York, YO30 4XF - email northeastregion@cwu.org)

- Also search for and like "Reinstatejohnvasey" on Facebook.
-

'Pay the rate' construction protests continue on Teesside

Protests have continued at the Wilton complex in Teesside over pay. SITA Sembcorp have laid off workers and replaced them with contractors who employ workers paid less than trade union agreed rates.

Unite, GMB and Ucatt have supported the construction workers who have been campaigning for all workers at the site to be paid the same rate with the same terms and conditions.

Promise

Teesside workers who managed to gain employment on the promise of two months' work have been told, after three weeks working on the site, that there is not enough work and the first of these workers was made redundant on 14 August.

At the same time a further 15 to 20 Eastern European workers have come onto the project and are being paid £5 an hour below the agreed rates for engineering construction workers.

This latest episode only galvanises the claims from the Teesside Construction Committee that migrants are being exploited in the name of profit while local workers are being overlooked in one of the highest unemployment areas in the UK.

Tony Seaman, a Unite activist, who has been involved in organising the protests has said: "We are protesting about the amount being paid to foreign workers on the job. There has been a perception that we are against foreign workers - we are not - we're simply against the fact that we are told they are being paid less than nationally agreed rates."

'Race to the bottom'

The North East region of the Socialist Party are supporting the protests and demand an end to the 'race to the bottom' and trade union agreed jobs, pay and conditions for all workers.

Bioscientists' strike forces management's climbdown

Adrian O'Malley, Unison branch secretary, Mid Yorkshire Health (personal capacity)

The threat of 24-hour strike action by 50 biomedical scientists has forced a climbdown by Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Unite members had already been out on four and 12 hour strikes and were going to be joined by eight Unison members for a further strike in a dispute over staff shortages and protection payments.

The Trust had reneged on a deal to pay two years protection for losses in pay during the introduction of a new rota to replace the existing on-call system. After failing to negotiate a new rota they attempted to impose a new rota by dismissing and re-engaging the staff on a new rota which had inadequate staffing levels and relied on excessive amounts of overtime.

During last minute talks the Trust agreed to back pay the protection payments by 15 months and meet with staff to discuss and agree a new rota. If a new rota cannot be agreed locally they have agreed that outside experts will be brought in and if extra staff are needed they will be bound by their findings.

This is a massive change in the Trust's position which would not have been achieved without the threat of strike action by the staff.

It is also worth noting that both strike ballots by Unite and Unison achieved the 50% yes votes needed for strike action to be taken under the Tories' new anti-strike laws. It shows that whatever obstacles they put in our way, a determined workforce that is prepared to take action can get results.

The workers have "suspended" their action while discussions over the staffing take place. A separate ballot of around 20 medical laboratory assistants belonging to Unison over the same issues starts today. The Trust has been made very clear that if progress is not made in introducing safe staffing levels then the rolling programme of strikes will continue.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 1 September 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Indesit strikers determined to press on for acceptable deal

Hugh Caffrey, Socialist Party - north west region

"Fat cats 22%, workers 1.5%!": A striker's placard on the picket line at Indesit's Old Trafford depot in Greater Manchester sums up why they are on strike. Indeed it sums up the chasm in society between the handful at the top enriching themselves and the overwhelming majority lower down who are told to be content with pennies or a few pounds at best.

Unite members involved in deliveries for white-goods company Indesit have been on national strike for four days across the last fortnight. An overwhelmingly solid strike by drivers and warehouse workers has made it clear that management's 1.5% pay offer is nowhere near enough, especially after years of 0% or 1% 'rises'.

Money is not a problem for Indesit, bought for €758 million by multinational giant Whirlpool last year. Company directors already on six-figure salaries have had a 22% pay rise, while senior directors got a reported 29% rise! Even regional management can jump on the big-bonus bandwagon. But none of these riches are on offer to those who actually do the work.

Instead of giving a decent pay rise, Indesit has been trying it on. Site visits by management after the first day's strike tried and failed to make any good impression. After that, during talks to clarify the bonus proposal, apparently Indesit's HR director phoned Unite to say the strike had been suspended, which of course it hadn't.

And then for the first time in many years, workers were called in to work the bank holiday Monday, in between the strike days of Thursday-Friday and Tuesday. Despite all this and more, sites across Britain have been brought to a standstill by the action, while a huge backlog of work has built up.

Strikers made it clear to me that they are willing to continue their dispute until they receive an acceptable pay offer. Solidarity from local trade union branches and trades councils has been warmly received, and Socialist Party branches will continue to back the workers in every way we can.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 1 September 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Workplace news in brief

Hungry for justice?

On 16 September the Bakers' union are holding a Fast Food Rights National Organising Day hosted by the Trade Union Congress. The organising day is an opportunity for fast food workers, union activists and community campaigners to find out more about the Fast Food Rights campaign. See www.fastfoodrights.wordpress.com for more.

Probation action

Unison members working for the National Probation Service in England and Wales will strike for a second time on 14 September. The three-hour strike will be followed by two and a half weeks of action short of strike, with members working strictly to their contracted hours.

Pay aspiration

On 1 September Aspire Housing maintenance workers in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs, took strike action for the fifth time against plans to dismiss workers and re-engage them on worse terms and conditions. Please send messages of support to sbaker@ucatt.org.uk or by text to 07845893607

National Gallery

As the National Gallery strike goes past 70 days, Union rep Candy Udwin's sacking is upheld but anti-privitisation petition tops 120,000! Keep supporting the indefinite #NationalGallery strike.

Rejected by Labour bureaucrats

When Mansfield resident Roy Bainton sent £3 and applied to register as a Labour supporter, a Labour Party official turned him down. The official explained why prospective party members could be rejected.

"Not being on the electoral register, or having stood for another political party at the last general election, local elections or European elections. People who nominated candidates for other parties at previous elections, and those who are known campaigners for, or members of, other parties."

Roy says: "I belong in none of these categories. Having been a Labour voter and union member since 1961, I voted Labour in every local and national election for 54 years.

"I was briefly a Labour Party member in the 1980s. I left after Kinnock refused to attend a miners' picket line, and would have in any case when they ditched Clause 4. In last May's local council and mayoral elections in Mansfield, I worked hard for Labour's unsuccessful mayoral candidate, Martin Lee. I wrote speeches, designed leaflets and actively campaigned for Labour on the street.

"I'm an unrepentant, left-wing Socialist, but I always saw Labour, even under Blair, as a valid buffer against the

increasing draconian nastiness of the 'New' Tories. I'm 72 and still working. Will I ever vote Labour again? I doubt it.

"Will this election end up as a fiasco? I suspect so. The current Labour Party is a very dark, sinister and corporate right-wing shambles. Hardie, Bevan and Attlee must be turning in their graves. Now, can I have my £3 back? Oh, sorry - I forgot - that doesn't happen under capitalism, does it."

TV review

Nuclear Secrets: a dangerous dead end

Geoff Jones reviews the BBC4 TV programme Britain's Nuclear Secrets - Inside Sellafield (on iPlayer until 10 September)

In what was obviously intended as a positive story on the nuclear industry, respected physicist Jim Al-Khalili took a camera crew into the nuclear complex at Sellafield in Cumbria. Even though he supports nuclear power, what he showed was scary to say the least, while what he omitted was even worse.

Sellafield, originally called Windscale, was set up in 1947 to produce plutonium to build the UK's very own nuclear deterrent. Nuclear reactors for 'peaceful' electricity generation only arrived in 1956. However, by 1957 a massive fire in one Windscale reactor spewed radioactive material over the surrounding countryside. The fire was mentioned, but not that this reactor still contains 15 tons of highly radioactive material.

We were shown 'storage ponds', open ponds of water containing nuclear waste and radioactive sludge. In 50 years at least 21 serious incidents have involved leakage of radioactive material. But even with perfect containment, radioactive waste remains highly dangerous for tens of thousands of years.

One issue hardly got a mention - in the 1980s the government had the bright idea of reprocessing spent fuel from nuclear reactors around the world into usable reactor fuel. The Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) facility finally came into operation in 1997 at a cost of £1.8 billion. Other countries were happy to send us their old fuel rods, but not to take back the processed fuel - Sellafield became the world's nuclear dustbin.

Reprocessed material is rendered into thousands of 'stable' glass disks, but these continue to generate heat and must be cooled. A safe long-term solution is yet to be found.

What emerged from Al-Khalili's account is that Sellafield is a long-running disaster, costing over £12.6 billion a year (not mentioned). In addition, the various schemes to 'clean up' the site are projected to cost around £80 billion. Conclusion? Nuclear power as a source of energy is an expensive, dangerous dead end.

Obituary

Anne Ullah Khan

Anne Ullah Khan, a very dear friend and comrade, has died. Her health had been steadily declining for a number of years, and Anne spent long periods in hospital and, finally, a nursing home.

I first met Anne years ago. After the discussion she agreed to join the party with much laughter saying: "At last, now watch out!" From then on there was no holding her back.

Unable to attend regular public activities because of her disability she made up for that by always having copies of the Socialist with her and buttonholing anyone she thought might benefit from reading it. That included anyone that might come to her home.

Until quite recently she regularly attended the Socialist Party branch, making valuable contributions every week.

In hospital, a couple of years ago, Anne was visited by two consultants. She asked them what they thought about the government's attitude to the NHS. They said they didn't like it but what could they do? Anne produced a copy of the Socialist and said: "Read that. It's contains all you need to know", and sold them a copy!

Stories like this are very inspiring and this was Anne's greatest contribution - her ability to set a fine example in all she did. She will be missed by her many friends inside and outside the party. Go well Anne.

David Rawlinson, Southampton Socialist Party

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21325>