

Unite to fight divided Tories

- Brutal tax credits attack halted - for now

Tory tax credit cuts to make millions poorer - but show divisions at the top

- Hands off tax credits - defend all benefits
- Build a mass movement, including co-ordinated strike action, against all cuts
- £10 an hour minimum wage now

Tory plans to cut tax credits are causing uproar throughout society. But divisions at the top show just how weak this government is. Even some Conservative MPs, in no way sympathetic with the poor, are afraid the government is going too far. There is huge relief that the attack has been delayed by the Lords. But the government is still trying to find a way to push it through.

Michelle Dorrell, a single mother of four in the audience of BBC Question Time, condemned the Tories with the cry of "shame on you!" A small business owner and Conservative voter, Michelle shouted she would never vote Tory again.

Other tax credit recipients have spoken to the Socialist and the establishment media about their desperation. It will be impossible to manage their finances if these cuts take place.

Subsidy

Gordon Brown introduced child and working tax credits during the last Labour government. They are a form of state subsidy to bosses in place of forcing them to pay a decent minimum wage.

Tanya Meyers, a single mother with three kids, spoke to the BBC. She gets £140 a week in child tax credits, paid to low-income parents. Tanya said: "We need it to feed the kids and [cutting] it will literally drive me nuts."

Four million families rely on child tax credits.

Working tax credits, for low-paid workers who meet certain criteria, boost minimum-wage incomes by £1,305 a year. 3.5 million will be affected if these are cut.

Donna Lowe works at Primark on the minimum wage. She told the BBC that "if the tax credit is stopped then my wages for a 20-hour week will only cover my rent - and there will be nothing left for anything else."

It is clear to more and more people that the Tories are over-reaching themselves.

Some of the capitalist press is even calling tax credit cuts Cameron's 'Poll Tax moment'. This refers to when Thatcher took on the whole British working class at once with an unfair flat-

rate tax. 18 million organised non-payers - led by supporters of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist - put paid to the tax and Thatcher's career.

Divisions

Divisions at the top over this attack further expose the political bankruptcy of the establishment's ruling institutions.

The BBC's Daily Politics show on 23 October shone a light on this. Presenter Andrew Neil was joined by former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg and Lib Dem peer Dick Newbie.

Rees-Mogg's argument was that the House of Lords had no right to amend tax legislation. This is enshrined in Henry IV's "1407 primacy of the House of Commons" rule that tax law must not originate in the Lords. Rees-Mogg added that "this was confirmed by the 1678 Commons declaration of privilege".

Traditionally, the Lords chooses not to block legislation promised in a government's election manifesto. This is called the 'Salisbury Convention'. Since tax credit cuts were not in the Conservative manifesto, it does not apply.

So Rees-Mogg advocated that the way to stop the Lords blocking the cuts was to appoint another 150 Tory peers on £300 a day!

Lord Newby said the Tories had "blocked the Liberals' efforts in the coalition government to end these powers and reform the House of Lords. And the Tories are now saying we can't use them anyway."

Varoufakis, asked to comment, said: "This is what I love about this country. It's the delicious contradictions and irony.

Unelected

"Here we have the unelected representatives of the established order, being told off by the elected representatives of the established order - for trying to look after the under-privileged, to prevent the end of tax credits.

"The idea that the way to preserve privilege - by attacking the unelected representatives of privilege against the elected representatives of privilege - is to flood the House of Lords with unelected representatives of privilege that are on the side of the elected ones - is fantastic."

Bill Mullins

Editorial of the Socialist, issue 876

Defend Corbyn campaign: 'Momentum' must mobilise for real and lasting change

The launch of Momentum is an attempt to give a political and organisational framework to Jeremy Corbyn's agenda for change.

Will it succeed? Only if it fully embraces all the anti-austerity forces, is open, democratic, accountable and reflects the urgent need to combat, not just in words but in deeds too, the government's vicious austerity programme.

This means mobilising for real and lasting change: in the Labour Party at all levels, in the workplaces and factories, pressurising councils not to implement cuts, through the trade unions, etc, as a precondition for changing society.

The Momentum leadership seemed to recognise this when they declared that the basis of their movement must come from "outside as well as inside the Labour Party".

However, clearly under pressure from the Labour right and their press, they have recently suggested that they now wish to narrow down the base of Momentum to just the Labour Party itself and with the prime aim of a Labour government in 2020.

If they exclude real fighters against austerity with experience on the ground - particularly Socialist Party supporters and others - they will weaken the ability of Corbyn and his forces to defeat the right. They will not succeed in fully harnessing the huge pro-Corbyn anti-austerity mood outside, which is not yet a real organised movement.

Battle

There is a real battle taking place, certainly on the part of the right who wish to contain and nullify the anti-austerity movement, and remain unreconciled to Corbyn's victory. Moreover, the leaders of Momentum can, perhaps unconsciously, assist them by pursuing a political charm offensive, proposing in effect 'peaceful coexistence' with the Labour right while the latter are preparing for all-out war.

There are also many seasoned trade unionists and fighters, workers and youth who, while supporting Corbyn in general, are at the same time in favour of the widest possible unity of left forces. Notwithstanding Corbyn's victory, they are still highly suspicious that his aims can be effectively implemented through a party still dominated by the unreconstructed right.

The Socialist Party shares their views, given the ceaseless attacks on Corbyn and his supporters. Even some Labour MPs who may claim not to stand on the right but the 'centre' have joined in the anti-Corbyn campaign, and in the process revealed their real political position.

For instance, in the Observer Labour MP John Cruddas, a former Labour 'policy chief', announced the creation of a new grouping 'Labour Together'. He states that the Labour Party "has got us into a situation in which a Tory chancellor looks more in tune with our Labour councils in the North than the Labour Party itself". The only interpretation that can be put on

these words is that 'Labour councils' in the North - and elsewhere - are fully "in tune" with Osborne because they are passing on his cuts.

Jeremy Corbyn won the Labour leadership contest because he articulated opposition to this and urged "Labour councils to stand together against the cuts". This can only mean: don't implement these cuts, which will only add to the already unbearable suffering of working class people.

No-cuts budgets

The Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) fundamentally disagree with this approach of Cruddas and most Labour MPs. We demand no-cuts, needs budgets along the lines of the Liverpool councillors in the 1980s.

Many workers would not agree to join and throw all their energies into the Labour Party while the changes that Corbyn articulated during his campaign have not been carried through. Nor would it be correct to hand over the precious funds of the trade union movement, through the affiliation of non-affiliated unions, before fundamental structural change has occurred. Corbyn could be overthrown in a coup by the Parliamentary Labour Party, in which his base is still extremely narrow.

The right are still in control of the Labour machine and will not hesitate to frustrate, delay and sabotage to prevent workers and young people joining to change the Labour Party.

They will not hesitate to expel those on the left - as they effectively did during the leadership campaign - those who come into collision with them, while they are imposing cuts on working people. Let us remember the expulsions in the past, for the 'crime' of opposing attacks on living standards of workers through the poll tax and the cuts: in Liverpool, the Militant Editorial Board, as well as others on the left.

Retreats

Unfortunately, the retreats undertaken so far by Jeremy Corbyn have encouraged rather than dissuaded the right from attacking him and his supporters. There have already been too many retreats by Corbyn: on tuition fees, on Europe - when Hillary Benn threatened to resign from the shadow cabinet, thereby forcing a retreat. There was also the flip-flop on Osborne's deficit charter, which was intended by Osborne to commit Labour to endless austerity.

This was followed by another potentially crippling blow to the 'new politics', when Corbyn declared emphatically that he was "crystal clear" in his opposition to the reintroduction of 'mandatory reselection' of Labour MPs. Right-wing Labour MPs up to now have been a law unto themselves - ignoring the growing opposition and anger of trade unionists, in particular, to their policies. They overwhelmingly supported Blair on Iraq, also voting for PFI and privatisation.

There has consequently been a hunger, both within and outside of the Labour Party, for real accountability, a desire to see socialist fighters as workers' representatives in Parliament. The models for this are those left Labour MPs in the past, like Dave Nellist, Pat Wall and Terry Fields - who went to jail for refusing to pay the poll tax - who stood on a worker's wage and fought to the end for the interests of the working class.

The bulk of Labour MPs under Blair, Brown and Miliband were apologists for capitalism, big business - and still are - supporting its demand for greater concessions while compounding the impoverishment of huge swathes of the working class.

Blairites' position clear

They have made their position very clear. Frank Field, inveterate right-wing Labour MP, openly boasted on television at the weekend that if Labour MPs are replaced in a reselection battle and then decide to stand against the Labour Party, he will support them against the official Labour candidate.

If such a statement had been made by the left in the past, this would have led automatically to expulsions. There have been no calls for Frank Field's expulsion. Yet the Labour right are already demanding that anybody who stood against Labour in past general elections should be excluded from membership.

The granddaughter of the late Tony Benn, Emily Benn, from the Labour right, has also called for the expulsion of Andrew Fisher, Corbyn's new Head of Policy, because of a few facetious remarks.

Peter Mandelson, Blair's infamous arch spin doctor - who is "intensely relaxed" about the rich - opposes Seamus Milne as Corbyn's press officer on the grounds of his "unsuitability". A child can see that this all adds up to a well-orchestrated right-wing conspiracy, taking in the majority of Labour MPs, in concert with the press, TV commentators, etc, to denigrate Corbyn and John McDonnell and prepare the ground for striking them down when they judge the time is ripe.

The strategy from the Momentum leaders to counter this is to subordinate everything to the election of a Corbyn-led government in 2020. This in turn means the left supporting right-wing figures, like Sadiq Khan for London mayor, even though he considers the best way to get elected is to systematically attack Jeremy Corbyn and the left.

This attempt to mollify the right will not succeed but it can help to demoralise and thereby disintegrate the forces that have begun to rally behind Corbyn and McDonnell. This would represent the loss of another favourable opportunity to change the labour movement in the battle against capitalism and its political representatives, the Tories and other forces that base themselves on outmoded capitalism. The political and organisational direction of the pro-Corbyn forces must be urgently discussed at all levels of the workers' movement.

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Hinkley deal - no point in nuclear

Geoff Jones and Kate Jones, Socialist Party Wales

The recent visit of Chinese Premier Xi Jinping seems to have sealed the deal on the Hinkley Point C nuclear reactor - a deal which is disastrous in every aspect.

First: cost. The reactor will be built by collaboration between Electricité de France (EDF) and the China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN). Ironically, both of these companies are state-owned. EDF claims that the final cost of the reactor will be £16 billion, with the Chinese paying one third.

The deal made by Chancellor George Osborne guarantees that Britain will buy electricity from them for 35 years at way above the likely market price, meaning that we will be paying a hidden subsidy over that period. This makes nonsense of any claim for nuclear as cheap, low carbon energy.

The figure of £16 billion is actually highly dubious - experts suggest the final cost will be nearer £25 billion. And in exchange for contributing a third of the Hinkley cost, it looks like the Chinese will get to trial their experimental Hualong reactor design at Bradwell in Essex.

There is currently not a single nuclear plant of the Hinkley type in operation anywhere. The two under construction in Finland and at Flamanville, France, are both running hugely over time and budget.

Flamanville was ordered in 2006 costing £4.6 billion, scheduled to start generating power in 2012. Its completion date is now 2020, with a final cost of over £15 billion.

In fact it may never be completed at all, as the pressure vessel that lies at the reactor's heart has been found to suffer from serious metallurgical flaws, meaning that cracks and even catastrophic failure are a real possibility.

Jobs?

Second: the effect on the UK economy. Thousands of jobs are promised.

But Britain lacks sufficient skilled workers to deliver Hinkley, according to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. Big business is not investing in skills through apprenticeships in any industry.

Third: safety. Radioactive waste will have to be stored for centuries. Radioactive leaks have occurred in the past, and are a risk in the future, while devising safe methods of storing radioactive waste is expensive and complex.

Sixty years on from Britain's first nuclear reactor at Windscale (now Sellafield) and with huge costs being incurred on "decommissioning" our aging nuclear power stations, the dream of cheap, safe, electricity from nuclear is dead. It is neither affordable nor safe.

Abandoning renewables

While the Tories embrace an expensive and risky nuclear future, dependent on other countries' economies, they are turning their backs on a successful renewables industry that they once heralded as the future of energy in Britain.

Massive 98% cuts in support for solar energy via reduced 'feed-in tariffs' (FiTs) threaten to wipe out our solar industry.

20,000 jobs are at risk through this, many of them in small and medium British-owned enterprises that the Tories claim to support. The savings to consumer fuel bills are, at best, negligible. According to The Ecologist a subsidy equivalent to £1 a year per household could save the solar industry.

The renewable sector - wind, solar, hydro - currently supplies 25% of Britain's electricity, and could supply far more. However, the UK renewables industry currently depends on attracting private investment - who would want to invest when the present government is so hostile?

As socialists, we say no to expensive and risky nuclear! We call for the nationalisation of the big energy companies, and for a national energy plan, including a programme of public investment in low-carbon energy production - solar, wind, tidal, geothermal and biomass - alongside guaranteed FiTs to support local community energy projects.

Condescending sugar tax debate misses real causes of poor diet

Iain Dalton

Taxing sugar has hit the headlines. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver backs calls for a 10 to 20% duty on high-sugar products.

After weeks of criticism, Tory health minister Jeremy Hunt released the report 'Sugar reduction: the evidence for action' on 22 October.

Poor diets are resulting in the growing prevalence of obesity and type-2 diabetes. But a sugar tax was just one of eight proposals in government agency Public Health England's report. Others include curbing advertising and supermarket promotions.

Some health experts suggest another of the proposals - 'reformulation' (changing recipes) - holds the key to tackling the crisis.

Some food companies have already reduced levels of sugar in their products. But this often means simply swapping sugar for another - sometimes controversial - sweetening additive. This doesn't address the underlying problem of over-producing food with little nutritional value because it's more profitable.

Moreover, only targeting high-sugar products misses out just how much sugar is used in other processed foods. This includes savoury products such as soups, ready meals, gravy - and even bread!

Many working class people will resent the paternalistic approach of taxation. The reality of our lives is often zero-hour contracts, low pay, long working hours and commutes. We frequently don't have the time or money to eat as we would wish.

Union

A shorter working week with no loss of pay was a historic demand of the trade union movement. Today, it would mean workers have time to prepare healthy meals.

Affordable workplace canteens serving nutritious food would lead to less reliance on fast food or packed lunches containing easy snacks.

The only way to fully control what we eat is to own it. The Socialist Party says: take big food production and distribution companies - alongside supermarkets - into public ownership, under democratic control.

First new grammar school in 50 years bolsters elitism

Beth Sutcliffe, Former grammar school student

Labour attempted to ban new grammar schools in 1998. The Tories have allowed one in Kent - by labelling it an 'expansion' of an existing school.

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan reassures the public it will be "one school, two sites". But they're nine miles apart?

The narrative of the grammar system is that it allows less-privileged but bright children to excel. But in reality, the '11-plus' entry exam often just tests who can afford a tutor and who can't.

I took the test when I was 11. There was a distinct impression that this was a way to sort children into a 'good' or 'bad' pile, with confidence-shattering consequences for those who didn't pass.

I ended up going to a girls' grammar school. Students were often reminded what a tiny minority we were because we passed the test, further instilling elitism.

Some fellow students had been to private primary schools. The system encourages the rich to condescend to state schools for their children's secondary education. Grammars tend to attract superior resources, both from councils and wealthy parents, at the expense of non-grammars.

Pressure

Unfortunately, the pressure schools are under to perform well at GCSE means surrounding comprehensives lose the highest-performing students. Lower attainment means more pressure on overworked teachers and support staff.

The new grammar in Kent has opened up the possibility of more elsewhere. But this is no opportunity for social mobility - only increased entrenchment of class divisions.

The Socialist Party fights for fully funded comprehensive education for all. Scrap the grammar and academy systems. Bring everyone the benefits of grammar school resources - without defining kids as successes or failures based on one test at 11.

Them & Us

Minimum wage storm

High street retail group Monsoon Accessorize was caught paying more than a quarter of its UK store staff below the minimum wage.

HM Revenue and Customs has named and shamed the firm as part of a list of 115 law breakers. In Monsoon's case, employees were required to wear the store's own clothes for work - which they had to buy. This brought net wages below the legal minimum.

The fashion company has been made to pay a total of £104,508 to 1,438 workers. But its fine for illegal poverty pay is a mere £28,148. The firm made over £18 million profit before tax in the financial year to 2013.

Monsoon is a founding member of the 'Ethical Trading Initiative' - strapline: "respect for workers worldwide".

Flight fit for a king

David Cameron spent over £100,000 flying to the funeral of human rights abuser King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia.

Return tickets from London to Riyadh in economy class cost from £464 a head. And last year, Cameron plus five flew to the G20 meetings in Australia - the opposite side of the planet - for just £13,290.

£101,792 to pay respect to a super-rich, unelected leader of a state which tortures and kills dissidents. That one trip would have paid four staff nurses' salaries for a year. NHS wards are currently dangerously understaffed.

But then staff nurses don't make Cameron's mates much money. British investments in Saudi Arabia total £9.8 billion. And who cares about human rights when the crude oil supply is at stake?

- **1** - Cameron's one £100k trip to the funeral of a serial human rights abuser in Saudi Arabia could have paid for...
 - **4** - full-time nurses for a year for our understaffed NHS, or...
 - **85** - FE students from low-paid households to receive a year's Education Maintenance Allowance - £30 a week for books and supplies
-

What we saw

This... is 'Workie'. Tory axeman Iain Duncan Smith spent £8.5 million on an ad campaign featuring a multicolour monster.

Why? The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) describes Workie as "a striking physical embodiment of the workplace pension".

Of course. What better way to communicate with adults about pensions than with a multi-million-pound computer-generated soft toy?

Duncan Smith's DWP has led the charge on barbaric cuts to jobs, welfare - and, yes, pensions.

Israeli government fans the flames of conflict

Yasha Marmer, Socialist Struggle Movement (CWI, Israel-Palestine)

Since the beginning of October, 58 Palestinians, ten Israelis and one asylum seeker from Eritrea have been killed. More than 4,000 Palestinians and more than 100 Israelis have been injured - many of the Palestinians during demonstrations.

This has been the deadliest month in the national conflict since the war on Gaza in summer 2014. The arrogant policy of "management of the conflict" of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is claiming more and more victims from both sides of the national schism.

During his first term as prime minister, Netanyahu cynically promised a "computer for every child". His fourth government today promises a gun to every Jewish citizen and a death penalty to every Palestinian suspect!

The relaxation by the ministry of interior of the terms to obtain weapons licences, alongside the call of ministers, mayors and police officers to the public to get armed, led to a 5,000% spike in applications for gun licences in two weeks!

Tragically, the range of the 'immediate suspects' is widening by the week: Arab-Palestinians, asylum seekers, Jews from Mizrahi Arab or Caucasus origin... everyone becomes a "potential terrorist" unless proven otherwise.

Government spokespersons, with generous help from the mainstream media, work extra hours justifying every bullet fired by the Israeli army, police and border police, while playing on the genuine security fears of the Jewish population.

Media propaganda

On 21 October, Jewish security guard Simha Hodedatov, originally from Dagestan, was shot dead by two Israeli soldiers in Jerusalem. The Israeli media chose to emphasise that during the confrontation between Hodedatov and the soldiers he allegedly yelled "I'm Daaesh" (Isis). The purpose of that emphasis - according to other reports he had shouted "Am I Daaesh?" - was clear: to justify the shooting.

In the case of Palestinian suspects, the 'justification' is automatic. This was the case with Asra Abed, a young Palestinian woman from Nazareth who was shot while surrounded by tens of armed security guards, police and soldiers, after automatically being labelled as a "terrorist".

A week later, a small article in a local paper reported that the police are seriously examining the option that the young woman didn't intend to carry out any attack. But this didn't make any headlines.

Before the case of Abed, there was the deadly shooting of Fady Alon, a Palestinian youth who was filmed trying to escape from a group of Jewish settlers after allegedly stabbing one of them during a fight. He was shot dead by a policeman, who is shown on video not making any effort to stop him first.

The Jewish terrorist who carried out a deadly attack on a gay pride march in Jerusalem two months ago and other Jewish terrorists from the recent period have been arrested by the police without causing them any harm. This is not a mistake, but a policy, and it's dictated from above.

Execution without trial

But the policies of execution without trial and licence to kill will not stop desperate individuals from conducting stabbings or running people over with vehicles. They also won't give a sense of security to Israeli Jews, and definitely not to Arab-Palestinians and non-Jews.

It's not surprising that Palestinian parents from Acre were afraid to let their kids go to a theatre play in Tel Aviv and cancelled the trip. In parallel, a number of schools in Tel Aviv cancelled trips to Jerusalem.

The direction that society is being dragged in by the government was shown horrifically during a terror attack in the bus station in Beer Sheva and a lynching immediately afterwards.

Habtom Zarhum, an asylum seeker from Eritrea, who was in the bus station during the terror attack was shot by security guards and then lynched due to the colour of his skin. He paid with his life for the government's incitement and scaremongering.

On 21 October the police arrested four suspects for involvement in the lynching. Two of them are prison service officers. The next day all of them were freed on bail.

Netanyahu

In contrast, young Palestinian citizens of Israel from Haifa, Acre, Jaffa and elsewhere have spent long days and nights in police custody only for posting Facebook messages calling for people to take part in protest marches against the occupation and government policies.

Netanyahu and defence minister Ayalon tried to shake off any responsibility for the lynching and called on citizens not to take the law into their own hands. But the lynch mob was acting in accordance with the message coming from the Knesset (Israeli parliament), the defence ministry, prime minister's office, and from the ranks of the Knesset 'opposition'.

The mob, particularly the two prison officers, implemented the new semi-official policy: execution without trial of every (non-Jewish) suspect of terrorism.

The government has reacted to the conflict escalation - that it itself has fuelled - with more and more repression against Palestinians in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Waves of arrests (including of children), collective punishments, reducing gun regulations, setting up checkpoints and deployment of troops to Palestinian neighbourhoods in east Jerusalem, did not calm the situation.

Instead they pushed more desperate young Palestinians towards the destructive path of indiscriminate attacks against Jews.

Nationalism

According to a Knesset TV channel poll (22 October), 72% of Israelis are not satisfied with 'the way Netanyahu deals with the current terror wave'. His promises to "bring back calm" haven't been realised.

According to a previous poll by the same channel, 68% don't believe that a 'centre-left' government headed by Labour Party leader Issac Herzog or Yair Lapid (leader of Yesh Atid) would do any better.

This is not surprising, as the heads of the Knesset opposition have supported the catastrophic policies of the right and haven't proposed any alternative.

Although among Israeli Jews there is a rise in nationalism and support for the right, sections of the population are drawing the conclusion that none of the establishment parties can offer a way out from the constant state of war.

The government doesn't have and can't have any military solution to the national conflict; it just makes it worse. Even the military Chief of Staff, Gadi Eizenkot, admitted on Israel's channel 2: "There's no clear military solution to this kind of challenge" (21 October).

The present national and religious tensions have built up over a period of time, to a large extent under the influence of flare-ups at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound in Jerusalem.

There has been an escalation in the campaign of Jewish religious fanatics, with backing from elements of the regime, to fan a religious war regarding the compound. Lying behind this is the aspiration to perpetuate the occupation and to "Judaise" east Jerusalem through expropriation of Palestinian families' homes for the benefit of settlers.

In a number of areas, Palestinians, mostly young, have demonstrated against the provocation at the Al Aqsa and the occupation. So far these protests haven't had mass participations, except for funerals.

Mass movement?

This signals that it's not yet a new intifada in the sense of a popular mass uprising - like it was during the first intifada and in the first period of the second intifada before it deteriorated, tragically, to a series of military confrontations and terror acts.

However, a popular mass movement is necessary, democratically run, and needs to be accompanied by the building of joint struggle between Jews and Arabs against escalation of the conflict, indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the policies of the government.

Also, crucially, this struggle needs to aim to mobilise wide layers in society to oppose the root causes of the problem: the occupation and settlements, the discrimination and national oppression, and the capitalist system.

These must be met with a political alternative: the building of left political forces of Jews and Arabs that put forward a socialist programme.

The above, followed by a longer article can be read at socialistworld.net/doc/7379

CWI news in brief

Sweden: CWI members' homes and office fire bombed

On 24 October the homes of several members of Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna (CWI, Sweden) as well as a party office in Gothenburg were fire bombed. Fortunately no one was injured but it took firefighters several hours to put the fires out. Only four hours later Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna (RS) organised a meeting against the attack with over 70 people attending.

These attacks follow on from the recent horrific racist attack on a school in Trollhättan, as well as arson attacks on six different proposed or existing refugee housing facilities over the past fortnight, and just weeks after the extreme-right Sweden Democrats called on its supporters to take their racist struggle against immigration onto the streets. RS members have instigated an all-night defence patrol, as well as a public meeting and protest event. Support

for the party has been impressive. "Now is our time to stand up for RS, that has stood up for us all these years," a women said.

South Africa: Tuition fees victory

Huge protests by university students in South Africa have halted the ANC government's planned hike in tuition fees. Members of the Workers and Socialist Party (Wasp - led by CWI, South Africa) and the Socialist Youth Movement (SYM), helped mobilise for the mass student demonstration to the government's Union Buildings in Pretoria on 23 October.

There, ANC president Jacob Zuma was forced to meet a delegation of students and scrap any increase in fees for next year. However, the demand for free education remains. Wasp and SYM have called for an escalation of the action; a national assembly of all student leaders to form a new mass democratic, accountable student organisation, and for a mass workers' party on a socialist programme.

Hong Kong: Defending election campaign

Members of Socialist Action (SA - CWI, Hong Kong), assisted by 50 local residents, resisted Police and Highways Department officials removing flags and banners supporting Sally Tang Mei-ching's (SA candidate) election campaign (while ignoring the pro-government side's flags and posters nearby).

Sally's election opponent was seen spying in his parked car while police and authorities tried to close SA's activity down. However a crowd of local residents prevented police from arresting Sally and her team, amid cheers when police agreed to pull back!

As angry students flood the streets again

What are the lessons of the 2010 student movement?

Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser

Five years ago, Britain's streets erupted in mass student protests. This short but furiously energetic wave of resistance represented the first rounds fired in the battle against Tory austerity.

Now, as thousands are again preparing to march in defence of education, the shadow of 2010 looms large. The student protest on 4 November is part of the continuation of that struggle, one which must now be re-embarked on with fresh determination.

But as we participate in and organise the fightback today, it is worth re-examining the history of the 2010 student movement - a history which can provide valuable lessons for those of us engaged in the battle for free, decent education now.

Austerity unleashed

The first trigger for this movement came on 12 October 2010 when Lord Browne, who had been commissioned by the last Labour government to review higher education funding, gave his recommendations.

His report argued that the cap on tuition fees (at the time just over £3,000) should be lifted entirely, allowing for universities to charge as much as they wished, while removing almost all state funding for higher education.

This report came just one week before the Con-Dem government revealed its first comprehensive spending review and austerity unleashed. Among the many vicious cuts announced, was a particularly vindictive attack on college students.

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which had been a grant of up to £30 a week available to 16-18 year olds to support their studies, was to be scrapped.

While stopping short of implementing the entirety of Browne's report, the government decided to triple the cap on what universities could charge to £9,000 a year.

The Lib-Dems, whose defining election pledge had been their promise to abolish tuition fees, were now wedded to the Tories in the unholy matrimony of coalition government. Their abject betrayal on this issue and others came at the cost of the electoral wipe-out witnessed this year.

Mounting pressure

The leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) was, at the time, almost entirely dominated by arch-Blairites and right-wing careerists. The organisation had recently abandoned a principled opposition to tuition fees and its support for free education.

But, under the weight of the impending onslaught and mounting pressure from below, even this right-wing and bureaucratic organisation felt compelled to act.

A national student demonstration was called by NUS for 10 November. And it was on this day that the boiling anger of a generation bubbled over onto the streets.

Over 50,000 young people massed in central London. Many thousands came on coaches from universities organised by student unions. But thousands more, particularly those from schools and colleges, had organised themselves to attend the march independently.

This layer of college students formed one of the most dynamic and audacious groups involved in the movement. As the demonstration assembled it quickly became clear that what had been unleashed was way beyond anything NUS's stale leadership had expected.

On the march, the air was heavy with the feverish excitement of a generation of young people feeling, for the first time, their own collective strength. 'Tory scum, here we come', was among the most popular chants.

At a number of points the demonstration stopped completely and everyone began 'just making noise' - simply enjoying the feeling of being part of huge crowd of people all fighting back.

The official leadership of the movement, particularly Aaron Porter, the NUS president, were utterly unprepared for the enormous anger and determination of those who attended the protest. They had no plan for what would come next, save for a campaign of letter writing to MPs - politely asking that they leave education alone.

There wasn't even a rally to end the march, which ended on Millbank, right outside Tory party HQ. It was therefore hardly surprising that many students, clearly wanting more than what they were offered by their official leaders, saw the opportunity to target the Tories' offices. Hundreds took part in an occupation of the building.

This action was bold, but it was also disorganised and spontaneous. To be fully effective occupations must be mass actions based on democratic decisions and control of tactics, organised and stewarded with a clear set of demands.

Smashed lives

This could have prevented actions like that of the one person who mistakenly, and potentially dangerously, dropped a fire extinguisher from the Millbank roof.

Disgracefully, when Aaron Porter was interviewed that evening he condemned the students who occupied Tory HQ, arguing that the "smashed windows" meant the protest was wrong.

But, while breaking windows is not an effective strategy for defeating Tory austerity, it represents very minor damage when you compare it to the smashed lives that have resulted from their brutal cuts.

While NUS's substantial resources and authority clearly contributed to the mass character of the demonstration on 10 November, after Millbank, this organisation played no role in any of the protests, strikes and walkouts that followed.

Unlike the official leadership of the movement, Socialist Students was clear on the necessary next steps to take.

We handed out over 10,000 leaflets on the march calling for students to walk out of their schools, colleges and universities in two weeks' time, on 24 November - an action supported by a number of student campaigns and organisations.

This call was taken up enthusiastically by the thousands who attended the protests. Nationally, it is estimated that over 100,000 students took part in the strikes and protests which took place on this date.

Again, it was college students who took a lead in these actions - self-organising huge walkouts and, in many cases, losing a week's EMA as a result.

Victimisation of individual protesters and sometimes very brutal police repression were a feature of the movement.

On 24 November thousands of protesters in London were 'kettled' and held for over 10 hours. This underlined the need for greater organisation on the demonstrations, both to enhance their effectiveness and to protect protestors against police violence.

Out of these actions, and the clear need for co-ordination and democratic discussion, new organisational forms began to emerge.

Getting organised

The 'London Student Assembly', which brought together student campaigns and left groups from around the city, took on a semi-national role in deciding the actions and slogans of the movement.

Socialist Students participated in this and other co-ordinating bodies around the country.

In order to try and see off this mounting rebellion as quickly as possible, the Con-Dem government decided to rush the legislation through parliament.

Once the date was set for the vote to take place in the House of Commons, it immediately became the focus for the movement with a mass protest and student walkout organised for this day.

Despite mass protests, the government was able to force the fee rise through parliament, paving the way for the £9,000 a year which students are now faced with.

While this by no means represented a full-stop, the lack of a national organisation with the authority to put forward a clear strategy for continuing and developing the fight, meant that the movement's energy and enthusiasm gradually began to dissipate.

But one thing that could have made a crucial difference to the outcome of this struggle was the role of the trade union leaders. Indeed, if the unions, whose members were supportive of the student protests, had acted to organise their members to fight austerity as well as supporting the students' campaign against fees, things could have been very different.

The huge potential for this was made crystal clear in the enormous 750,000 strong, trade union demonstration that took place in London on 26 March 2011.

Had this march taken place a few months earlier, especially as part of a campaign building up to mass, co-ordinated strike action, then the might of the working class could have been brought to bear on the situation. This could have transformed the outcome of the student movement and, indeed, the whole course of the last five years.

Working class

The need for students to unite and fight alongside workers and trade unions is a lesson that remains extremely relevant in today's struggles. Unlike students, workers have huge potential economic power - demonstrated most clearly during strike action.

Organising around a clear political alternative to austerity is also paramount.

The 4 November student demonstration benefits in confidence from the endorsement of Jeremy Corbyn, whose leadership election was won on the basis of offering a clear break with pro-austerity New Labour.

Indeed, Corbyn's pledge to support the abolition of tuition fees and the return of student grants was undoubtedly a major factor in him garnering the support of tens of thousands of enthusiastic young people.

As the right-wing parliamentary Labour Party move to try and undermine this key policy and others, it's clear that his supporters need to be organised. Student struggle can play a part in this.

This underlines the importance of building and escalating the fight against the Tories' latest wave of attacks, including their removal of the remaining student maintenance grants. We need to build a mass student movement, organised on every campus and college and linked with workers and trade unions in struggle.

Socialist Students fully supports the call made by the new NUS NEC for a student strike in 2016. We urge our members and supporters to pass motions asking that NUS initiate this ballot for strike action through their student unions as soon as possible.

Student strike

But, in order to mobilise such a strike, a mass movement must begin to be built now. Socialist Students is taking initiatives on campuses country-wide to build anti-austerity and free education campaigns.

A good example of this is Yorkshire, where Leeds for Free Education built an excellent regional demonstration which took place on 24 October.

The International Students Campaign has called for a day of walkouts and protests on 17 November, in solidarity with refugees and against the government's racist immigration policies. Socialist Students will support and mobilise for this.

Clearly, this latest national demo will need to be built upon and followed up with meetings, protests, occupations and walkouts on every campus building momentum towards a potential student strike in February 2016.

In particular, Socialist Students is calling for a day of action on 25 November, the day of the government's next spending review and likely announcement of a new round of austerity. Socialist Students is willing to work with all those who wish to help build such a movement.

Join us and get involved. We say:

- Abolish fees - tax the rich to fund free education
- Stop all cuts and privatisation - kick big business out
- Living grants for college and university students

- Make our campuses zero-hour contract free zones - all workers deserve secure jobs paid at least a minimum wage of £10 an hour
 - Cap and slash rents, university accommodation must be affordable for all
 - For an education system that's fully funded, publically owned, democratically run and universally free at all levels - a socialist education system
 - For a socialist society for the 99% free from all exploitation, war and oppression
-

**National student demo. Wednesday 4 November.
Assemble 12pm Malet Street, central London**

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Rally speakers include Helen Pattison, London Youth Fight for

South African student solidarity demo humbles diplomat and cops

Mark Best

The power of protest was clear on 23 October. Angry students gave orders to a senior diplomat and prevented the arrest of a peaceful demonstrator.

Over 200 demonstrated in central London in solidarity with South African students fighting tuition fee hikes.

South Africans studying in Britain who wanted to support the struggle back home organised the event. Others taking inspiration from student militancy in South Africa joined them.

The upbeat, confident mood of the demonstration was clear to see. Students marched through the streets, blocking traffic while singing and dancing.

Demands

On reaching the South African high commission (embassy), marchers demanded the high commissioner come out to receive their demands. They weren't going to take no for an answer!

The demonstration's size and energy eventually forced the high commissioner out. He was made to sit on the street. Organisers read him demands for free education and an end to privatisation.

Police then tried to arrest one of the marchers for climbing the building. The demonstration surrounded officers until they released the peaceful protester.

In South Africa, mass protests of students and workers have made President Jacob Zuma halt the fee rise (see page 14). In London, a high commissioner had to leave his cushy office and was humbled.

Imagine the power of protest when linked to co-ordinated strikes against cuts, fees and sell-offs.

Students march in Leeds for free education

Around 100 Leeds students stopped city centre traffic on 24 October as we marched for free education.

A rally kicked off the demonstration with speakers from the GMB union, the Green Party who pledged to support the campaign and a passionate speech from Socialist Students' Lilly Green. The reception from the public was fantastic.

To end the rally Sarah Gilborn, vice president for welfare at Leeds Beckett University spoke on how student leaders need to contribute to the fight-back and the secretary of Leeds Fight for Free Education, Socialist Party member Mary Finch gave a fitting closing speech.

A meeting afterwards was packed out with 33 attendees and there were lots of contributions on how we practically go forward with the fight.

Amy Cousens, Leeds Fight for Free Education

Steel industry and the battle for jobs

The massive job cuts and plant closures in the UK's steel industry reflect the underlying fragility of the capitalist world economy. But workers and the affected communities don't have to accept the inevitability of cutbacks. Through the trade unions a fightback can be organised which puts centre stage the need for nationalisation of the industry and a socialist plan of production.

Socialist Party members have been campaigning to pull together a fighting working class response.

A community facing an uncertain future

Rob Parrish, Socialist Party Scunthorpe

I've been hard at work campaigning in support of the Tata steel workers in Scunthorpe who are facing job losses.

Scunthorpe already has a high level of unemployment so the 1,200 job cuts between the steel plants in Scunthorpe and Lanarkshire could be the death knell for our community.

Fortunately the community has come out to support the faltering steel industry with demos, posters in every shop window, and banners at football games reading: "Save Our Steel".

The Tory leader of North Lincolnshire Council has welcomed her government's promised £9 million to 'retrain' former steel workers. But retraining them for what? £9 million for the redevelopment of a post-industrial town like Scunthorpe, is nothing.

I've been in Scunthorpe's town centre collecting signatures for a Stand Up For Steel petition. Someone asked me who I blame for the steel crisis, I told him that I blamed the system and the constant drive to chase after profit. He told me he didn't think much of Labour as an alternative to the Tories.

On the first Saturday I petitioned there were a lot of steelworkers who came out to join us and some brought their families along.

The second Saturday seemed to consist more of activists than workers. Charlotte Upton, a steelworker and Unite union rep who has been in negotiations, urged people to chant "Save our Steel"!

A rep of the train drivers' union Aslef talked about the ramifications of job losses on other industries. Local Labour MP Nic Dakin turned out to show his support.

Other activists discussed the need to bring the steel industry back under public ownership, a suggestion which was met with applause from the crowd.

On Thursday 22 October me and two other Socialist party members from Sheffield set up a Socialist Party stall. I have never seen a stall so busy. We had to go back to the car to pick up more copies of the Socialist as we kept selling out.

Our petition, which was more specifically about nationalising the steel industry, received a lot of support.

Following the stall we then gave out Socialist Party leaflets to steelworkers coming off shift calling for nationalisation of the steel industry.

Solidarity with those fighting to keep their jobs in Scunthorpe, Lanarkshire and Redcar.

Workers' action and nationalisation needed

Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland

The Socialist Party Scotland's campaign for nationalisation of the steel industry, in the wake of the threatened closure of steelworks in Motherwell (Dalzell) and Cambuslang (Clydebridge), has received a massive response from the affected working class communities.

Our stalls in Motherwell, Glasgow and Paisley have been regularly mobbed, with hundreds signing our petition demanding that the Scottish National Party (SNP) government save jobs by nationalising the plants. Hundreds have bought copies of the Socialist, and thousands of leaflets have been distributed.

We have also leafleted shifts at both plants. There exists a mood for a fightback in the communities, if only a lead was given by the trade unions. Frustratingly, this has yet to take place.

Nobody expects anything from the Tory Westminster government, but the SNP - which has not yet ruled out nationalisation but has stated its preference for finding a private buyer - is becoming a target of anger and frustration.

One steelworker's partner told SPS activists leafleting the Motherwell plant: "I joined the SNP after the [independence] referendum. Me and all my pals voted for them in May when Labour got a kicking. We thought the SNP stood up to big companies in the referendum for the working class, but what are they doing about this? This has been going around for months about Tata pulling out. Nicola [Sturgeon - SNP First Minister] needs to act now, if they can't nationalise these plants how can they convince anyone of independence?"

The statements of the leaders of the trade unions, Community and Unite, have rightly called for the Westminster and Scottish governments to intervene but this has not been a clear call for nationalisation.

A mass fightback called by the trade unions could link up the fight of the steelworkers and against austerity locally.

The Labour council in North Lanarkshire should set a 'no cuts' budget and refuse to implement austerity, mobilising a mass campaign in support. Such a stance should demand support from Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, elected on an anti-austerity ticket,

Full article on www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Looking after number one

Weeks before the official announcement of job losses, a Community Union representative contacted our local radio station to call for lower electricity charges and business rates for the steel industry in order to save jobs at the Scunthorpe Tata steel plant.

The union rep declared that local councillors were also backing this call. This was just before Tory Chancellor Osborne's budget which included a cheaper rate for energy bills for large business consumers of energy.

Peerage

Around the same time Liz Redfern, Tory leader of North Lincolnshire Council, was questioned on local radio regarding her plan to cut council jobs and workers' pay, terms and conditions. Only weeks before the official announcement of steel job losses at Scunthorpe David Cameron made Redfern a Baroness!

Back in November 2004, the local Scunthorpe Telegraph newspaper, under the headline Rates Blow For Leader, declared that: "The new acting leader of North Lincolnshire Council has not paid business rates for her company for almost ten years...

"The district valuers office confirmed it would not be able to get the couple [Liz Redfern and her husband] to repay any of the money, as the law states arrears could only be backdated to the beginning of this financial year, which started in April" [2004].

Amid the uproar of an estimated 25,000 jobs disappearing in Humberside due to the knock on effects of axed steel jobs, Cameron sneakily handed Baroness Liz Redfern the job of heading the new Tory 'task force' - to direct the retraining of the jobless for jobs that do not exist!

Janet Gibson, Socialist Party Humberside

For a fighting and democratic Unison general secretary, vote Roger Bannister

Socialist Party member Roger Bannister is standing for election as general secretary of Unison.

Roger, Unison branch secretary in Knowsley, is a lifelong socialist and anti-austerity activist who has committed to mobilise opposition to the attacks coming from this vicious Tory government.

Recently Roger has condemned the actions of both Hull and North Lanarkshire councils for their attacks on trade unions and workers.

Speaking about Hull City Council's decision to make five full time union convenors redundant (see left) Roger said: "I have always been prepared to work alongside Labour councillors who opposed cuts in words and deeds in the council chamber. I welcomed the election of Jeremy Corbyn as a great step forward for the anti-austerity movement. Hull councillors should follow his message. I also ask Jeremy Corbyn to intervene directly to support the unions."

North Lanarkshire has announced plans to axe 1,100 jobs (10% of its workforce). Roger has expressed solidarity with Unison members in North Lanarkshire and committed to fight attacks and cuts like these if elected.

Roger has said: "Unison cannot carry on as it is, punching below its weight, while members live daily with the threat of redundancy and cuts to pay and conditions."

If you are a Unison member and agree that Unison needs a fighting strategy to beat the cuts and win victories for members, we urge you to vote for Roger Bannister.

Ballot papers will be hitting doorsteps from 9 November and voting closes 4 December.

Follow the campaign at:

- @Roger4UNISON
- facebook.com/roger4gensec
- roger4gensec.wordpress.com

Morrisons workers deserve fair pay and conditions

Below, a Morrisons Usdaw union rep gives their personal take on the current pay offer which Usdaw is recommending.

Socialist Party members in Usdaw believe that Morrisons workers should reject this pay offer and demand that the union negotiating committee fights to retain premium payments.

Given that companies are due to be forced by the government's new 'living wage' to pay £7.20 an hour to over 25s (rising to £9) it is entirely possible that over the next few years pay could again be restrained like over the past period with the pay rate hovering slightly above the minimum wage once more.

Udaw should actively support and campaign for the TUC's demand of a minimum wage for all of £10 an hour.

Retail has historically been low paid. So on the surface Usdaw negotiating Morrisons staff a wage increase from the basic rate of £6.83 to the dizzying heights of £8.20, taking them over the so-called living wage, seems like more than a fair deal.

That is the coverage that is in the media. The reality is a double edged sword. The new wage deal sees the end of the company's Sunday premium currently paid at time and a half, ironic when Usdaw the 'Campaigning Union', that organises predominately in the retail sector, is fighting the government's propositions to deregulate Sunday trading.

In trading away the Sunday premium, is Morrisons preparing for it to become a normal working day or accepting it already is one?

The Sunday premium isn't where it ends either. Overtime, and late and early premiums are being scrapped. Forklift drivers and cafe cooks will see their supplements disappear. People who started with the company after December 2013 will only receive service rewards at five year intervals.

Finally, paid breaks will disappear taking the working week down to 36.5 hours (39 hours minus paid breaks).

The concern of many rank and file Usdaw reps within Morrisons (who don't negotiate pay, apart from a select committee who sit with the National Officer) is that terms and conditions are being traded away for a higher rate of pay, and given the government's attack on working tax credits and benefit cuts, are members realistically going to be any better off? Many Usdaw members in Morrisons are part-time student workers, and some only work a Sunday.

Of course for some people who don't work late, early, or on Sundays it's understandable why they might be excited about the offer. But how long before they are expected to work late, early and on Sundays?

Usdaw however is recommending that members accept the company's offer. Many members are asking why. Surely a trade union fights to strengthen its members terms and conditions?

It's not difficult to understand members' or even non-members' apathy towards the union when you look deeply into what is being offered, and a perceived lack of any sort of a challenge from Usdaw officials. They just seem concerned with recruiting new members.

Usdaw needs to remind itself that recruitment is only a part of organising, and it is unlikely to recruit new members or organise the ones it has if it keeps trading away terms and conditions without so much as a fight.

Who's next: Tesco, Sainsbury's? Where's the next new member coming from? Because the old question is more than likely: 'What is the union going to do for me?' And with deals like this even the most dedicated reps and trade unionists are struggling to answer that one.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 26 October 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Hull council in aggressive attack on union convenors

Hull City Council, run by Labour, is pre-empting the Tories' trade union bill by issuing a redundancy notice known as a '188 notice' which threatens the council's five full time union convenors.

As Mike Whale, Chair of Hull City Council trade unions has said: "The proposal to halve the convenors' time is a determined attempt to behead the workforce as the council prepares to implement the Tories' brutal cuts."

Cuts

Earlier this year Hull City Council passed a budget which will mean cuts of £48 million to services over the next two years with a loss of up to 500 jobs. Sitting alongside the cuts package in Hull is the likelihood of mass privatisation of council services.

This might be to private companies or through social enterprises. Alternatively it could be to council owned 'arms-length' companies. Whichever way, the outsourced services will mean that it will be easier to cut. Privatisation will also make it easier to further attack workers' terms and conditions and pay.

Unison Hull branch has claimed that Hull City Council is even proposing to cut the trade union convenor posts based on incorrect membership figures.

It is to be expected that a Tory government would attack the unions but it should be expected that a Labour-led local authority and Labour councillors defend workers' and union rights.

The council should follow the lead of Jeremy Corbyn and fight back on behalf of one of the poorest cities in the country against the anti-trade union bill, cuts and austerity.

Demonstrate outside Parliament on 2 November and strike together to...

Kill the Bill!

Rob Williams, Chair, National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN)

The TUC lobby of Parliament on 2 November needs to mark a major change in the fight against the Tory anti-trade union bill. There is speculation that its third and final reading could be as soon as 16 November. That date must be in the diary of every trade union member for a mass demonstration in London.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has been to the forefront of the 'Kill the Bill' campaign. We brought hundreds of union activists and reps to lobby Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Brighton in September. That conference passed resolutions calling for a mass campaign against the bill and co-ordinated industrial action if it becomes law.

In particular, the RMT motion called for 'generalised' strike action. That demand must be the banner of this struggle and the whole membership of the trade union movement must be mobilised behind it.

Response

The response of the TUC and many of the unions has been totally insufficient to a bill that could be law in a matter of weeks. The full implications of it must be explained to union members, their friends, families and their communities. It has been presented at the same time as another brutal Tory cuts offensive precisely because Cameron and Osborne know full well that it is the union movement, with over six million members, that has the potential power to be the biggest barrier to their austerity agenda. A mass demonstration on 16 November followed by strike action would see the realisation of this power and defeat this bill.

This trade union bill is the biggest attack on union rights since Thatcher's anti-union laws three decades ago. A fat cat government that was elected by a mere 24% of the electorate wants to impose voting thresholds on unions, thresholds that if applied to elections would mean hardly a councillor would be elected anywhere in the country!

Under the Tories, it's always one law for the rich and another for the rest - tax cuts for them, vicious cuts for us. Now it's one set of voting rules for the unions that don't apply to the politicians!

But that is only the start. This bill enshrines attacks on union facility-time, doubles strike notice period, puts time limits on disputes, legalises scabbing and opens the door to the arrest of peaceful pickets.

Fighting programme

The removal of check-off - the deduction of union membership subs from wages - is also part of the package in an attempt to bankrupt the unions. But the PCS civil servants' union, singled out by the Tories before the general election, has already shown that if the unions are prepared to take on this challenge with a fighting programme, it can be won. They have faced down the Tory attack by signing up 90% of members to direct debit this year!

The unions have to take a fighting stance against the bill. This isn't an all-powerful government. They sneaked in to power but now want to push on with their cuts and anti-union plans. But they have already been met with growing opposition. The London tube strike over the summer shut the capital down, showing again the power of the organised working class. The victory of the PCS National Gallery workers after a heroic struggle of over 100 days of strike action has been an inspiration. Now the junior doctors have burst onto the streets and are balloting for strike action against Jeremy Hunt's new contract and students are also again on the march.

Jeremy Corbyn was victorious in the Labour Party leadership contest because he rode a mass anti-austerity wave which was reflected in huge anti-austerity demonstrations in London in June and in Manchester in October outside the Tory Party conference.

Tax credits

The defeat of the Tories' tax credits cuts was in reality because of the fear about the anger of low-paid workers. What would a mass movement led by the unions achieve?

This shows that if the unions take decisive action against the trade union bill and link it to the cuts, they could lead a mass movement against the Tories.

If the streets of Westminster were full on 16 November, warning Cameron that there would be a 24-hour general strike if the bill was passed, the Tories could be forced to back down. That is the message that needs to be taken back from the 2 November lobby.

Come back to London on 16 November for a mass demonstration to defeat the bill and also prepare for mass strike action if it's passed.

Southampton NSSN Kill the Bill campaign

Trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners came together in Southampton to hear Rob Williams, chair of the NSSN, outline the implications of the Tories' new anti-trade union legislation. Also Declan Clune, Unison steward (personal capacity), outlined the problems facing workers in the public sector suffering the impact of cuts and the important role of the NSSN in bringing together activists in the trade unions and the community to build joint campaigns and solidarity action. Rob emphasised that "this is a weak government facing a potential mass movement of trade unions with the power to resist further cuts." The meeting agreed to organise transport from the local area for the TUC lobby on 2 November and continue building wider support for the anti-austerity movement and the work of the NSSN.

Nick Chaffey, Hampshire NSSN

North West Kill the Bill meetings

Organising to Kill the Bill, public NSSN meetings in the North West:

Manchester

Tuesday 3 November, 7pm, Britons Protection, 50 Great Bridgewater Street, M1 5LE.
Speakers include Daren Ireland, RMT regional organiser.

Liverpool

Tuesday 3 November, 7.30pm, Casa Pub, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BQ. Speakers include Dave Walsh, president of Liverpool trades council and Aaron Borbora, deputy chair of the BMA junior doctors committee.

Workplace news in brief

Diagnosis: angry

5,000 junior doctors descended on Newcastle from across the North East on 24 October. They were quite rightfully angry at the attacks on their terms and conditions by Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt. For many, this was the first demonstration they have attended, but what was noticeable was their eagerness to fight this injustice. Some commented that they were "surrounded by socialists" but they were more than happy for us to join them in their struggle and the public applauded the march as it entered the city centre.

A speech at the beginning giving solidarity from the National Shop Stewards Network received cheers and a round of applause. This will hopefully be a stepping stone in building the resistance against these attacks in Newcastle and across the country.

Ballot papers for industrial action over the proposed new contract for junior doctors in England will be sent out on 5 November.

Paul Phillips

DLR dispute

The RMT has confirmed that over 300 staff across all grades on Keolis Amey Docklands Light Railway in London have voted by massive majorities for both strike action and action short of a strike. The dispute is over a range of serious unresolved issues that are wrecking industrial relations. Over 92% voted to strike with an even larger majority for action short of a strike. RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said: "Our members on DLR are furious at the way that Keolis/Amey are trying to bulldoze in some of the worst working practices and conditions in the transport sector and that anger is reflected in these ballot results. We will not sit back and allow this aggressive and bullying culture to develop on this key part of London's transport network."

Get the latest union news...with the National Shop Stewards Network bulletin

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Film review: Suffragette

A partial view of working class women's fight for the vote

Helen Pattison

Suffragette tells the story of Maud Watts, a working class laundry woman in east London. Overworked and tired she is sent to the West End to deliver a package. Suddenly women start smashing the windows of shops on Oxford Street - it's the first time Maud has seen suffragettes in action.

Assaulted and mistreated by her boss, she is politicised by her experiences of inequality. Working longer hours for less pay than her husband, she is swept into the suffrage movement. Maud's politicisation replicates that of thousands of working women at that time.

'New unionism'

In east London the match women's strike had recently happened and was still having ramifications in the wave of 'new unionism' that followed it. Semi-skilled and casualised workers flooded into the trade union movement. And as well as building trade unions, working class women and men were organising politically against poverty and inequality.

At first Maud is reluctant to join the suffragettes or get involved, believing the fight is impossible to win. But after being arrested on her first protest by the police and when her husband reacts badly to her politics, she is spurred on.

The film tracks huge losses in Maud's life because of her political beliefs, losses that many wealthier women didn't experience.

This inequality between rich and poor women in the movement is exposed when an MP's wife is bailed from prison leaving the other women from the protest to suffer at the hands of the police. In the end Maud loses everything for the cause, including her job, marriage, and her young son.

Political revolution

While it's brilliant to see a working class perspective of the suffrage movement, there are still some big gaps in the film. It misses the political revolution that was happening in the East End. The other women in the laundry are presented as against Maud and her politics, shunning her inside and outside of the workplace. But many working class people were organising and resisting inequality and poverty.

Maud's husband doesn't support her politics and is derogatory about the suffragette movement. Many, even unionised men, would have held the same view. It took effort to shift the trade union movement towards support for equality for women in all areas.

For example, unions such as the National Union of Teachers didn't officially support the demand for equal pay until 1919. Although, around the same time as the film is set the National Federation of Women Teachers was agitating for equal pay and to remove the marriage bar on women teachers.

All of this is missed in the film and the politicisation that Maud goes through is presented as very isolated. She meets up with a small group of mainly middle class suffragettes in secret. Through these women she is pulled away from her workplace and home and convinced of the individual direct action that the suffragettes are still remembered for now.

In reality working class women didn't just follow behind the middle classes in these types of actions. Particularly in the cotton mills in the north of England, working women were organising collectively, including through strike action, for the right to vote.

Why the vote?

Selina Cooper, an activist in the movement in Lancashire, said that working class women like herself "do not want their political power to enable them to boast that they are on equal terms with the men. They want to use it for the same purpose as men, to get better conditions..."

"Every women in England is longing for her political freedom in order to make the lot of the worker pleasanter and to bring about reforms which are wanted."

This would clearly have been the main motivation for women like Maude but the point isn't brought out in Suffragette.

The film ends just after Emily Davidson is killed trying to raise the suffragettes' banner in front of the king's horse, showing that this was a pivotal moment for the movement.

It was only a year before this that Sylvia Pankhurst set up the east London federation of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) which was more democratic than other sections of the WSPU.

Pankhurst, a socialist who visited Russia after the revolution, wanted to maintain the links between the suffrage movement and the labour movement, making it a political and industrial struggle. She saw that the vote was one part of the struggle that needed to be waged in the fight for equality for women.

Mass action

One character comments in the film that "even Sylvia Pankhurst" is against her mother and sister's advocacy of individual militancy. The suggestion is that Sylvia was more moderate or conservative, when actually the polar opposite was the case.

Pankhurst believed that more people needed to be pulled into the movement rather than individuals take more militant action.

The excuse in the film is that breaking windows got them media coverage and gave them an audience, while hunger strikes and being force fed got them sympathy.

Sylvia, being a socialist, looked beyond this media attention and sympathy to a mass working class movement that could have been built at that stage. Such a movement could have won not just the vote but a complete change of society to one free of inequality and poverty.

Suffragette goes part of the way to telling the real history of the fight for the vote and equality by working class women.

Rebel Girls

Their fight for the vote

By Jill Liddington

£14.99 +p&p

Striking A Light

The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History

By Louise Raw £16.99 +p&p

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Teachers and 'growth mindset'

How can we help students excel?

'John', London secondary school teacher

In schools up and down the country, teacher training sessions are taking place on 'growth mindset'. The theory is simple. It argues a student's ability to learn is intrinsically linked to their mindset.

Carol S Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford University, found students with a 'fixed' mindset may believe their intelligence is fixed. Therefore there are limitations to what they can do. "I'm not good at maths" or "I'm not a very practical person".

A growth mindset suggests openness to change, feedback and determination to progress in challenging areas.

Language

Training in our school has focussed on adapting teachers' language to motivate students. On the face of it this is very progressive. Students from deprived backgrounds often have lower self-esteem and self-belief than peers - support for them in particular should be encouraged.

However, like any idea in education, the proof of the pudding is in the eating - as any good hospitality and catering teacher will tell you. In our school it has been used to challenge teachers who raise concerns about students' progress.

A teacher in one recent department meeting identified a student who was working below his target in English. This student has a precarious home life which adversely affects his behaviour and focus in school.

He has been on the verge of exclusion in the past. But we were told he should meet his target if we "applied the growth mindset".

In other words, mere thought processes can overcome external economic and social factors. This despite research in 2011 finding social class could put students up to eight months ahead of peers.

Cynically applied, this reinforces the right-wing lies peddled in the capitalist press. They say your social standing ultimately comes down to whether you have a 'can-do attitude'.

This was not Dweck's intention. She says her research has been misinterpreted. There are hard limiting factors that need to be dealt with alongside changes in language and culture.

For all students to excel requires changes to the education system as a whole. The Tory government recently sanctioned extending a grammar school - for the first time in 50 years. This is a step backwards, towards more segregated schooling through the 11-plus examination.

An over-emphasis on exam results means many students feel demoralised and undervalued if not ticking the right boxes.

Cuts

Cuts to budgets, performance-related pay and excessive monitoring are causing low teacher morale. This inevitably impacts environment and ethos.

£9,000 university fees have affected the 'Aimhigher' initiative. And narrowing the curriculum has meant many students don't get to explore a broad range of subjects and ideas.

Teachers should welcome high-quality, research-based training. But that must be coupled with willingness to fight cuts, privatisation and excessive workload.

That is the key to fostering a positive environment in every school, where growth mindsets can flourish.

Townsend Productions presents two critically acclaimed pieces of socialist theatre

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Fund the fight for socialism at home and internationally

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

Can you make a donation to the Socialism 2015 finance appeal? We are aiming to raise £25,000 and set a record total for our annual fighting fund.

There is huge anger building up against the shameless injustice of Cameron and Osborne's austerity. While the rich get tax cuts, low-paid workers face losing thousands from cuts in tax credits.

Students get hikes in tuition fees while university vice-chancellors pay themselves bankers' wages. Jeremy Corbyn won the Labour leadership contest because his opposition to austerity has tapped into that anger.

Young people are eager to discuss socialist ideas and how we can build a movement to defeat the Tories. In a recent poll conducted by Lord Ashcroft, 52% said a radical socialist alternative would be a good thing.

Tories

This Tory government has no mandate, only 24% of the electorate voted for them, and they are weak and divided; they could be pushed back by a mass movement against austerity.

That is why the Socialist Party is calling for a conference of anti-austerity forces, including the trade unions, community campaigns and all those who have joined the Labour Party looking for change.

Without the fighting fund we would not have the resources to produce all the material we need to get our ideas and programme across in all the meetings, protests and demonstrations that are taking place. That is why we are asking you to donate to this appeal.

Socialist ideas are key to fighting austerity. We need an alternative to capitalism, a system of crisis based on private greed which is out of control. 85 super-rich individuals currently own more wealth than over half the world's population - over three billion people.

Those resources alone could be used to begin to establish the basis for a decent life for all of us, for the 99%.

A quarter of the money we raise at Socialism 2015 will go to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) special appeal to assist the often difficult and pioneering work that our members internationally are engaged in.

Every day, members in Tunisia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, South Africa and elsewhere risk imprisonment and worse. Their work would not be possible without the great sacrifices made by our comrades internationally and the support of all the sections.

Donate

You can help the work of the Socialist Party and the CWI. Can you give £5, £50 or £500?

Can you ask other members and supporters to donate? Every donation, no matter how small, will make a difference and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.

TUSC councillor calls for local Labour to back Corbyn's anti-cuts stance

Warrington TUSC councillor Kevin Bennett has called on the town's Labour-controlled council to back Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stance and vote against new cuts to council services.

The call has picked up positive coverage in the local media.

Kevin, described by Warrington Worldwide as Warrington's 'rebel councillor', points out that he was the only councillor in Warrington who endorsed Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership.

Anti-austerity

He is then quoted as saying "TUSC believes that in the new situation opened up by Jeremy Corbyn's victory, there really is no reason why Labour councils should not combine together and refuse to implement the Tories' brutal austerity agenda.

"In our view that can only mean setting a needs-budget to defend jobs and services which will meet the needs of our town, as the start of a fightback against the Tory government.

"The government's localism agenda gives local authorities a 'power of competence' to do anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited. This allows councils to resist cuts - if they wish to use it.

"TUSC will give full support to those councillors who vote against further cuts but TUSC will also stand anti-austerity candidates against those councillors who continue to vote for cuts.

"Our campaign will send a clear message to the austerity supporters in the Labour Party that any attempt to undermine Jeremy Corbyn will not be tolerated by those who have given him such magnificent support".

Housing crisis on the agenda for Socialist Party in Reading

James Bibey, Reading Socialist Party

Reading and Bracknell Socialist Party held a well-attended public meeting on 21 October on the housing crisis.

Walthamstow Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) general election candidate Nancy Taaffe spoke to a room full of students, giving a telling account of the housing problems facing the new generation in Britain today.

She focused on issues such as over-crowding and social cleansing along with the problems of homelessness and the tragic consequences of such poverty for society.

There was plenty of discussion on how to pressure Labour leaders into driving through anti-austerity ideas. Nancy starkly pointed out that while there is more general anti-austerity talk, cuts are still taking place and destroying lives.

Jeremy Corbyn

Following the success of Jeremy Corbyn in being elected Labour leader, communities and trade unions must demand a council house building programme - taking a necessity like housing into our hands and out of the market.

We raised £20 and sold four copies of the Socialist. Four of those who attended were interested in joining to Socialist Party.

There is an excited section of young people who are keen to get involved in the struggle.
