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Budget cuts resignation: Tories split - Strike now!

Iain Duncan Smith's ministerial resignation has revealed everything that is rotten about the Tories.

Speaking on TV, IDS blurted out the truth: George Osborne's intended brutal cuts in disability benefits were to fund tax cuts for the wealthy, knowing that the victims of these cuts are unlikely to vote Tory.

So much for the 'one-nation', 'we're all in it together,' Tory party. Instead, here we see the cold, class cruelty of the representatives of capitalism.

Of course, IDS's departure has more to do with his breach with David Cameron over the EU referendum than his professed concern over widening class inequalities.

After all, he was the millionaire minister who, since 2010, has consistently voted in parliament to slash welfare while reducing taxes on the super-rich, along with introducing the hated bedroom tax and universal credit.

Nonetheless, just like their retreat over cutting tax credits, sections of the Tories are worried about the groundswell of people's anger over continuing austerity and growing inequality.

IDS's resignation and Cameron's rapid retreat and U-turn over the budget's £4.4 billion cuts to disability benefits yet again shows the deep divisions and weakness of this detested government.

Here is a massive opportunity for Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the Trades Union Congress leaders to mobilise a mass demonstration and workplace action to drive out the Tories.

They should not let Cameron and Co off the hook by timidly demanding that the government eases off its austerity agenda.

They should also stop giving credence to Cameron's campaign to remain in the bosses' European Union.

Instead, they should insist that Labour councils stop implementing cuts, and pledge that a Labour government will reverse all the cuts, nationalise the banks and the tax-dodging, worker-exploiting giant corporations, and renationalise our privatised public services, in order to democratically plan the economy to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority.

Let's kick out the Tories now!

[Click here to download a Socialist Party leaflet: IDS Gone - Let's kick them all out!](#)

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Them & Us - budget special

£56 billion

Osborne's proposed tax giveaway to higher earners and business over this parliament, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. That will have to come from somewhere. Our money's on cuts to benefits, services, jobs and wages.

-£3.5 billion

Additional cuts to national government departments, as yet unallocated.

-29%

Cut in capital gains tax - which affects sales of property and investments - for the super-rich. The derisory 28% duty will fall to 20%.

-15%

Cut in corporation tax - on business profits over £300,000 - which the Tories hardly bother to collect anyway. Last year's laughable 20% rate will drop to 17%.

3.96 million

Workers aged 16-24 (Office for National Statistics, March 2016) - who will not be eligible for the government's new National 'Living' Wage. The Socialist says: no exemptions for youth or training - pay the rate for the job!

-£1.05 an hour

Amount the Tories' £7.20 National 'Living' Wage falls short of the Living Wage Foundation's suggested rate. It falls £2.20 an hour short of the London rate. The Socialist campaigns for an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage as a step towards a real living wage for all.

+£250

Average increase in income for the best-off fifth of households over this parliament, according to thinktank Resolution Foundation.

-£550

Average loss in income for the poorest fifth of households over this parliament, according to the Resolution Foundation.

£4,000 a year

Amount of disposable income Osborne will let under-40s save tax free. He also promises a 25% top-up

from the state. The move is an attempt to cover up raids on state pensions.

-£4,301.79 a year

Pre-tax shortfall between wages and cost of reasonable living - never mind having spare cash to save - for National 'Living' Wage earners in London. Compared to Living Wage Foundation rates, assuming a 37.5-hour working week. Shortfall is £2,053.13 outside of London.

2021

Expected year average wages will return to pre-2008 levels, according to the Resolution Foundation. Even this 'lost 13 years' prediction assumes no new economic crisis. It is also based on official 'CPI' inflation measures, which don't cover all areas of household expenditure. Using 'RPIJ' inflation projections - which include some housing costs - we still won't have recovered.

Fight for socialist policies to reverse budget cuts!

Nick Chaffey, Southern region Socialist Party secretary

Six years of Tory driven austerity have been years of pain and suffering for the many, so few will have expected much from the government in Wednesday's budget to benefit them.

But more and more are asking: When is this pain going to end? This budget comes nine years after the Great Crash of 2007-08. When will 'good times' return?

Imposing budget cuts to pay off the deficit, to bring about economic recovery, is a Tory mantra that many have been hoping would bring a return to growth. But austerity hasn't revived the economy, paid off the deficit or reduced government borrowing. Now the Tory chancellor, George Osborne, far from crowing about the success of his management of capitalism, is warning of lower growth and a new economic recession.

Many people will be seething at the prospect of more cuts and another recession, and asking: What needs to be done to avert further pain?

The Tories' policy, representing the interests of big business and the capitalist system, is to make the working class pay for the economic crisis, through cuts to jobs, pay, pensions and benefits, as well as to the 'social wage' - via cuts and privatisation to public services, particularly the NHS and council services.

That is what's behind the forced academisation of remaining state secondary and primary schools by 2022, removing national pay agreements, driving down wages and preparing for further privatisation that will see children's needs forgotten in the race for profits.

From the many to the few

Austerity has been a policy of wealth transfer from the many to the few. The cuts have been used to pay for a huge reduction in corporation tax, further enriching the 1%. Tory claims of assisting working

people by increasing the starting tax threshold and slightly raising the minimum wage for over 25s, go no way to removing the poverty afflicting over 25% of children or restoring wages frozen for so many for the last six years.

A sign of the shifting tax base onto the shoulders of working and middle class people can be seen in the fact that government revenue from corporation tax is now just £43 billion - and set to fall further as its rate is cut to 17% - while VAT now raises £138 billion.

Many local councils will raise council tax further while implementing another round of vicious cuts, further squeezing hard-hit pockets.

The Tories argue that such policies will revive the economy by creating the conditions for investment, by increasing the profitability of businesses. Profits have certainly risen on the backs of low-paid workers and zero-hours contracts, but the economy has stagnated as investment has fallen.

Austerity policies have worsened the economy - squeezing the army of consumers, the working class and middle class, who remain saddled with enormous personal debts, 142% of incomes. With the majority having little to spend, industry is reluctant to invest in production, as its bosses doubt their goods will sell and realize a profit.

Striking back

The battle lines had already been drawn before this budget with the junior doctors leading the fight to defend the NHS, now joined by NUT college teachers, port workers at Grangemouth, Glasgow City Council janitors - all forced to strike back against the impact of austerity. Many more will be forced to follow their lead.

The only way to reverse the budget cuts and restore wages, benefits and pensions is for the trade unions to mobilise the huge mass of anger in coordinated action to confront the government.

Teaching unions must be to the fore in mobilising their members, parents and students to block the destruction of state education.

Every trade union member must demand that their union calls on the TUC to mobilise the anger on the streets in a national demonstration against austerity, as a means to prepare for coordinated strike action and a 24-hour general strike.

The Tories are weak and divided over the European Union referendum and on other issues, and would be forced to retreat in the face of such determined opposition.

The demand from local government workers in the unions Unite and Unison for Labour-led councils to refuse to carry out further cuts needs to be vigorously campaigned for in the shape of national action.

At the ballot box in May, where right-wing Labour councillors have voted through Tory cuts, anti-cuts candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will back this demand.

Britain remains a rich country, the wealth exists to meet the needs of society, but it requires bold socialist policies to realise that goal.

Labour shadow ministers Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are right to criticise the failed economic policies of austerity and the unequal impact it has meant for millions of workers, their families and those on benefits and state pensions, while the super-rich 1% got richer.

Last week John McDonnell launched Labour's new Fiscal Credibility Rule, which: "will eliminate the deficit and pay down the debt without accepting Tory cuts to our public services. In the words of our

Economic Advisory Council member Joseph Stiglitz, we must now 'rewrite the rules' of how our economy operates."

However, far from rewriting the rules, this restricts a Labour government to working within the rules of the capitalist market, a market that faces a renewed world crisis. The capitalists once more will demand that we bail them out of the crisis and pay for it in further cuts. We have seen this borne out vividly in Greece.

The only way to end this crisis-ridden economic system is to break from it by building political representation for working class people with the aim of carrying out socialist policies - including to cancel the debts incurred by the bank bailouts, take privatised utilities back into public ownership, and nationalise the banks and major monopolies under workers' democratic control and management.

Only on that basis would it be possible to implement a plan of production that could bring investment to create full employment, restore and improve wage levels, benefits and pensions, and eliminate poverty.

A programme of public works could end the housing crisis, rebuild crumbling schools, hospitals and care homes for the elderly, and develop a sustainable public transport system.

It is socialist ideas that must lead this fightback, so that we can permanently eradicate poverty, inequality and capitalist economic crisis.

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Brussels attacks: don't let the terrorists and racists divide us

Linkse Socialistische Partij/Parti Socialiste de Lutte, Socialist Party's sister organisation in Belgium

Dozens of dead and wounded. A country in shock.

That is the result of the terrible terrorist attacks in Zaventem airport and Maelbeek metro station in Brussels on 22 March. We express our condolences to the victims, their families and friends.

The victims, once again, are ordinary people. This terrible, barbaric violence was completely random. Authorities have shut Brussels down. Thousands are trapped in the capital, worried about their children and relatives.

Solidarity

Like after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, or the November attacks in Paris, there are spontaneous expressions of solidarity. Taxi drivers offering free services. People opening their homes to those who are stranded by the failure of public transport. The solidarity of ordinary people is huge, like after every disaster.

The perpetrators are likely members or sympathisers of Islamic State, which also pursues its reactionary regime of terror against the population in Iraq and Syria.

Belgian foreign policy reinforces the risk of attacks. This summer, Belgium will start participating in military interventions in Syria, as it did previously in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bombing Syria will inevitably mean more random victims, which will not improve security here or there. On the contrary.

These wars are the bosses' wars - by and for the benefit of local and international profiteers, politicians and warlords. The victims, however, are always from our side: the side of the workers, the poor, and the young, both here and in the Middle East.

We call on all trade unions, workers and young people to participate in the national demonstration against Belgian participation in the war in Syria and the purchase of fighter planes.

Over the coming days, trade union reps and activists should help organise collective discussion, especially in workplaces. The workers' movement needs a collective response to resist terrorism, racism, and government attempts to restrict strikes, demonstrations and political opposition.

Crisis

The capitalist system is in a deep crisis. It undermines the prospects for growing numbers in society. This prepares the ground for terrorism and other reactionary violence.

We fight for a world where the enormous wealth currently in the hands of a very small minority is used for the needs of the majority: socialism. Then we can once and for all consign poverty, misery, war, hatred and terrorism to the dustbin of history.

The Socialist will publish a full analysis and response on the Brussels attacks - including a programme to fight terror, war and racism - in our next issue

'Living wage' lie: fight for £10 now!

Ryan Aldred, zero-hour contract worker

On April Fools' Day the Tories will implement the sick joke of a National 'Living' Wage of £7.20 an hour - but only for over-25s. Do under-25s not deserve to live?

Earlier this month, the Tories stole £30 a week from the pockets of disabled people, forcing a cut to Employment Support Allowance through the Lords. Not content with this, they now want to further their assault on the young.

The Living Wage Foundation suggests a more realistic living wage is £8.25 an hour - £9.40 for those in London. In 2014, the Trade Union Congress adopted the demand of bakers' union BFAWU and the Socialist Party, for a £10 an hour minimum wage. Once again, the Tories fall short of delivering yet more of their empty promises.

The National 'Living' Wage won't make much difference to the millions of workers on zero-hour and temporary contracts. We are unlikely to get enough hours to make the rent regardless of the raise.

Workers under 25 shouldn't be made a fool of with this outright discrimination. If young workers organise - alongside older workers - together we can win the same rate for the same job, and a real living wage for all.

Socialist Party members will be joining Fast Food Rights and Youth Fight for Jobs activists to leaflet workplaces on 1 April. This should include organising after-work meetings encouraging young workers to join a union.

Meetings should also build for a day of demonstrations on 14 April against this insulting super-exploitation of young workers, while demanding a real living wage of £10 an hour with no exceptions.

- Send details of your plans for 1 and 14 April to youthfightforjobs@gmail.com. Share your experiences of low pay and zero-hour contracts using the hashtags #JoinAUnion and #NotFooledToday.

Junior doctors to escalate strike action

Scott Jones

Junior doctors' trade union, the BMA, has vowed to escalate their strike over the imposition of the new, unsafe, unfair contract by Jeremy Hunt and the Tories.

The chairman of the BMA's junior doctors' committee, Dr Joseph Malawana has written to junior doctors to confirm the committee had "voted to move towards an escalation of its planned action".

The details have yet to be announced but could include a full walkout by junior doctors including those working in emergency services or extending the upcoming strikes on 6-8 April beyond the 48-hours currently planned.

Doctors have so far struck on three occasions to defend the NHS. They plan at least two more stoppages. The Tories have made a new enemy, with punishing schedules and cuts to pay normally reserved for other workers.

Any escalation should include Britain's largest trade unions, Unite and Unison, which both represent big sections of health workers. Other unions should ballot for action now.

They can then coordinate strikes with the junior doctors. This will prevent the doctors from becoming isolated, and allow other sections of the workforce to exploit an opportunity to push the Tories back.

We urgently need an emergency national demonstration to support the BMA and the junior doctors. The Socialist calls on the TUC to approach the People's Assembly about turning its 16 April march into a TUC and union-led demonstration to defend the NHS.

Aramark slammed by workers striking for the living wage

Roger Shrives, Lewisham Socialist Party

Lively, and at times noisy, strike action hit the NHS in south London on 21 March. It wasn't the junior doctors or the student nurses but the catering, cleaning and 'hostessing' staff at four mental health hospitals in the South London and Maudsley (SLAM) group.

Strikers at Maudsley, Bethlem Royal, Lewisham and Lambeth units, all members of the GMB union,

were loudly 'slamming' their privatising, cost-cutting, US owned employer Aramark and telling them to pay a living wage!

Collin, who was picketing Lewisham hospital, said most workers there were on £7-£8 an hour for very hard work. They are demanding £10 an hour and better deals on sick pay and unsocial hours payments. Sick pay has been abolished for many newer workers, which obviously makes for great anxiety. They also want increased pay for weekends and bank holidays.

This is the first strike ever in Aramark's British concerns. Junior doctors and nursing staff at Lewisham came and wished them well. This lively protest showed the potential for a huge trade union and political campaign to rescue the NHS from Tory attacks and poverty pay.

Tube drivers shut down Piccadilly Line over bullying

Tube workers in London operating the Piccadilly line are striking for 24 hours on the 23 and 24 March over "bullying, harassment and intimidation".

The Piccadilly line is the fourth busiest in the city, with 600,000 people using it daily, and the strike of 400 tube drivers is causing massive disruption. 85% of the drivers, members of the RMT union, voted in favour of action with an even larger number voting for action short of a strike.

The ballot for action was called after a prolonged period of industrial problems on the line. The issues have left drivers in a vulnerable position and been used by management as a tool to harass and threaten members through misuse of the disciplinary procedure.

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said: "The hostile and aggressive attitude by tube bosses has collapsed the normal negotiating process. The wholesale abuse of procedures and agreements by management on the Piccadilly line is rife and amounts to the development of a campaign of bullying, harassment and intimidation that the union will not allow to continue.

The RMT will not sit back and allow individual members to be picked off by a vindictive and aggressive management who are continuing to drag their heels over addressing fundamental safety issues which leave staff in a vulnerable and exposed position."

Further action is planned on 19-20 and 21-22 April.

Workplace news in brief

Teachers walkout

Teachers in West Dunbartonshire are to strike again on 30 and 31 March and 26 and 27 April after rejecting the employers' offer which did not deal with the core issue of the introduction of faculties into West Dunbartonshire schools. In January and February, all five main secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire were closed for a day after EIS (Scottish teachers' union) members went on their first strike since the 1980s. The row centres on moves to cut the number of principal teachers of individual subjects. The union said its members had voted two-to-one against the revised proposal from the council on a turnout of 88%.

Lambeth library strike

Lambeth library workers have taken strike action on the 22 and 23 March to oppose the closure of four libraries. The campaign has already saved the Tate South Lambeth library. The libraries are either being privatised, sold or turned into gyms. At the time of writing there are also plans for an occupation to defend the libraries.

Guardian jobs to go

Hot on the heels of closure of the print edition of the Independent and the Independent on Sunday, it's been announced that the Guardian is to cut 250 jobs, including 100 editorial roles. In total, 100 jobs are earmarked to be cut from the 725 editorial workforce at the Guardian and Observer and 150 from other departments. Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "This is a major blow for the staff of the Guardian and Observer and for journalism as a whole. We will oppose any compulsory redundancies."

Stop academies onslaught

Unions must organise to defend education

Jane Nellist, NUT executive member (personal capacity)

A seething anger permeated throughout school staffrooms when the Tory government announced their intention that all schools in England must become academies and join Multi Academy Trusts (MAT).

Calls of 'strike!' by school staff echoed around the country with the realisation of what this means for schools: attacks on national pay and conditions and the democratic accountability of schools.

There is a growing body of evidence showing that MATs are not making the claimed improvements to schools. In a letter to Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan, the chief inspector of schools Michael Wilshaw (no friend of teachers) raised concerns about scrutiny of MATs, large cash reserves not being spent on pupils and high levels of pay for chief executives!

Profit

It was always this government's intention to seek a way to privatise education and enable schools to be run for profit, just as is happening in the health service.

You only have to look at other countries like the US, to see that this would be a catastrophe and must be stopped.

Protests have quickly been arranged in towns and cities to resist these attacks. A petition calling for a public inquiry and referendum reached 100,000 signatures in just four days.

Unions and trades councils need to mobilise and organise public meetings to explain the consequences of these attacks and build support to resist them.

The Tories are in more disarray and teachers are looking for Nicky Morgan to go the way of Iain

Duncan Smith! The war over the EU and party leadership has exposed weaknesses that trade unions must take advantage of.

Education unions need to build the confidence of their members with a mass national demonstration early next term.

The TUC should be mobilising and reaching out to our communities to defend our schools, NHS and public services.

All three teaching unions are meeting over Easter for their annual conferences. There must be a united approach to fight this attack, with support staff as well.

Solid strike

The NUT conference must agree a strategy for national action to defend our schools. The solid sixth form colleges strike demonstrated an appetite to fight back on the funding cuts.

For the sake of our children and communities, these plans can be defeated. The Tories can be pushed back if we act decisively now.

See page 5 for a feature on academies.

Teachers, students and parents unite to defeat John Roan academy plans

The government has declared that it will begin forcing all schools to become academies. This is a huge attack which requires a huge response from the trade unions, teachers, parents and students. These recent examples from south London show that when a serious struggle is launched, victories can be won - especially when the campaign includes determined strike action.

Teachers, students and parents at the John Roan School in south London have defeated plans to turn it into an academy. Members of the teaching union NUT were set to strike on 15-16 March which forced a significant retreat.

Head teacher Nadine Powrie issued a statement that the school did not intend to move to academy status and will not consider academisation for at least six months. The strike was suspended on 11 March in response.

Tim Woodcock, Greenwich NUT branch secretary, said: "We were told that academisation was inevitable and we should quietly accept the privatisation through the back door of our community schools. Well, we have proved them wrong."

Sixth form students have also played a key role in fighting for their future with activities such as leafleting parents' evenings and demanding their student voice in the discussion about what academy conversion would mean for them.

Martin Powell-Davies, London NUT regional secretary and Socialist Party member, who was involved in negotiations with the school congratulated the NUT members at the John Roan: "Their campaign has made sure that governors have had to pause and reconsider. Of course, this may turn out to be only a temporary step back but it is still a significant one.

"Over the next term, the campaign to make sure governors reject the damaging choice of academy conversion can continue. We will continue to support the call for a parental ballot and we will be lending our voice to the parents campaign for a democratic say in the future of their children's school."

However, issues at the school are far from over. On 29 February, redundancies and cuts to courses were announced. Over 24 posts in teaching and support have been axed and a number of courses currently on offer are being threatened with closure.

Academy failed me and other children with disabilities

Thomas Patrick Kendell

If you do a quick internet search on tax dodging search engine Google for "academy schools special needs/disability" you can clearly see the impact academies have on these children. The Tories, outlined in George Osborne's budget, now plan to turn all state schools into academies.

As someone who has autism and went to a big academy school in Doncaster, I feel obliged to share my experience.

In a school with over 1,000 students it is very hard for special needs children to thrive, as there is a big rush of people. With social problems, it is very challenging to feel comfortable in such a difficult environment.

The school has a duty to look after all students, but a small minority of children with disabilities do not receive the sort of support and conditions in which they are able to have a real understanding of what is being learned and to feel valued.

As well as this, they also have strict rules, a strict dress code and disciplinary procedures. It is a real struggle for special needs students to be catered for because they're not treated as individuals with individual needs.

I felt I had little support from the academy I attended, including an inconsistent level of care which did not meet any of my required needs. The school was split into set groups which were numbered on the child's ability. I was in sets 4-5 for most classes when I joined, which was pretty high, but soon fell down in sets as I was struggling to cope.

I was also moved down in classes in which I was excelling in order to fit in with my timetable, which was unfair to say the least. There is a risk that children are seen as just a 'number' to make the school seem like they are getting good results. Sometimes they will happily expel 'underachievers'.

The lowest sets were not even taught by qualified teachers, rather 'special needs coordinators'. They treated the pupils' varying needs as 'bad behaviour'. Time management is especially challenging for these children, as academies require strict adherence to timetables.

Also, the levels of discipline in these schools are completely unacceptable even for mainstream students.

Detentions and isolation are given out on too many occasions for minor things, including perceived 'bad behaviour' which could be avoided with more understanding. Isolation is an appalling punishment of writing out rules for a whole school day.

When such procedures have been challenged by carers and parents, they have been dismissed. This will only continue and get worse if every school is made into an academy.

Socialist Party national congress 2016

A serious, thoughtful, optimistic and lively national congress of the Socialist Party took place from 19-21 March. Delegates representing branches from Plymouth to Tyneside and Llanelli to Ipswich met in London to discuss the current stage of the struggle against austerity and capitalism and to make plans for the future.

See the other articles in this feature for reports from three of the discussions. Others included building the Socialist Party, finance, workplace and trade union work, a socialist approach to the EU referendum and a report from the work of the CWI (the international organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to). The fighting fund appeal raised over £10,000.

A world of crisis, ripe for revolution

Kevin Parslow

Peter Taaffe opened the Socialist Party's 2016 congress with an introduction on the current world situation. On every major issue and on every continent, world capitalism is failing and this is recognised by their 'experts'.

The world economy is still suffering severely from the crisis of 2007-08 and is now desperately attempting to avoid a new slump. Growth since then was fuelled by a massive worldwide injection of credit, including quantitative easing, and the Chinese economy.

With this slowing, two Chinese stock exchange crises have reflected the worries of capitalism. Peter said a world recession may not occur immediately, but mistakes like December's interest rate rise in the US could bring this forward.

The world slowdown has slashed commodity prices and this will push millions further into poverty. There have already been massive repercussions in countries like South Africa and Brazil.

Central banks have resorted to extraordinary measures including further quantitative easing and some have even introduced negative interest rates, charging depositors for holding their money.

Economists are even mooting 'helicopter money', directly giving people cash to spend. This may not work if deflation takes hold and workers delay purchases waiting for lower prices. Big corporations have huge bank deposits but won't invest unless they can make huge returns.

Peter remarked that capitalism cannot solve the environment's problems. The Paris summit was a failure and global temperatures are rising due to increased concentrations of greenhouse gases.

He then commented on the severe strains between the major imperialist powers, epitomised by Obama and Cameron's spat over Libya and Syria and the paralysis in the Middle East. The colossal refugee crisis has blown the fallout from the civil war in Syria into Europe.

As the CWI predicted, a quick defeat of the Assad regime has not materialised. Russia may feel its intervention and withdrawal from Syria has re-established its immediate aims as a 'great power'.

Putin may try to force Assad to make concessions without undermining the regime's foundations, which can still rely on the support of Iran and 100 million Shias in the region.

As Isis/Daesh increasingly repels the population, it will also face revolts. When workers in the region begin to move against oppression, we will need to emphasise class unity against sectarianism.

As world inequality deepens, class tensions rise sharply. In virtually every country, the major pro-capitalist parties - including the former social democrats - are split.

Sanders

The world is ripe for revolution yet there are small numbers consciously fighting for a socialist world. Bernie Sanders' call for 'political revolution' is remarkable. However, 'socialism' is a fresh idea in the US where there is little experience of Stalinism or social democracy.

A new crisis will pose the question of system change and socialism in the minds of the masses. The Socialist Party and the CWI explain to workers and youth what is really needed to change society.

Youth play a key role in all revolutions. In the recent uprising in Kasserine, Tunisia, they demanded: "We want jobs or another revolution!"

Peter commented that Europe is also entering a new phase of struggle. Greece faces new agonies. Further cuts are demanded while the EU wants to turn Greece into a giant campsite for refugees.

Spain and Ireland are politically deadlocked and both could face new general elections. A storm of protests from workers and students in France has erupted as the Hollande government attempts to attack working conditions and education.

In Germany, recent election gains for the far-right AfD put the future of Chancellor Merkel in doubt. Socialists will develop programmes against the far right throughout Europe.

Peter concluded by emphasising that our organisation is key to events because of our political unity and ideas. We have been tested but have emerged strong and confident as a lever to help transform the world.

The 21st century will be one of revolutions, even more than the 20th. It will differ in one crucial respect: learning from the experience of the past, we will fight for the victory of socialism.

Britain: political earthquakes ahead

Dave Carr

The bombshell resignation of Tory government minister Iain Duncan Smith formed the backcloth to the debate on Britain.

As deputy general secretary Hannah Sell reminded delegates in her opening remarks, just such a possibility of splits in the ruling party was outlined in the opening paragraph of the congress document.

The Tories are in a humiliating retreat over their plans to slash a further £4 billion, including from disability benefits. "Yes, IDS's resignation reflects the Tory split over the EU but fundamentally they can feel the ground shaking under their feet, such is the unpopularity of Tory policies," Hannah explained.

One consequence of this could be to give workers confidence to fightback and then the shaking ground could turn into an earthquake.

This isn't the first retreat - the government has backpedalled over cutting tax credits.

The weaknesses and divisions in the ruling class could be exploited by the organised working class if the trade union leaders were to coordinate industrial action against austerity. Unfortunately, many trade union leaders are playing a baleful role and are holding back the struggle.

This has resulted in setbacks. Since 2010 one million jobs have been lost in the public sector. Ironically it's the junior doctors, less encumbered by this union bureaucracy, who are in the forefront of the struggle against government attacks.

But even without a lead from the union tops, local struggles are breaking out. This could escalate with the Tories' school 'academisation' plan.

Social movements in Britain over issues like the lack of affordable housing, evictions and the housing bill. The battle to save the health service continues to erupt and we could see a renewed student movement over the higher education bill.

Young people in particular, who are at the sharp end of government austerity, could come to the fore in low pay and unionisation struggles.

As socialists, our starting point is what is necessary to take these struggles forward, taking into account people's political confidence and consciousness.

Even before major industrial and social movements have developed, opinion polls indicate a favourable attitude among young people toward 'socialism'. While what is meant by socialism is unclear, this is nonetheless indicative of a growing anti-capitalist mood in society.

Three months ago Osborne was trumpeting the 'successes' of Britain plc. Now he's blaming the world economy for dragging the UK economy down, having discovered that it's £18 billion smaller than he thought.

Government measures, such as quantitative easing, have simply led to renewed speculative price bubbles. There could be another financial crash leading to a new economic downturn.

The contradiction of modern times is that the underlying anger among the working and middle classes over the economic and social crises is not being expressed in a mass opposition party. Equally, the ruling class hasn't got a reliable party to rule through, creating political instability.

No one predicted the landslide election of Jeremy Corbyn. His anti-austerity message, like Bernie Sanders' in the US, struck a chord with many people new to politics as well as an older layer of left-leaning workers. Corbyn's opponents could only serve up a diet of 'austerity-lite' policies.

Two parties

But his election hasn't transformed Labour into a workers' party. In fact Labour encompasses two parties - a capitalist party and a potential workers' party. But the structures of Labour remain in the grip of the Blairites. The new anti-austerity members are viewed with horror by the Blairites, who are waging a civil war against Corbyn.

We oppose Labour's right wing and back Corbyn when he supports socialist policies - while criticising him when he backtracks, such as not instructing Labour MPs to opposing the bombing of Syria.

The EU, along with its anti-worker neoliberalism, is also anti-refugees. Its latest deal with Turkey reinforces the borders of 'fortress Europe'.

A vote against the EU would weaken British capitalism and undermine Cameron. Unfortunately, under right-wing pressure, Corbyn has u-turned over opposing the bosses' EU in the forthcoming referendum. It means that both 'remain' and 'leave' campaigns are led by capitalist forces.

We have to fight for an independent, working class exit campaign based on socialist, internationalist opposition to the capitalist EU.

Delegates expanded points on Britain, including racism and the refugee crisis, the battle to save the NHS, trade union leadership, developments in the pro-Corbyn 'Momentum' campaign, Wales Assembly elections and Ukip, Labour and fighting austerity, local elections and TUSC, a report from Scotland, and more besides.

A separate session discussed the EU referendum in more detail.

A storm for youth - and favourable winds for socialists

Scott Jones

"There is no future for us, only a black void where our future should be" said Lily Douglas, a school student in east London, when she spoke in the youth and student session.

Lily described how she and her friends are organising weekly discussion groups, attending demos and leafleting against cuts after joining the Socialist Party over opposition to the bombing of Syria.

She described how at every opportunity, young people are facing attack. From attending a school threatened with academisation, to not being able to afford to go to university, to wanting to be a librarian at a time when libraries are being closed.

This sums up what Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Party national youth organiser, described as a "perfect storm" engulfing youth around the world, when she opened the discussion.

Socialism popular

But it is a storm with favourable winds for socialists. Claire mentioned recent polls which show that under-24s in Britain have a minus 15 favourability rating of capitalism, and there is growing interest and support for socialist ideas.

Young Socialist Party and Socialist Students members are at the forefront of this growing movement. Socialist Students has marked itself out as the main organisation of struggle on campuses.

Maddy Steeds reported that in Leeds, Socialist Students has forced the student union to set up a student run, not-for-profit letting agency and built links between trade unions and students. There were further excellent reports from Swansea, Portsmouth, Leicester, Birmingham, Nottingham and Hatfield.

Our young members are also playing leading roles in other campaigns like the struggle to defend Huddersfield A&E, as reported by Aaron Bailey. Jac Green explained why she joined the Socialist Party, saying that all of her childhood friends have been forced to leave her hometown of Corby in

Lincolnshire to find work.

In finishing the discussion Sarah Wrack, editor of the Socialist, summed up the complete insecurity young people are facing as their hopes and aspirations are being let down on an unprecedented scale.

But also how marvellously our young members are fighting back and stepping up to be the next generation of socialists - a generation that can change the world.

Twenty years ago...

BSE crisis - the madness of the profit system

The UK's biggest health scandal in living memory was the BSE epidemic known as "mad cow" disease. On 20 March 1996 Tory health secretary Stephen Dorrell belatedly announced a "probable link" between the cattle disease BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) and its human equivalent, vCJD.

More than 180,000 cattle were infected and 4.4 million slaughtered during the eradication programme which cost billions. By June 2014 it had officially killed 177 people.

Four years after Dorrell's announcement, Lord Phillips produced a 4,000-page inquiry report costing £27 million. But as the Socialist remarked at the time: "Not one former government minister, civil servant, nor anyone in the meat and livestock industry, faces criminal charges. Under capitalism, the rich and powerful don't pay for their crimes."

The following article commenting on the report was published in the Socialist on 3 November 2000 and can be read online in full.

No one in the report is accused of lying and covering up the BSE scandal. Instead, its language is full of words such as "misled", "inaccurate", "mistakes", "regrettable", etc. Actions of ministers and civil servants are prefaced "with hindsight".

The report is a whitewash of the previous Tory governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, top civil servants and meat industry chiefs.

The inquiry findings only attack "the culture of secrecy and complacency" in government. But this criticism merely begs the question - what lies behind this culture?

A clue is given in the report. In 1986, scientists at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), who identified BSE and its potential threat to health imposed secrecy on their findings.

Before an EU-imposed ban on exports [in 1996], the beef trade was valued at £590 million. Clearly, the profits of the industry came and still come before people's health.

But this should come as no surprise. MAFF - which is meant to represent both producers' and consumers' interests - is simply a pliant tool of farming interests. As Dr Tim Lang of the London Food Commission put it: "You'd be wrong to think of MAFF as a cosy club for farmers. It is a cosy club for farmers, the agrochemical and food industry."

With the Tory Party and New Labour dependent on big business financing and with big business representatives operating at the highest levels of government, there is no way the political system, without being challenged by working class people, can address the needs and concerns of the majority

of the population.

Guilty!

Douglas Hogg, the agriculture minister between 1995 and 1997, was determined to rehabilitate beef sales in the interests of the industry. In December 1995 he said: "BSE is not transmissible to humans" and that "in any case our controls are effective enough to prevent the infective agent getting into the human food chain."

After the medical journal, the Lancet, reported the death of a dairy farmer of CJD in March 1993, Kenneth Calman, the government's then chief medical officer, stated: "I wish to emphasise that there is no scientific evidence of a causal link between BSE in cattle and CJD in humans."

John Gummer, Secretary of State for Agriculture 1989-1993, in May 1990 in the full glare of TV cameras, attempted to reassure the public that beef was safe by trying to feed a beef burger to his four-year-old daughter, Cordelia.

In the same year Gummer said: "Our Beef is safe... There is no evidence anywhere in the world of BSE passing from animals to humans." The report says he shouldn't be criticised.

In the attempts by civil servants and government ministers to lie and cover up the serious implications for human health of the BSE crisis, dissenting scientists were maligned, sidelined, and even threatened with legal action to silence them.

As microbiology professor Richard Lacey pointed out in 1996: "The [Tory] government has been deliberately risking the health of the population for a decade. The reason it didn't take action was that it would be expensive and damaging politically, particularly to the farming community who are their supporters."

Socialist programme

The history of the BSE epidemic shows that unsafe practices in the meat industry were the consequences of a profit-driven system, ie, the capitalist market economy - a clear example of how big business works against the interests of the majority.

The practise of recycling animals to ruminants [vegetarian eaters] was introduced in the late 1920s and accelerated after World War Two with the adoption of intensive farming techniques.

In an industry now dominated by finance capital, the motivation is not to feed people with safe, wholesome food, using sustainable methods of production, but maximising profits and minimising costs.

People cannot have confidence in an industry whose safety record comes second to big business' profits.

To restore confidence, the contradiction between the drive for profits under capitalism and the health and safety of people has to be eliminated. The pursuit of profit has to be jettisoned and replaced with a democratic, socialist agriculture policy.

The food processing industry and retail industry should be brought under democratic workers' control and management to ensure standards and make sure it operates within an overall plan to supply good quality cheap food to everyone.

Five years ago: 750,000 march against cuts

Five years ago, on 26 March 2011, the biggest trade union protest in British history took place. The TUC-organised demonstration was the first major show of opposition to the then Con-Dem government.

Thousands bought copies of the Socialist from hundreds of Socialist Party members who took part.

The throng of people felt enormously confident. It was followed later that year by a one-day public sector strike. Unfortunately trade union leaders sold out that strike.

The Tories are even more weak and divided today. The outpouring of support for the junior doctors shows coordinated action against austerity is possible. The Socialist Party is calling on the trade unions to lead next month's anti-austerity demo as the first step to building a general strike to stop the cuts.

Cuts that destroy vulnerable lives

"As a carer, I am expected to pick up the slack"

'Jenny', carer

The feature 'Mental health - system in crisis' in issue 888 (see www.socialistparty.org.uk) was excellent and highlighted very well the viewpoints of both a mental health worker and a service user. I thought it would good to add to the topic with the impact on carers and families.

Lifeline

Where I live in Stafford we are very lucky to have access to one of the better mental health trusts. Unfortunately, this is being slowly chipped away.

The person I care for has suffered quite a few changes over the last month. He usually has a community psychiatric nurse who calls fortnightly to give him his medication via injection.

This is also a time to chat and to sort out any issues or concerns. For me as a carer it is a vital lifeline and contact.

The trust has now decided to hold a clinic instead, where patients will make their own way to hospital for their injections. The reasons given all sound very nice, such as, 'empowering service users' or 'encouraging them to be responsible' and 'this is a vital step on the road to recovery.'

All these sound very good and of course are important. But when you compare having one nurse who can see five or six patients in an hour to a nurse going out and sitting in each person's home for an hour, the maths becomes very clear!

I am constantly battling the dreaded discharge. I always have to point out that the reason my partner is doing so well is that he has lots of support and taking it away will be detrimental to his recovery .

In the community, we have had a day service for years that has offered many opportunities for education and enjoyment such as computing, art and cooking.

My partner has had a lot of use out of this service. He has undertaken a maths course, obtained a qualification in farming and agriculture as well as making some much needed friends in a rambling group.

These things have given him so much confidence and a reason to get up on the days he goes there. As his carer it also gives me much needed space and gives us something to talk about, which improves our relationship.

Closed

This vital day service which was run by the council is to be closed in March. This has been done with no real consultation. I spoke to another carer who attended a meeting and said that the service users found it very difficult to put their views across and were not listened to.

In conversations on social media I was informed that there was little 'appetite' for a fightback from the staff and non-existent union leadership. When I hear words like these it makes me very angry.

I can see how much of benefit a full and supportive mental health service is. Giving someone with mental illness the chance to participate in the same things as so-called 'normal' people is extremely important for their confidence and wellbeing. These attacks on services that are vital to a section of society who can find it difficult to articulate their feelings and needs are disgraceful.

As a carer, I am expected to 'pick up the slack' when all these services disappear. Carers provide millions of pounds every year in unpaid work.

So I ask all those in unions in this field of work and beyond - please, please demand that your union implements a fight before it is too late and before this crisis becomes a catastrophe!

The Socialist Party calls for:

- Reinvestment in social and mental health work - to allow genuine social work with manageable caseloads, to protect and assist those who require support
- Councillors who refuse to implement cuts. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) local election challenge
- No cuts to Personal Independence Payments or any other benefits
- Abolish the Health and Social Care Act - no cuts, closures or privatisation
- Scrap the Private Finance Initiative and cancel the debt
- Coordinated action by trade unions as a step towards a 24-hour general strike against austerity and to defend all jobs and services
- Nationalise pharmaceutical companies and all private health providers

Letters

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, phone 020 8988 8771 or email editors@socialistparty.org.uk.

We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

Rape, women, blame

Despite public discussion about domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape, victims still encounter the assumption that they are somehow to blame. According to the Office for National Statistics (2015), more than a quarter of the public believes women who are drunk at the time of an assault are at least partly responsible for what happens to them.

One Tory MP caused a furore in 2013 when he suggested women should not wear tight skirts and heels as it hinders their flight from "predators". In reality, predatory or opportunistic rapists account for very few assaults: most women know the man who raped them. In the UK, two women and one child a week die at the hands of someone they know well.

On average, a woman will suffer 35 times before she asks for help or reports it. Cuts to domestic violence services, adult social services and policing aggravate this situation.

Since 2010, 54% of domestic violence services have been forced to close. In many areas there are no places in hostels or women's refuges, thus leaving women and children vulnerable. Appeals to our local MPs about cuts to services and facilities to help victims of rape and domestic victims have failed.

One key area which receives insufficient funding is the support of women from ethnic minorities - and there is precious little charity money available either. Not least because victims are stigmatised.

Sue Powell, Gloucester

McDonnell boosts Blairite mayor

Fresh from his advice that councillors couldn't fight the cuts, John McDonnell makes this astounding observation in response to a question from the Liverpool Echo:

What do you make of Joe Anderson as Mayor of Liverpool?

"I think he's been a really strong voice for Liverpool. A strong voice, dynamic and absolutely committed, working himself into the ground basically for the city and I think he's done a great job. He's one of the best advocates Liverpool has had for decades, to be honest.

"And when he comes down to London his voice is heard. He lobbies ministers. Within the Labour Party he's extremely well respected because of the advocacy he does on behalf of the city. I think he's turning the city around. He's got great ideas."

With all the respect I can muster, I think John is wildly out of touch and he should be reminded he is a member of Corbyn's anti-austerity team. In that capacity he should make time to speak to those who have suffered from the £340 million cuts Anderson's council has imposed on the city's neediest.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

Healthcare headache

An elderly disabled couple came up to my street stall in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, to sign our petition on 'No to a privatised NHS'. I got talking to them about the consequences of this cruel and tyrannical regime's treatment of the elderly and disabled.

In the event of total privatisation along American lines, they could have to take out private health insurance - potentially losing their lifetime of National Insurance contributions. They both informed me that because they have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and multiple sclerosis, they cannot currently get such insurance!

Kris Caci, Stoke

Errors of pro-EU left

This is just a short opening shot in the campaign we'll be conducting in the next three months against the anti-worker, racist, capitalist 'inners', and against the anti-worker, racist, capitalist 'outers'.

Unfortunately, many on the left are adopting one position or another on the European Union (EU) on the shaky basis of very superficial impressions, hopes and fears. This will lead to all sorts of political mistakes during the swings of the debate - on political alliances (Galloway with Farage, for example), migration, democracy and austerity.

We need a clear understanding of the class nature of the EU, but also of the frustrations and confusions in the minds of different groups in the working class and middle class, as a firm basis for our campaign.

The referendum also presents a potential opportunity to get rid of Cameron and his deeply divided, weakened government within months - if the Opposition had the right programme and strategy. An exit or narrow remain vote could lead to formal splits both in the Tory and Labour parties, completely changing the political landscape, and unleashing forces from below which the ruling class can't control.

Socialists have not only always opposed British membership of the EU; as working class internationalists, we're for the abolition of the EU itself. Originally set up by the coal and steel barons, it's a free-market bureaucracy serving only the interests of the banks and big business, not ordinary Europeans.

The Lisbon Treaty allowed Thatcherites like Cameron and Merkel to impose their policies of lower wages, austerity and privatisation on other governments like Greece - and on their own populations - while blaming "Brussels". Now these right-wing politicians are using the EU to make secret negotiations with the USA to privatise public services like the NHS and allow corporations to dictate government policies solely in the interests of their own profits.

The Trade Union Congress wrongly relies on the EU to safeguard workplace rights instead of getting off its backside and fighting. Concessions like maternity leave and maximum hours were only won by pressure from below, not granted by pro-business bureaucrats or toothless MEPs.

Workers need to rely on our own strength, and international solidarity, to fight for better living standards and social progress. No to the capitalist EU, yes to fighting for a socialist Europe!

Brent Kennedy, Carlisle

Global economy gripes

After the financial crash of 2008, the Socialist Party predicted that any recovery was always going to be fragile.

Recently, we have seen more panic selling on global stock exchanges. China has been the latest and biggest economy to suffer. For a while, enormous government investment kept the country afloat, but this growth has stalled, leaving behind ghost towns of empty properties, which the mass of people simply cannot afford.

America too, is suffering. Cheap oil has meant that its investment in environmentally disastrous industries such as fracking is not paying dividends.

In place of a system built on fleeting, short-term gains for a few, socialists look to democratic planning, and collective solutions to meet the world's needs.

Ian Reynolds, Leicester

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/22443>