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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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STRIKE TO FIGHT CUTS BUDGET

photo Senan

Emma Clark

Tory Chancellor George Osborne is introducing yet more severe spending cuts. Osborne justifies this new savagery because of a faltering economy. But he's been in the driving seat for the last six years!

These cuts will disproportionately hit the working class hardest. Meanwhile he con-

tinues to give big businesses tax breaks that allow them to dodge billions in corporation tax, and the super-rich enjoy lower rates of income tax.

Under public pressure, Osborne was forced to make a u-turn in his 2015 autumn statement on plans to scrap tax credits.

Tax credits

However, on the eve of this budget the government has changed how tax credits are calculated, thereby taking £1 billion from 800,000 low-income workers.

Osborne is targeting other areas for making cuts, such as slashing PIP disability ben-

efits by up to £150 a week for 500,000 vulnerable people (see page 2).

Pensions are also coming under his cosh. At the turn of the 20th century, the state pension was introduced into Britain. Gone were the days of people working up until their death.

But cuts and changes to pensions show that the Tory government wants to return back to times like this.

Young people today could see their retirement age rise to 75 or even as high as 81!

This is the latest nail in the coffin for the prospects of young people, who have to

balance tuition fees, zero-hour contracts, lower wages, and now a retirement age where we'll work till death do us part!

Strike

We have to stop the Tories returning us to the Victorian age. The trade unions should rally to people's defence by coordinating industrial action as a step towards a 24-hour general strike.

The Tories are split over the EU and are on the back foot in attacking the junior doctors. They can only get away with more austerity if the opposition allows them to.

Join the fightback now!



Join the fight against poverty pay and zero-hour contracts!



photo Lisa Padilla/
Creative Commons

NEW ZEALAND BANS ZERO HOURS 'LIVING WAGE' LIE STARTS APRIL

Nick Hall

A recent change to law in New Zealand has outlawed zero-hour contracts. It is now essential for the same to happen here.

Meanwhile, the Tories' new National 'Living' Wage comes into force 1 April. And yes, it is an April Fools' Day trick. For a start, it is nothing close to a genuine living wage, which would allow workers to live comfortably without relying on benefits and borrowing. And it doesn't even apply to under-25s!

Elitist Tories and big business Blairites tout nonsense to defend the undefendable. Zero-hour contracts are 'practical for people'; workers 'can choose when they want to work'; it's 'flexible work in the modern economy'. They hide the reality behind such contracts.

If you have to knuckle down and obey every unsafe or unfair practice for fear of losing your hours, how is this practical? If you turn down a shift and don't get more hours in punishment, how is this working when you want? When you spend all your time waiting at home for your manager to call you for work, how is this flexible?

Zero-hour contracts are an exploitative practice, used to make unionisation and worker-friendly conditions more difficult to win.

It is these low-pay, low-rights, low-dignity jobs which the gov-

ernment claims are building the so-called economic recovery. They mean some companies are more profitable - off the back of Victorian labour practices.

It is self-evident that casual contracts and poverty pay have a negative effect on workers. No ability to have a work-life balance, or earn enough money to get through the week; no sick pay, no holiday time.

So long as the profit rolls in, capitalism doesn't care. The bosses won't just grant us better hours and wages - and neither will their politicians, the Tories and the Blairites.

Socialist

The Socialist Party fights to end zero-hour contracts and poverty pay.

For flexible working on our terms, not the bosses'. Guaranteed hours and shift patterns, up to and including full-time work, for all who want it.

For a £10 an hour minimum wage now, with no exemptions for youth or training. This would be an important step towards a real living wage for all.

To win these improvements, and make sure they are implemented, we campaign to build a strong trade union movement. As the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) has shown, militant collective action can beat zero-hour contracts.

For fighting, democratic unions, and a mass workers' party against austerity and privatisation.

Take action against poverty pay and zero-hour contracts!

Join food workers' union BFAWU, campaign group Youth Fight for Jobs, and others in the Fast Food Rights campaign.

National 'Living' Wage protests

Friday 1 April
Show Osborne we're not fooled by his 'living wage' lie. Demand £10 an hour now with no exceptions!

Global protest against low pay

Thursday 14 April
Join low-paid workers around the world in calling for a real living wage and the right to a union.

Times and locations will be confirmed nearer the day on fastfoodrights.wordpress.com and youthfightforjobs.com.

Contact Youth Fight for Jobs for more info: text your name and postcode to 0774 937 9010, email youthfightforjobs@gmail.com, call 020 8558 7947
Facebook 'Youth Fight for Jobs', Twitter @youthfight4jobs.

Follow us on Twitter
@Socialist_Party and @socialistpaper



photos Sarah Wrack



THOUSANDS MARCH TO STOP TORY HOUSING BILL



photo James Ivens

"Housing Bill, no way - can't pay, will stay!" chanted thousands of angry tenants, housing campaigners and trade unionists on the national Kill the Housing Bill demonstration in central London on 13 March.

The Housing Bill is yet another assault on social housing - increasing rents and attacking security of tenure (see socialistparty.org.uk 'We need socialist policies to end the housing crisis').

Socialist Party members asked people to sign up to the 'we're not moving' pledge to resist the implementation of the bill, which hundreds did. The 'I'm not moving' placards

were all snapped up long before the march set off. We will now be calling meetings to organise this resistance in local communities.

Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party formed a bloc on the demonstration with tenants from the successful New Era estate campaign in Hackney and the ongoing campaign at the Butterfields estate in Walthamstow.

Tenants from Butterfields spoke from the platform of the demonstration, as did Socialist Party members Nancy Taaffe from Walthamstow and Suzanne Muna of general union Unite's housing workers branch.

TORIES CUT DISABLED DIGNITY FOR TAX BREAKS

Adrian Picton
Disabled worker

Tory chancellor George Osborne plans to cut £1.2 billion from benefits which help disabled people live independently.

The Con-Dem coalition brought in 'Personal Independence Payments' (PIP) to replace Disability Living Allowance in the hope it would save a lot of money. It cost a huge amount to roll out, and those people who have applied so far have actually been more successful with their claims than originally anticipated.

This has resulted in Osborne deciding to cut the new benefit to save a further £1.2 billion. Current estimates say this will impact 640,000 people by 2020. But once again, Osborne - and Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith - claim it is all about making the benefit 'fairer'. Clearly it is about making cuts.



The cut will impact 640,000 people by 2020

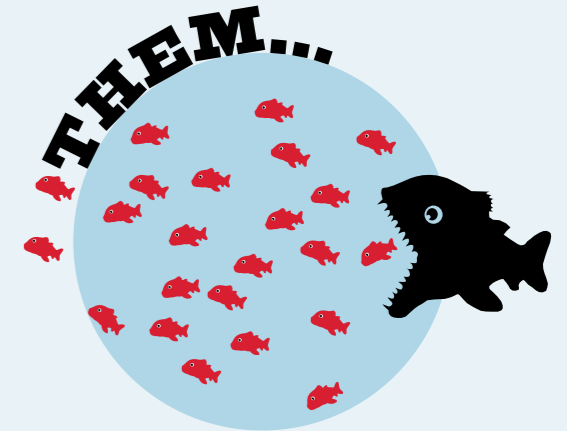
The changes to the eligibility criteria planned for next January concern the weight given to the use of aids and appliances. The theory goes that if someone can have a piece of equipment to make it easier to do something, this reduces their disability, and so they don't need as much help.

However, I would argue that if a person requires the use of specialist equipment to help them get dressed, they are likely to have high needs in other areas. For example, they may be more likely not to be able to do their own housework - something PIP doesn't account for.

This is just the latest in a long list of attacks against disabled people. In this case, to fund a cut in tax for the super-rich from 45 to 40p in the pound.

It is shameful that the government targets disabled people, many of whom are vulnerable and struggle to speak up for themselves.

As socialists, we believe that disabled people have the right to play a full part in society. Benefits must reflect the extra costs of overcoming the barriers disabled people face. Reverse all cuts to disability support and the welfare state - for well-paid jobs and liveable benefits for all, without compulsion.



Hooch for them...

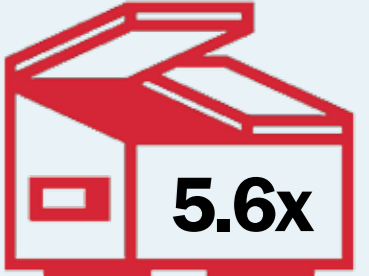
Parasitic property speculators will stumble through several days of free Scottish booze at international property fair Mipim on 15-18 March.

The government-run Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA) wants more super-rich developers to suck out profits and drive up workers' living costs.

Fat cats can start the crawl with gin tasting on Tuesday. On Wednesday they can stagger over to a more traditional whisky night. And anyone left standing by Thursday can quaff their way through a selection of craft beers.

The SCA is even running a toffs' tombola. Just sign up for its networking events, and you could win a bottle of rare single malt. 70cl of Tomatin 1988 Malt Whisky - retail price £173.

Imagine the story if a worker - let alone an unemployed person - accepted this quantity of complimentary sauce. The bosses' papers and politicians would scream for benefit sanctions and extra duty. No such moral outrage for the super-rich.



Growth in people found sleeping in bins, 31 in 2014 to 175 in 2016

...homelessness for us

Meanwhile, many workers at the mercy of the speculators' market can't even afford to rent.

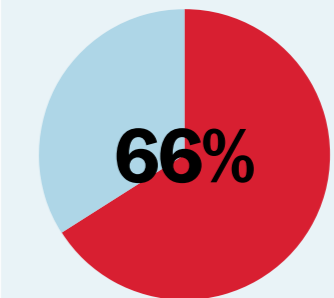
Rent in nearly two thirds of the country is now unaffordable for parents in their 20s and 30s on regional average full-time wages.

Research by the Guardian and Generation Rent found that such couples would have to spend more than 30% of one partner's wages on rent. Various organisations place the figure for affordability - without impacting on other essentials like food and clothes - at about this level.

And Tory attacks have caused a spike in homeless people sleeping in bins.

Refuse collector Biffa says staff found 175 people sleeping in dumpsters this financial year, up from 31 in 2014. If bin workers don't find occupants in time, waste crushers can seriously injure them - or worse.

The Socialist says this is a disgrace. Reverse all cuts to homeless support services. For immediate rent controls, and a mass programme of council house building.



Nearly two thirds of the country has rent which is unaffordable for a two-parent family in their 20s or 30s on the regional average wage



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email editors@socialistparty.org.uk

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Don't give state funds to reactionary Ukip and Tory EU 'outers'

A recent meeting of the PCS civil servants' union national executive committee (NEC) gave a big boost to the campaign under way to stop millions of pounds of public funding being given to Tory and Ukip Brexit campaigners.

Under the rules of June's European Union (EU) referendum the Electoral Commission, an unelected quango, has the power to choose who shall be the official Remain and Leave campaigns, giving them political authority but also substantial public resources.

The PCS NEC decided that the union will write to the Electoral Commission calling on them not to designate any group dominated by Ukip, Tory and other pro-austerity and racist establishment politicians and organisations as the official exit campaign.

TUSC

Dave Nellist, chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), welcomed the decision by one of Britain's biggest unions and commented: "The media narrative that only reactionaries oppose the EU and its austerity agenda must be broken."

"I was elected as a Labour MP in 1983 on a manifesto that committed the party to withdrawal from the then European Economic Community (EEC). There are millions of trade unionists, young people, anti-



TUSC is demanding that the Electoral Commission does not allow Ukipers and Tory Eurosceptics to be the official Leave campaign photo Paul Mattsson

austerity campaigners and working class voters generally who, like TUSC, still oppose the EU from a completely different standpoint to that of Ukip and the Tory outers.

"The danger is that the Electoral Commission will follow the establishment media's lead and appoint one of the reactionary Vote Leave,

Leave.EU, or Grassroots Out campaigns, or an amalgam of them, as the official exit organisation. That would give them, for a start, £13 million in free postage, paid for from public funds.

"Choosing a reactionary-led exit group will not only leave working class voters who oppose the EU un-

represented but would actually be a favourable decision for the remain campaign, allowing them to play on the fear that a leave vote would boost Ukip and the Tories who have allied with them.

"It would be better, in fact, if the Electoral Commission decided on no official campaign on either side."

■ TUSC has a petition to the Electoral Commission calling on them not to give taxpayers' money and other public resources to the reactionary-led exit groups. Founding signatories include two trade union national presidents and 16 union national executive committee members

■ Sign the petition online at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/17170/04-02-2016/dont-give-taxpayers-money-to-ukip-and-tory-eu-campaigners>

■ A TUSC leaflet is available to order, explaining TUSC's 'Exit Left' opposition and our campaign to make sure the voice of opposition is not dominated by Ukip and the Eurosceptic Tories (see PDF at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/367.pdf>). To order supplies go to <http://www.tusc.org.uk/resources> on the TUSC website

■ A downloadable version of the petition is available at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/360.pdf> Send completed copies to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London E1 4JP

UKIP STANDS RIGHT-WING TORIES IN WELSH ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Dave Reid

Ukip has selected right-wing ex-Tories Mark Reckless and Neil Hamilton to head regional lists for the Welsh Assembly elections this year.

Because they are standing in the proportional representation section of the election they stand a very good chance of being elected - unless the working class movement opposes them.

Arch-Thatcherite Reckless has been chosen to stand in South Wales East, one of the most deprived areas of western Europe, which was devastated by Thatcher's attacks on the coal and steel industries in the 1980s.

Hamilton has been selected to stand in Mid and West Wales. He was an extreme right-wing Tory MP famous for being implicated in the cash-for-questions scandal in the 1990s. Even more scandalously he supported the privatisation of the NHS and education and is opposed to trade unions and child benefits.

Disillusionment

The selection of these two candidates potentially exposes the anti-working class nature of Ukip and its misleading propaganda.

The party recently sent out a leaflet entitled "Save Our NHS, Say No to TTIP", but is in fact led by two right-wing opponents of the NHS. If elected, they would work with the Tories in Westminster and Cardiff to destroy the NHS in Wales.

Because Ukip poses as an anti-establishment party it has succeeded in winning the ear of some working people who are disenchanted with the corrupt establishment parties.

However, it is very difficult for Welsh Labour to truly expose and defeat these Tories. In the valleys of south Wales there is an even greater disillusionment with the main parties after years of Tory attacks and New Labour neglect in these areas.

In last year's general election Ukip came second in four of the eight constituencies in South Wales East and gained about 17% of the vote overall. If repeated in the Welsh Assembly elections, it could get two of the four 'top up' seats in the region.

Part of this growing support for Ukip has been the media's incessant anti-immigrant rhetoric, but that



The anti-establishment establishment party! photo Karl Lang



Ukip can only be countered by a radical alternative to the austerity and austerity-lite of the main parties

too is bound up with lack of decent jobs, low pay and cuts to public services.

On many issues the majority of its voters are to the left, not just of the leadership of Ukip, but of all of the establishment parties - they are closer to Jeremy Corbyn.

One YouGov poll showed 78% of them support the renationalisation of the energy companies, 73% renationalisation of the railways, and 57% want zero-hour contracts banned. Over 80% of Ukip voters

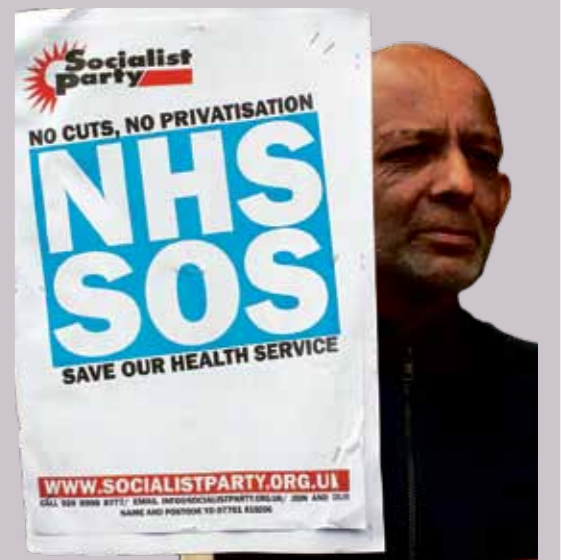
think big business takes advantage of ordinary people.

Ukip can only be countered by a radical alternative to the austerity and austerity-lite of the main parties. However, Carwyn Jones and the Welsh Labour leadership are very much part of the austerity consensus, passing on Tory cuts to working people in Wales with a 'what-can-we-do?' shrug.

The NHS in Wales has borne the brunt of these cuts as Welsh Labour has cut the number of A&Es from around a dozen to just five in south Wales. So Welsh Labour will find it hard to attack Reckless and Hamilton on their closet opposition to the very concept of the NHS.

What is needed is a clear anti-cuts, pro-NHS alternative. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in Wales has no choice but to take up that task and to link up with the hundreds of genuine socialists who have joined Labour in Wales to support Jeremy Corbyn.

NHS Bill - anger over Labour's lack of support



Hugh Caffrey Keep Our NHS Public activist

Activists campaigning for an end to cuts and privatisation in the National Health Service were left angry and perplexed after Labour failed to support the NHS Bill in parliament on 11 March.

The bill aims to reverse pro-market measures introduced by Tory and New Labour governments, such as the Con-Dems' Health and Social Care Act (England), and the Labour-driven Private Finance Initiative now bankrupting NHS trusts.

Campaigners organised a national day of action to publicise the bill, and contacted their MPs urging them to vote for it. Only 34 MPs turned up.

Many Labour MPs made their excuses using a template letter circulated around Labour MPs, which apparently originated from shadow chancellor John McDonnell's office.

The letter says that although Labour supports the 'principles' of the bill, Labour is actually fundamentally opposed to it:

"...this bill would require another wholesale reorganisation of the health service... If the bill were to proceed, Labour would seek to amend it so that it avoids the problems of a further reorganisation but implements the key principles of the bill."

The only reorganisation of the NHS which people actually want is its return to complete public ownership and control. John McDonnell, Jeremy Corbyn and their supporters will share that opinion. Only Blairites like shadow health spokesperson Heidi Alexander and her predecessor, Andy Burnham, are opposed to this.

But if Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell cannot confront the Blairites even over the future of the best-loved public service in Britain - when legislation is in front of parliament and campaigners are mobilising, when support for public ownership is sky-high and junior doctors are striking - then what will they confront them on?

Unless they change course, NHS campaigners and trade unionists will increasingly draw the conclusion that they had under previous Labour leaders - that Labour will not ride to the rescue.

Our NHS can only be saved by building a political alternative and more mass struggles like the recent tremendous 'save our A&E' demonstration in Huddersfield and the junior doctors' strikes.

Elections: TUSC demands 'fair media coverage'

Over 100 candidates have now been approved by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee for the English local council elections taking place on Thursday 5 May.

But as the candidate numbers grow a battle is looming with the broadcasting authorities over TUSC's right to 'fair media coverage' in this year's elections.

As in previous elections the BBC's Chief Political Advisor, Ric Bailey, acting for all the broadcasting organisations, has set the qualification criteria for allocating a Party Election Broadcast (PEB) as "a party standing candidates in at least one sixth of the seats contested".

This year however there is an unusually high number of councils that are holding 'all-up' elections where every councillor is to be elected. This means that there are substantially more councillors to be elected (2,742 in 2,171 wards) than there were in the equivalent elections in 2012.

So should the 'fair coverage' threshold be calculated as the number of wards in which a party has at least one candidate standing (one-

sixth being 362) or the number of councillors to be elected (one-sixth in this instance being 457)?

Despite protests from TUSC, the threshold proposed is for 457 candidates.

In our appeal to the broadcasting authorities we have explained that the TUSC national steering committee expects that in wards where more than one councillor is to be elected, the local TUSC group would in many cases positively wish not to stand for every councillor vacancy.

Changed situation

This is because of the new political situation that has been created by Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader on an anti-austerity message.

TUSC is prepared to use the ballot box to put pressure on councillors who vote for cuts - whatever their party label.

But we will not be standing against Labour councillors who vote against cuts in the council chamber or Labour candidates who give that pledge. The BBC's ruling to maximise councillor vacancies over wards doesn't take into account 'the new politics'.



The establishment doesn't want to allow the voice of socialists to be properly heard photo TU Senan

The BBC has always been quick when it responds to TUSC's complaints to pretend that political considerations play no part in their decisions.

In reality the main 'criteria' for the media elite - a vital part of the capitalist establishment - is not to allow

the voice of trade unionists, socialists and working class community campaigners to be properly heard.

TUSC's local elections campaign message is to build on Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity call - to fight for a councillors' revolt that could stop the Tory cuts.

And with four weeks to go before nominations close there's still time to get that onto our screens.

■ The full list of the candidates agreed so far is at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/txt/369.pdf>

Striking to save sixth form colleges

Members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in sixth form colleges were on strike across England on 15 March against funding cuts, mergers and closures. See reports below and online at socialistparty.org.uk:

Sheffield

NUT members at Longley Park were in high spirits on the picket line following the High Court ruling that their strike was lawful. Several members told us that the Tories' decision to try to get the strike ruled unlawful had massively increased press coverage for the action! One member told the Socialist: "It's great that we've had strong action today. But we need the other education unions to join us in the fight to preserve further education, and that means taking strike action with us."

Sam Morecroft

Islington, north London

"Wow, it's so colourful!" said one of City and Islington sixth form college arts teachers as she joined the picket line. Homemade placards and trade union banners were draped over the entrance to the college. A crowd of 20 staff and supporters were there towards the end when London NUT secretary and Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies joined the picket, and the NUT's deputy general secretary Kevin Courtney also arrived to give support.

Helen Pattison

Newham, east London

"The government has claimed our strike is political, but it is them who are politically attacking us - they want to destroy sixth forms", one striker at NewVic (Newham sixth form college) explained. Another, a modern language teacher, outlined why she felt so strongly about strik-

ing: "We are on strike today because of the threat to sixth form provision, because of the cuts, the threat of academy status. I think especially in an area like Newham with a lot of students from deprived backgrounds, the sixth form is really important. The other thing we've had is the 'Academy of Excellence' where Eton college lends some of its teachers for part of the year to teach the poor in the East End - that smacks of Victorian England not 2016."

Hannah Sell

Salford

Paul Rossington, an NUT member at Salford City College explained: "Members have gone out on strike today at Salford City College. It's not about this college, this college is a great college, and teaching staff are very proud of it. It is primarily because of the Tory funding cuts - since 2010, it's been cut by 14% in real terms and we feel that this sector that we're extremely proud of, will cease to exist in its present form. And I think that particularly in an area like Salford, which is classed as a deprived area, the service that we provide to young people is immense."

Hugh Caffrey

Eastleigh, Hampshire

Visiting the NUT picket line outside Barton Peveril College in Eastleigh we found a buoyant and committed group of sixth form teachers who explained how cuts to education are resulting in courses being with-



Teachers and students on the picket line in Kensington photo Chris Newby

STOP PRESS: JOHN ROAN ACADEMY VICTORY!
Teachers, students and parents the John Roan academy in south London have defeated academy plans. NUT members were set to strike 15-16 March after the school retreated. See next week's issue for a full article.

drawn and staff losing jobs. Pickets described how happy they were to receive support from parents who stopped to give support and from the Socialist Party members who came in solidarity.

Declan Clune

Havering, east London

Kieran Clements, NUT rep at Havering sixth form college, the fifth largest in England, told the Socialist that the college faces losing approximately £500 per student due to the government cuts: "So multiply that by 2,700 and you can see just how hard these cuts are hitting!" Kieran added, "People might say that the strike is inconvenient for the students for one day, but the current government is harming the students' education every day with their cuts to education."

Pete Mason



photo Helen Pattison

DOCTORS OUT IN FORCE FOR THIRD PHASE OF ACTION



Junior doctors and supporters rally in Sheffield photo Alistair Tice

Junior doctors in England were out on strike in force again on 9 and 10 March in their third round of action against worse contracts.

There's massive anger against the government for trying to impose the new contract and for all its other attacks on the NHS. Further strikes are planned for 6 and 7 April and on 26 and 27 April.

Determination

Iain Dalton reports that comparable numbers at both Leeds General Infirmary and St James's Hospital showed their determination to fight. One striker carried a poignant sign: "If you tolerate this, then the nurses will be next," which sums up how serious the dispute is.

Pickets laughed and cheered as a truck driver honked and gave a

clenched fist salute outside Lambeth Hospital in south London.

A member of fellow health union Unison agreed that other health unions should ballot for coordinated action with the doctors, in light of the Tories' latest 1% public sector pay insult.

Strikers bought copies of the Socialist from James Ivens who reports that one junior doctor said: "We're not used to being anti-establishment." But pickets at Lambeth Hospital are up for the fight.

At Southampton General Hospital spirits were high with many chocolate bars and cakes in circulation plus smiles and laughs all around, reports Declan Clune. Later in Southampton city centre the BMA held a rally which was joined by protesters taking part in the national day of ac-

tion against benefit sanctions organised by Unite Community.

Back at the picket line, one doctor explained: "Having the support of people coming to join us is extremely important and is much appreciated."

Doctors in Bristol stood firm, determined to see off the imposition of the new contracts. They were buoyed up by support from the public which was as strong as ever.

Support

The picket line in the centre of town was met with a constant cacophony of car horns and everywhere you could see people wearing BMA badges, reports Tom Baldwin.

Large and lively pickets outside Royal Liverpool Hospital were well supported by the public, patients,

local campaigners and trade unionists.

Hugh Caffrey spoke to one of the doctors, Nusiba Taufik, BMA junior doctors' rep at the Royal, who said: "Hunt imposed the contract the day after our last strike, which shows the Department of Health doesn't care what we're saying."

You can see there's gritty determination to take on the Tories when junior doctors are out en masse in freezing cold rain, says Elaine Brunskill in Gateshead.

It is also clear they are digging in for the long haul as they mentioned looking forward to picket lines in the sunshine over the summer!

At Gateshead's Queen Elizabeth Hospital doctors understand they are seen as at the forefront of the battle to defend the NHS. One of them proudly likened themselves to the miners who went on strike during the 1980s.



Junior doctor reads a Socialist Party leaflet photo Elaine Brunskill

[News in brief]

Blacklisting protest

Protesters from the Blacklist Support Group and supporters occupied the lobby at the headquarters of construction firm Skanska for several hours. A High Court trial into the blacklisting is due to start in May and scheduled to finish at the end of July. Skanska is one of eight contractors who have set up the Construction Workers Compensation Scheme to try and settle with victims out of court. The demonstrators including the National Shop Stewards Network unfurled banners in the lobby of Skanska's main office on 14 March before being moved on by the police and continuing their protest outside the building. For more and a video of the occupation see: <https://youtu.be/SEGngBmHKA>

Co-op driver strike

Co-op drivers have voted overwhelmingly for industrial action over the proposal to transfer 87 drivers in the Midlands to haulier Eddie Stobart. The ballot was passed with 77% of the 700 Unite members in favour. The members are based at Birtley, Newcastle; Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland; Castlewood, north Derbyshire; Coventry; Inverness; Newhouse, Lanarkshire; Plymouth and Thurrock in Essex. Unite national officer for retail distribution Adrian Jones said: "The ballot result is a strong mandate from our members to continue to fight hard to protect their pay and conditions. In 2012, Unite was embroiled in a long-running dispute when Tesco in Doncaster 'TUPEd' 184 workers to Eddie Stobart. The drivers were then issued with a termination of employment notice with no prospect of re-employment. Many of those drivers are still out of work."

Port workers rally

A fortnight of strikes at the Port of Grangemouth in Scotland kicked off with a rally on the 14 March by Unite members before joining night shift workers on the picket line. The two week strike is over the imposition of shift changes, affecting pay by up to £1,800 a year. Unite regional officer Sandy Smart said: "We are on the verge of a prolonged strike action at Scotland's biggest port because of Fort Ports' draconian approach to employment relations." See <http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk/> for updates.

May Day greetings with

the **Socialist**
Formerly **Militant**

International Workers' Day is a time when we express solidarity with all sections of our movement. The Socialist newspaper consistently champions trade union struggle, covering the stories the mainstream press ignores or misrepresents, and putting forward a fighting strategy to improve workers' lives.

Help the Socialist continue that work with a May Day greeting this year from readers of the Socialist in your union or campaign.

Deadline is Wednesday 22 April but you will get a 25% discount and only have to pay the prices in bold if you send your greeting before Wednesday 15 April.

Spread £800 **£600** - full page £500 **£375** - half page £300 **£225** - quarter page £170 **£127.50** - 1/8 page £90 **£67.50** - 1/16 page (text only) £50 **£37.50** - 1/32 page (text only) £30 **£22.50** - 'Small box' (name only) £20 **£15**

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Email jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk
socialistparty.org.uk
Pay greeting online www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday

PLANS TO EXTEND SUNDAY RETAIL TRADING DEFEATED

Iain Dalton
Vice chair, Usdaw Leeds private trades branch (personal capacity)

Retail workers up and down the country will be celebrating the defeat of the government's plans to devolve Sunday Trading to local authorities. A majority of 31 voted down the government's plans, including 27 Tory MPs.

Cameron's reaction to the vote has been to declare that the plans are "dead in the water". But a number of Tory MP's have argued that the votes of the SNP, who opposed the changes, should not count given the new English votes for English laws provisions. Scotland already has longer Sunday Trading. This factor means that despite the Tories saying they will not reintroduce these proposals, if the government brings in limitations on Scottish MPs to vote on 'English' matters and with pressure from big business, they may yet appear again. The vote on 9 March was, after all,

photo Simon Haytack/
Creative Commons



the third attempt by the Tories to introduce such measures in the last five years.

Clearly the vote is a great result for Usdaw (the shop workers' union) members' hard work in campaigning and lobbying in opposition to this vote.

But given the vast majority of the big, urban local authorities are controlled by Labour, then serious opposition at that level and a refusal to use powers to extend Sunday trading if granted, could have made this 'dead in the water' before now.

The task now is to use this victory to give confidence to organise retail workers to halt the attacks on terms and conditions, particularly premium payments that were stepped up in advance of this legislation possibly coming in.

Mobilising an active campaign for the TUC demand of a £10 an hour minimum wage, while defending hard won premium payments and campaigning for a minimum of time-and-half for all working on Sundays, must be the goal of Usdaw and other retail unions.

A day in the life of a painter and decorator "I'm a ragged trousered philanthropist"

My day starts at about 3.20am, answering to my 18-month old daughter's cries of cutting those important new teeth. My, how teeth take up so much of our time!

I like to think I'll always be there to comfort my daughter when she needs me but I have to be up for work in the next three hours.

At 6.15am my alarm rings and it's time to get ready for work. If my daughter is up I let her attempt to brush those teeth of hers along with mine and then we go downstairs to change, sort breakfast out and make lunch.

I thank science for the all-important thermal flask, without which the entirety of my lunch box would be like the weather: cold!

Usually once my lunch is done, my wife is up and ready to take over the parenting and I'm out the door, in the van and off to work. I am a ragged trousered philanthropist. In other words, a painter and decora-

tor who teaches socialism free of charge.

Like the vast majority of tradespeople I am self-employed, bound by a 'zero-hour contract', I have no sick pay, no holiday pay, and no entitlements to rights as a worker. But

“““

We have no welfare: no hot water, no flushing toilet and nowhere to sit during lunch

for the moment I have paid work which will provide for my family. I work every day of the working week and sometimes weekends when necessary.

But I work with the joy of looking forward to getting home to spend

the most valuable time I have with my daughter and wife, my family.

Life is for living and that is why we should fight for our rights to equality and justice. My current job is prepping and painting all the external windows on a large building which has about forty windows in total, so I'm outside in the elements.

On this job we have no welfare: no hot water, no flushing toilet and nowhere to even sit during lunch.

But we make do. My exploitation as a worker doesn't stop there as currently I am also a sub-contractor out on loan to another company which basically means my labour creates three types of income. Two for the bosses and the leftovers for me.

With the Tories forever tightening the grip, I fought against those tax credit cuts which would have cost us even more of our 'staying alive budget'. The privileged party took a step back on that, which the working class should see as a small victory.



photo Joanne Munroe/
Creative Commons

LIVING WAGE LIE: END LOW PAY WITH £10 AN HOUR NOW!

Cuts to premiums and below inflation pay rises: organise and fight back!

A Tesco worker and Usdaw rep

In February, my Usdaw (shop workers' union) area organiser came to see me with the long overdue Tesco pay deal. Having been previously informed that there was unlikely to be any pay rise, I was surprised when he started by saying that Usdaw had successfully negotiated with Tesco for one.

With a smile, he told me that our pay will increase by the amount of 12p. But then he told us that our overtime, weekend and night premiums will be cut.

This means that most workers, who rely on overtime and bonus payments to pay ever increasing bills, will be worse off as a result. On the other hand, Tesco CEO Dave Lewis enjoyed pay of £4.1 million in his first six months in the job in 2015!

As one of my colleagues said in despair: "A 12 pence pay rise, great! Now tell that to my landlord who is increasing my rent by £100."

This is the reality for the majority

of workers; wages are not keeping up with rises in rent, bills, transport, childcare, etc. It is almost impossible to be able to have a normal, stress free life without worrying about running out of your pennies.

We work very hard but are constantly denied the right to have a decent standard of living. In London where I live 57% of people in poverty are in working families.

Osborne

The numbers of low-paid jobs in London has increased substantially. The current official living wage in London stands at £9.20 an hour and at £8.25 in the rest of the UK. The number of jobs paying less than the living wage has jumped by 54% since 2008 - one in every five jobs fails to pay it.

George Osborne's announcement of a £9 hourly rate, which will not be introduced until 2020 and only for workers aged 25 and above, is seen by

many workers as a joke. By 2020 the so called National Living Wage of £9 will be completely useless. There are more than 5.2 million low paid workers in Britain. These workers, including many retail and public sector workers, will remain trapped in low paid, insecure work. But we don't have to remain trapped. There is enough money to

increase the minimum wage now! The Socialist Party, alongside the bakers' union, has been campaigning for a £10 an hour minimum wage now! As a result of a bakers' union motion, the TUC adopted the £10 an hour demand at its conference. But this is not enough. Usdaw, along with other trade unions and campaigners, has to organise to win the demand.



Socialist city councillor Kshama Sawant led the successful movement for a city-wide \$15 minimum wage in Seattle, USA

Smash the public sector pay freeze and campaign for a real living wage

Dave Semple
PCS union rep (personal capacity)

Low pay is something normally associated with call centres, care work or retail jobs. Yet last year, a PCS civil servants' union survey among Scottish government workers indicated significant numbers relying on pay day loan companies and even using foodbanks, with 20% in debt by £5,000 or more.

Cap

The Scottish government has adhered to the 1% pay cap imposed by the Tories - which is a real-terms cut of at least 2% a year, for the next four years. Following years of austerity, the overall cut to wage bills since 2008 has already been 20%.

On top of this, there is a range of hidden attacks, like the planned increase in employee National Insurance contributions from April. The cost to workers will be an average 1.4% of their wages - instantly wiping out the 1% pay rise. The cost will be disproportionate for those on lower salaries.

This rise in National Insurance contributions is to fund the government's flagship new State Pension, which will raise the basic pension amount, but wipe out a lot of the extra components that millions of workers will be counting on in retirement.

Meanwhile, the shockingly low civil servants' pay is subsidised by the benefits system. When Universal Credit replaces Working Tax Credit, 40% of those administering the scheme will be eligible to claim it. Wages for lower civil service grades are only a few pence above the national minimum wage.

Low pay in the civil service also disproportionately impacts women. 70% of staff are women in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), one of the lowest paid areas of the public sector. Socialist-led union PCS has

fought hard against all of this. Museum workers have been on strike over pay, along with staff in other departments such as the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the Natural Environment Research Council.

Concessions won from employers show that a fighting, democratic union can get results, like the 23% won for cleaners and caterers at the Department for Education, or the 15% won from outsourcing firm Maximus. In DWP, a magnificent campaign to put pressure on the employer has resulted in talks about breaking the 1% pay cap.

Workers are defiantly opposed to Tory pay austerity. Their constant willingness to organise and fight back against low pay is an embarrassment to 'leaders' like Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the Trade Union Congress, who recently said that our rights at work depend on membership of the EU.

Leaders

Some working class people fear that this is true - but only because of the passivity of the leaders of the bigger unions, despite all their fine words in October 2014 when half a million workers joined the 'Britain Needs a Pay Rise' demonstration. If called upon to fight against low pay in a determined, national campaign, millions of workers would respond.

Frustrated by the inertia of union leaders, workers have cast around for other means to fight back. The huge vote for the Scottish National Party in May 2015, because they hinted at anti-austerity policies, reflects this, and secured - after pressure from the unions - a declaration that the Scottish government would be the first living wage government.

This shows the explosive potential for a serious campaign by trade unions, especially if combined with the offer of a real political alternative at the ballot box.

Zero-hour contracts and hand to mouth misery

Dan Smart

Life on low pay and precarious contracts is a hand-to-mouth existence. You are forced to live from week to week with little ability to plan for the future.

When you aren't told the hours you will be working that week until the day before, it can feel like walking a tightrope. It might be 60 hours, or just six.

Questions are always on your mind - will the rent get paid this month? Will I be able to afford to pay the bills and do the food shop?

Not being able to plan in advance also makes having a social life difficult. Living for the moment becomes a necessity.



Some managers refuse to use people's names, instead referring to them as 'agency one' and so on

The sort of job I previously saw as a temporary interlude, before moving onto something more secure and rewarding, has become the long-term prospect. As bosses look for more ways of cutting costs and maximising profits, workers' pay and conditions are driven into the dirt. The options are becoming more limited, with insecure and zero-hour contracts becoming the norm.

I have experienced many jobs working under these conditions. At Tesco's cafe, I was told I would get no more hours for a fortnight and that I could expect a call to let me know when I would be working again.

The call never came, and it turned out I had unofficially been sacked. The contract made it impossible for me to dispute the decision, and made it more convenient and less embarrassing for management.

The working atmosphere is often very competitive. Even for such low-paid work, we are required to battle



photo Suzanne Beishon

fiercely for shifts. This is highly beneficial to employers, as it makes people work harder and keep their heads down. It makes unionisation particularly difficult, as workers struggle to hold on to the little they have, not wanting to take any risks. With these divide and rule tactics, workers compete with their colleagues rather than organising collectively.

Exhausting

You often end up with the contradictory situation of some scraping by on barely any hours, while others work an exhausting amount. I have known workers to take 17 hour shifts (these were split shifts, which nevertheless have the added annoyance of leaving you waiting around for hours unpaid).

And at an agency I was with, they ask people to meet at 4.30am, to travel for hours unpaid, and work a 12 hour shift. Then do the same again the next day!

There are numerous other examples of poor working conditions I have witnessed. Friends turning up for shifts in the morning just to be sent home. Managers refusing to use people's names, instead referring to them as 'agency one' and so on. And

impossible targets resulting in an incredibly high turnover of staff. Many young workers' expectations of the working environment are far too low. We need to start getting organised now to demand decent pay, at least £10 an hour, and a quality standard of living. The struggles in the US for \$15 an hour and the fast food workers strikes are fantastic examples of how we can get organised, struggle and win!

The Socialist Party calls for:

- A minimum wage of £10 an hour as a step towards a real living wage
- No exemptions - a living wage for all, regardless of age
- For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to the real cost of living
- End the pay freeze now
- End zero-hour contracts and all forced under-employment
- Investment in a massive programme to create socially useful jobs
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment



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The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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Sanctions against women

With International Women's Day recently, it is interesting to note how much austerity measures are affecting women, particularly those with children. Of the £26 billion of cuts by this government to benefits, tax credits and pensions, 85% has been taken from women's incomes. 40,000 single parents with preschool children, mainly women, have been sanctioned yearly. 100,000 children are going hungry as parents forced to look for non-existent work have benefits withdrawn. These cruel benefit sanctions are pointless, and have been shown to drive people away from the jobs market. Less money means fewer resources to even look for work. Women need socialism. We are still the main carers in most households. It is clear that capitalism is incapable and unwilling to meet our needs.

In Derbyshire, 32 Sure Start centres are under threat of closure, leaving just 19 - increasing hardship for those with young children. Those sanctioned can appeal to Citizen's Advice centres, unemployed worker's centres and the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund for hardship payments.

**Elaine Evans and Karen Seymour
East Midlands**

Unemployed heroes

In Derbyshire, 65% of benefit claimants are still feeling the stressful effects up to six months after a sanction, according to Financial Action Advice Derbyshire. It affects their health, their finances and their relationships.

There does not need to be this punitive system. Your benefits can be stopped with no warning. Those in employment do not lose all their wages if they are late, as can a benefit claimant who is ten minutes

late for an appointment. Claimants have to be careful what they are signing up for. If the jobseeker's agreement says they have to make 35 evidential job searches, and there is no proof of their search online, they could be sanctioned. This also applies to those on training schemes.

In Derbyshire alone, 7,000 people were sanctioned for no good reason. Research shows that 90% of these sanctions go unchallenged. People should apply for mandatory reconsideration as many of these sanctions are overturned on appeal.

On the national day of action against sanctions at Shirebrook job centre, it was reported that an unemployed person was given an appointment for 10am when the job centre did not open until 10.15. Even this mistake in the paperwork can result in a sanction.

Unite Community says that the unemployed are not scroungers - they are heroes walking a tightrope. Juggling to buy food, pay bills, and look for work, while the government is taking away the safety net of the welfare system.

There is no evidence that sanctions help anyone into work. We all need to support each other to make everyone's life better.

Elaine Evans

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.

Featured letter

CAPITALISM SAYS BLAME YOURSELF, NOT THE SYSTEM WHICH MAKES YOU ILL

James Collett

Gloucestershire Socialist Party

After reading Amalia's article on mental illness (see socialistparty.org.uk, 'Mental health: my battle for the help I needed'), I tried really hard to put my own story down on paper.

Unfortunately, I'm sick to death of that story, and to be honest it's unprintable anyway. But what it comes down to, once the gory details have been removed, is nothing more than this.

I've been trying, for as long as I can remember, to rise above my unhappiness, to conquer it somehow. And by this very act of trying - by taking individual responsibility for my problems, and by searching for an individual solution to them - I have become steadily more entangled in the cycle of self-blame, self-hatred and self-destruction which made me unhappy in the first place.

This is only natural in a society where community and culture have been systematically destroyed, leaving people isolated, embattled and vulnerable. A society where advertisers deliberately exacerbate your emotional insecurities in order to sell you their false promise of a

solution to insecurity.

A society which constantly indoctrinates each one of us to believe that we can and should 'pay our way', 'make something of ourselves', 'go forth into the world' - and yet simultaneously pays most of us wages so low that any plans we make for self-improvement are ruthlessly smashed by the sheer impossibility of making ends meet.

DWP

And when, one day, a person is so crushed by all of this that they become ill, that person is put on trial by the Department for Work and Pensions, a trial which more and more takes on the features of a witch trial. Finally the defendant feels forced to either consider suicide, or else 'stop being such a faker' and get a job.

I could quite literally give myself a breakdown trying to explain how I feel about mental illness, but the main thing I feel is tired.

I'm really, really tired of all this wretchedness and shame, of hating myself while a gang of millionaires demand from me what I haven't got to give. I'm tired of feeling that I'm unfit to live, while in reality it is the ruling class which is unfit to rule, and the conditions of capitalist society which are unfit to live in.

Obituary

Max Neill, 1966-2016

Socialist Party members in the North West and beyond were saddened to hear of the loss of long-standing comrade Max Neill.

Max joined Militant (forerunner of Socialist Party) in Blackburn while a teenager. The campaign in defence of the 'Blackburn Six' - Militant supporters expelled from the local Labour Party - was in full flight and in the national media.

As a student at Lancaster University, 'Max the Militant' was a stalwart of the Labour Club and organised solidarity for the miners during the 1984-85 strike.

Max moved to Preston after graduating and played a key role in building the local Militant branch. He had an impressive grasp of Marxist ideas and methods of work. He was crucial in the formation of the Preston Anti-Poll Tax Union and Lancashire Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

After the magnificent victory over the poll tax, Max's focus centred on bringing up a young family, and his work with people with learning disabilities. When diagnosed with cancer, Max bravely blogged about 'end of life planning', which was featured in the national press.

Max remained committed to socialist ideas and loyal to the Socialist Party. When I visited him in February he was enthusiastic about Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader of



Max (with the megaphone)

the Labour Party. But he added that bold socialist policies, and the mobilisation of the working class, were needed to bring about real change.

The Socialist Party sends condolences to Max's partner and comrade, Lorraine, and all his family and friends.

Niall Mulholland

■ Read more about Max's life at socialistparty.org.uk, 'Obituary: Max Neill, 1966-2016'

Very sad to hear of Max Neill's death. We were the first people he came to

in Blackburn to begin his socialist activities. After not much discussion he became firmly convinced of the policies put forward by Militant supporters in Blackburn and joined the Labour Party Young Socialists.

This was at a time of great turmoil in the area, as six of us had just been expelled from the local Labour Party. We knew from day one that here was a dedicated socialist, and are just so sorry his life has been so cruelly cut short.

Our condolences go to Max's family, friends and comrades.

Peter and Kay Harris



Anti-capitalist occupy protests, 2011
photo Paul Mattsson

Pent Valley student speaks: SAVE OUR SCHOOL (AND ALL THE OTHERS!)



photos Eric Segal

Bethany Smith
Sixth form student

are overcrowded, schools are failing and closing down.



I will continue to stand up for Pent Valley, but we need everyone to stand up too

In my local area we are campaigning to save Pent Valley School from closure (as previously reported in the Socialist). However, Pent Valley is not the only school that needs saving. By 2020 the government would like every UK school to become a free school or an academy. Is this the way we want education to end up? Britain is in a 15,000 primary school place crisis. Is it not the case that in the next few years we will end up with a secondary school place crisis too? The reason the government isn't worried about children under the age of 18 not in full time education is because classrooms

329 schools across the UK are registered as failing schools, however there are plenty of others that are failing unnoticed. The head of education at Kent County Council, Patrick Leeson, has noticed that the Folkestone Academy is dropping below its expectations. However the council has allowed

more and more students into the school. Do parents want to send their children to another school that is on the borderline of being a failing school? There is a public Facebook page called 'Folkestone Academy action group' which is for parents and students to raise their problems within the school.

Parents
Parents whose children are currently at Pent Valley but have been allocated to the Folkestone Academy (if Pent Valley closes) have been told that their child must stop any extra-curricular activities when they are transferred as they will be in school until 5pm, four days a week. It will cost £3.7 million to keep Pent Valley open until pupil numbers pick up. However we know numbers will increase as parents are



still trying to send their children to Pent Valley, despite what is being said by the council. On the other hand, it will cost £5.9 million to close the school and make teachers redundant. Why can't they keep us open? I think we need a referendum for the future of education. It shouldn't just be the government's choice, it's my generation's future children that

this will effect. We won't have a choice but to send our children to schools and be taught by teachers that aren't even qualified. This isn't what we want for Britain; we need a radical solution to the situation. I will continue to stand up for Pent Valley, but we need everyone to stand up too. Something needs to be done, and now is the time.

Political springboards and big boosts at Northern Socialist Party conference

Elaine Brunskill
Northern Socialist Party secretary

The Socialist Party northern regional conference acted as a political springboard, giving us a big boost for the tasks ahead. Our first discussion on Britain was introduced by Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer. Ken started by highlighting the volatility of the period we're in and how growing numbers of young people are wanting to discuss socialist ideas.



We discussed the reprieve of two respite centres and one day centre for the disabled which were saved from closure

Our members from Tyneside, Teesside and Cumbria discussed an array of topics: the rift within the Labour Party and Momentum and fears that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are constantly giving too much ground to the Blairites.

Shocks

We discussed the possibility of splits in the Tory party over the EU referendum and the impact of further shockwaves in the economy. There were also reports from the various campaigns and activities



photo Nick Fray

we have been involved in, including the reprieve of two respite centres and one day centre for the disabled which were saved from closure. This victory highlighted the importance of high profile campaigning. A fourth centre in Gateshead is still under threat.

Our members from Carlisle told how, after the devastating floods, we came up with an action plan. This includes the demand that Carlisle City Council should requisition the region's 1,586 identified empty properties to rehouse flood victims. The conference was well timed

to give us political direction in the forthcoming local election campaigns where we will be standing as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition across the region. The upbeat mood of our conference was reflected in our fighting fund appeal which raised over £350.

Also, a big thanks to Norman Hall and Clare Hannaby who did a marvellous job catering for us all.



DONATE TODAY!
If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:
■ pay by card on 020 8988 8777 ■ cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

| | £ received | £ target | January-March 2016 | Deadline 1 April 2016 |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| North West | 4,204 | 1,800 | | 234% |
| South West | 2,086 | 1,400 | | 149% |
| Northern | 829 | 600 | | 138% |
| Yorkshire | 3,610 | 2,900 | | 124% |
| West Midlands | 2,431 | 2,100 | | 116% |
| Wales | 2,316 | 2,300 | | 101% |
| East Midlands | 1,509 | 1,600 | | 94% |
| Southern | 783 | 1,200 | | 65% |
| London | 3,849 | 6,100 | | 63% |
| Eastern | 274 | 1,200 | 23% | |
| South East | 127 | 750 | 17% | |
| England and Wales | 169 | 3,050 | 6% | |
| TOTAL | 22,186 | 25,000 | | 89% |

SPRINT FINISH FOR FIGHTING FUND IN NOTTINGHAM AS THE QUARTER ENTERS HOME STRAIGHT

Socialist Party member Jean Thorpe in Nottingham has entered a ten kilometre run to raise money for the fighting fund. As Jean said on the sponsor form: "This is my first run since school. As well as doing this to get fit, I am hoping to raise money for the Socialist Party's campaign to defend public services." Jean asked for sponsors where she

could: at work, at labour movement meetings and on the Socialist paper round that Jean and Gary Freeman do each week. Other Socialist Party members also helped. Sponsorship ranged from 20p to £2 a kilometre and over £180 was paid in advance; £204 has now been collected and when all the money is in, it will total £447!



picture neopri/
Creative Commons

Invigorating and inspiring South West day school

Ryan Aldred
Plymouth Socialist Party

On 28 February, Plymouth Socialist Party hosted a day school with new members from Truro, St Austell, Exeter and Bristol in attendance. We were also pleased to welcome members of Momentum into our inclusive discussions which gave an introduction to Marxist philosophy and economics. We held commissions covering a range of aspects of party building including recruiting to the Socialist Party, how to run a successful campaign stall and various ways of raising fighting fund such as our

Comrade Dine With Me evenings. Even in the lunch break political discussion continued on our successes in Ireland where, by the afternoon, we had achieved a third TD (MP) in the general elections. Everybody left the school feeling invigorated, inspired and even more confident of our ideas. We now hope to see a rise in the strength of the Socialist Party in the South West, a rise in new members and a further rising of the ideas of socialism. We'll keep the red flag flying here!



TUSC urges Leeds Council to take action on private rents

Leeds Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) lobbied the executive board of Leeds City Council on 9 March when it discussed what action to take regarding the growing private rented sector. The council discussion follows a deputation by TUSC in 2015 to establish a council-run lettings agency as part of a series of suggestions to tackle high rents, poor quality housing and rip-off lettings fees. The executive board is considering establishing a council-run lettings agency. Iain Dalton, West Yorkshire TUSC convenor, said: "While we are unsure of all the details, we welcome the fact that the council is taking on board our idea of establishing its own lettings agency.

This could provide a beacon of hope to renters stuck in the private sector who have been ripped-off by letting agents and dodgy landlords. "At the same time the council is still only taking limited action. Private rented sector average rents

are double those in the social sector. That's why TUSC combined our proposal for a council lettings agency with proposals for a mass council housing building programme, something we still believe is necessary as solution to the housing crisis."



photo Leeds Socialist Party

BERNIE SANDERS' CAMPAIGN AT A CROSSROADS



photo: Gage Skidmore/creative commons

The anti-big business and pro-worker message of Democratic Party 'socialist' candidate Bernie Sanders continues to resonate strongly among voters in the presidential primaries. However, despite his positive appeal, it would take an extraordinary surge in support to prevent the Democratic Party establishment securing Hillary Clinton's nomination. As **Ty Moore** and **Philip Locker** of Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) argue below, if Sanders' 'political revolution' within the Democrats fails he should continue the fight as an independent left-wing candidate and lay the basis of a new mass party of the working class.

Bernie Sanders' campaign stands at a crossroads. Even as he reaches new heights of popular support in national polls it's becoming increasingly clear that Sanders' hope for victory within the corporate-dominated Democratic Party primaries is extremely unlikely to succeed.

The Democratic Party primary elections are, by design, skewed to favour the pro-capitalist establishment that dominates the party. Especially since the redesign of the process after the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, the entire primary process - from the super delegates to front-loading the more conservative southern states - is designed as an undemocratic firewall against left insurgent campaigns.

Historic campaign

Overcoming a near blackout in the corporate media throughout 2015, using mass rallies and social media, Sanders went from single-digit support in national polls to a dead-head with Clinton by early February.

Bernie" activities, public debates, and mass community outreach.

Despite these dramatic successes, the Sanders campaign has failed to win over any significant section of the Democratic Party establishment to challenge Wall Street's domination of their party.

Clinton's machine

On the terrain of the electorate participating in the primaries, the weight of the Democratic Party machine has a major impact. The establishment of elected officials, party insiders, and wealthy donors use their power and links to influence unions, civil rights and community groups, and church leaders to turn out their base.

This influence was shown graphically by the role of the vast majority of union leaders played in mobilising

the power of labour behind the candidate of the Democratic Party machine without any serious opportunity for their members to debate or decide.

The power of the mass media is deployed to undermine anti-corporate campaigns and prop up establishment candidates like Clinton. Only through building up organised class conscious forces - independent working class movements, political parties, and media - can the power of the corporate media be systematically undermined on a mass scale.

On top of all this is the colossal mountain of Wall Street and corporate donations amassed by Clinton and her Super Political Action Committees. Despite the historic success of Sanders amassing over four million individual donations, Clinton's



Hillary Clinton represents the corporate, Wall Street, Democratic Party establishment photo Marc Nozell/creative commons

“”
Bernie's campaign has already proved the potential exists for a new mass left party that could dramatically change the face of American politics

virtually unlimited supply of corporate cash remains a major institutional advantage.

Keep on running

When Sanders launched his presidential bid last year, Socialist Alternative welcomed his campaign's bold pro-worker message. At the same time we argued that Bernie was "making a fundamental mistake by running in the Democratic Party primary. Instead... he should run as an independent to help build a political alternative to the corporate-owned political parties. There is a glaring contradiction between Sanders' call for a political revolution against the billionaire class and attempting to carry that out within a party controlled by that same billionaire class."

Despite our clear disagreement with Sanders' decision to run in the Democratic Party, we did not stand aside from his campaign or denounce it from the sidelines, as unfortunately many on the social-



Sanders' anti-corporate, pro-worker message has attracted huge audiences at campaign rallies photo Gage Skidmore/creative commons

ist left did. Instead, we worked in a non-sectarian fashion to support Bernie's left-wing campaign while openly raising our political disagreements along the way.

Meanwhile Sanders and his supporters tested out their strategy of trying to take over the Democratic Party.

While it is true that Sanders was able to reach a mass audience by running in the Democratic primaries and participating in the televised debates with Clinton, it is now increasingly clear that this experiment will fail.

It's time for Bernie, and more importantly for his supporters, to draw all the necessary conclusions from this experience.

If the movement does not break free from the straitjacket of the corporate-controlled Democratic Party it will be used as a left-wing prop for the Walmart, Wall Street, pro-war Clinton campaign.

The impact of the millions mobilised for a political revolution in Sanders' campaign against the billionaire class being pushed to embrace a candidate of the billionaire class will mean the demoralisation, demobilisation, and shipwreck of the movement.

Bernie Sanders' campaign has opened up the best potential in dec-



Donald Trump photo Gage Skidmore/creative commons

ades to build an ongoing political movement to challenge the corporate establishment of both major parties. But this will be tragically undermined unless we get organised - independent of the Democratic Party - to continue and deepen the 'political revolution,' through November and beyond.

That's why Socialist Alternative has consistently called on Sanders to run all the way through November, regardless of the outcome of the Democratic Party's rigged primaries.

Stopping the right

The central objection raised against Sanders running as an independent - Bernie himself has rejected this - is the threat of dividing the vote and allowing a Republican to win. And with Trump seen as the likely Republican nominee, the termination of millions of workers, people of colour, women and young people to do everything possible to push back the far-right threat is completely understandable.

The problem is, Hillary Clinton is just about the worst possible candidate imaginable to cut across the right-wing, anti-establishment populism of Donald Trump. Alongside the Bush family, the Clinton political dynasty is the living symbol of establishment politics in America.

There is a reason most polls show Clinton losing, or neck-and-neck in matchups with the leading Republican candidates. It's the same reason that, after president Obama bailed out Wall Street, the Tea Party Republicans made sweeping gains as the dominant voice, however distorted, appearing to express popular anger with the special interests that corrupt politics.

So far, Sanders' 'democratic socialism' has captured broader anti-establishment support than Trump's hateful right-populism. If Sanders attempts to funnel his supporters behind Clinton's Wall Street campaign it will allow Trump

to appear as the only anti-establishment voice in the general election.

Sanders has a political responsibility to run in the general election, both to provide a pro-worker alternative to the corporate candidates, and to cut across Trump's anti-establishment appeal.

A Sanders campaign through November, even if just running all out on the ballot in 40 states or so, could lay the foundations for a new mass party of working people.

We have an historic opportunity to launch a new party that runs left candidates, who reject corporate cash and pledge to use their positions to mobilise grassroots power to win a working class agenda. This should include \$15 an hour, an end to mass incarceration, free education, and single-payer health care.

Bernie's campaign has already proved the potential exists for a new mass left party that could dramatically change the face of American politics.

Both the threat from the right, and the potential to rebuild a powerful independent left, demand that the movement behind Bernie refuses to be imprisoned within the Democratic Party. We must stay organised and continue the fight for a political revolution through November and beyond, laying the basis for a new party for working people.

The full version of this article can be read on www.socialistalternative.org



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. www.socialistworld.net



What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.

- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.

- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.

- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.

- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.

- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

**Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!**

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UNIONS MUST BACK JUNIOR DOCTORS

James Ivens

Brave junior doctors are an inspiration to us all - now, the trade union movement must come to their support.

Members of doctors' union BMA 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.

Healthcare has so crumbled that we might not even meet the World Health Organisation's definition of a national health service. Increasingly, the capitalist state is reducing its legal obligation to provide care. At the same time, it is selling off its facility to do so to unaccountable privateers.

Meanwhile, a recent BMA poll of 2,800 GPs' surgeries found 294 reporting they were "financially unsustainable". 46% expect to lose doctors to retirement or emigration. Across the NHS, thousands of junior doctors have applied to get out - and who can blame them?

But Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's bullying imposition of the contract shows weakness, not strength. He knows the doctors are united and the public is against him. Now is the time for other unions to join the fight and hit the Tories while they are weak.

Britain's largest trade unions, Unite and Unison, both represent big sections of health workers. Their members have a litany of potential industrial disputes - not least the latest 1% pay deal. So do workers across the public sector.

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.

The BMA is not yet a member of the Trade Union Congress (TUC). The Socialist says it should have a standing invite to the TUC's general council while the dispute runs.

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.



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photo Paul Mattsson

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