

BEDROOM TAX DEFEATED

● Now let's bring down the Con-Dems

Philip Stott

The Bedroom Tax has been effectively defeated in Scotland. The announcement that the Scottish government intend to end the crushing burden of the hated and reviled Bedroom Tax is a huge victory.

It's a victory for thousands upon thousands of working class people who refused to accept the inevitability of this brutal attack, and who are therefore primarily responsible for this achievement.

As we go to press, the Scottish government have asked the Con-Dem's at Westminster to allow them to provide payments to kill-off the tax for 2014/15.

Regardless of whether the Tories allow this, the money can and must be given to Scottish social landlords by the SNP to write off all Bedroom Tax from 1st April 2013 on.

The Scottish government now plan to increase the funding for Discretionary Housing Payment to insure that for 2014/15 not one of the 85,000 households in Scotland affected by the tax will have to pay.

Mass campaigning, the organisation of hundreds of public meetings the length and breadth of Scotland; thousands marching on demonstrations; lobbies and protests of councils, MSPs and the

Scottish government, and a refusal to accept any possibility of evictions, proved an unstoppable force.

The Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation, which united the majority of the local campaigns, was crucial in this victory.

The Fed, and its affiliated groups took the struggle to the doorstep of the elected politicians demanding action.

Socialist Party Scotland members play a central role in the Fed and in local campaigns across Scotland.

The Scottish government had come under enormous pressure from the anti-bedroom tax campaign that, from the start, had demanded that the SNP use the powers they had to end the Bedroom Tax in Scotland.

This pressure led to a change of approach by the Scottish government. In September 2013, five months after the Bedroom Tax was introduced, they announced £20 million to top up DHP for the year. This meant that 70% of the cut to Housing Benefit was now covered for 2013/14.

In October Nicola Sturgeon announced another £20 million for 2014/15. This, on top of the £15 million provided by the DWP, left a £15 million hole which the Scottish government has now pledged to fill for 2014/15.



Thousands marched to defeat the Bedroom Tax

That the elected politicians in Scotland have now acted, albeit almost a year after its introduction, is down to the unending campaigning work of the scores of anti-bedroom tax campaigns, the Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation that united the majority of them, and an unbreakable will not to allow the Bedroom Tax to pass.

This victory will give confidence to the millions suffering cuts and

brutal austerity inflicted by the Con-Dem government of millionaires. Imagine what could be achieved if the almost 7 million strong trade union movement was mobilised in the form of a 24-hour general strike, which would be a mighty blow against the capitalist austerity agenda.

The defeat of the hated tax will also give a huge boost to the campaign in England and Wales who

will step-up demands for its abolition and for councils and Housing Associations to refuse to carry out evictions. The campaign in Scotland will remain vigilant and will continue to fight to demand all Bedroom Tax debts are written off. And that any and all legal action currently being taken by councils and Housing Associations leading to possible eviction are immediately suspended.

Editorial: The trade unions and the Labour Party

Collins review: Time for a new workers' party



Ed Miliband is continuing with New Labour's attack on trade union links with the Labour party

Editorial from the Socialist
Paper of the Socialist Party
England and Wales

In response to the Collins Review proposals to 'reform' the link between the unions and Labour Mirror columnist Kevin Maguire has declared: "It is time for the trade unions to march proudly out of Labour's front door instead of being slowly bundled out of the back" (3 February, 2014).

Labour leader Ed Miliband has said that the Collins Review proposals "complete unfinished business of the last twenty years". They are both right. The process of undermining the voice of the trade unions within Labour began twenty years ago, under John Smith's leadership, and was accelerated under Blair.

Today, before the Collins Review, "unions have less influence over selection [of candidates] than they have had in 100 years" as Tom Watson MP put it (Guardian, 16 August 2013). However, if implemented, the Collins Review will mean the destruction of the last remnants of the trade unions' organised presence within the Labour Party. Far from letting "people back into politics" as Miliband claims, this will conclude the transformation of Labour into one more party of big business.

Maguire continues: "Rather than enduring a thousand indignities, organised labour should take its money and people and abandon industrial links with the party it fathered, nurtured and continues to sustain. However Ed Miliband dresses up these far-reaching re-

forms, which were triggered by his blind panic over the selection of a parliamentary candidate in Falkirk, truth is he wants union cash but not the unions. The Labour leader elected on the back of members is terrified of the 'red Ed' tag, never forgiving those who awarded him the top job." Until now Kevin Maguire has defended the idea that Labour gives trade unionists a voice via the union link, but now feels he can no longer do so. No doubt many trade unionists will feel the same. The Collins Review comes after the Falkirk fiasco, where Miliband's response to Unite's attempts to democratically influence the selection of a parliamentary candidate was disgracefully to call in the police to investigate.

capitalist party

Kevin Maguire goes on to report that, "votes were fixed weeks ago to pass Miliband's package at this week's meeting of Labour's national executive committee and a shamefully short two-hour conference on St David's Day." There is no doubt that there have been weeks of haggling behind the scenes in order to try and come up with a deal which Miliband hopes will mollify the demands of the capitalist class and Tory Party, but which the trade union leaders also feel able to vote for. Of course, as Maguire rightly points out, no matter what anti-union measures Miliband takes, the capitalists and the Tories will always demand more. As Maguire puts it Miliband

is, "in La-La land if he thinks anything short of outlawing union membership and transporting activists to Australia would end Tory smears." Nonetheless, these proposals are what the capitalists have been buying for, and trade union leaders should vote en-masse against them. The few crumbs that have been offered do nothing to change the fundamentals.

It is true that the unions will still have 50% of the vote at the conference – a concession Miliband could give because the conference has long been completely toothless – but even this is only for the next five years, and the share of the vote going to different unions will be adjusted in the meantime on the basis of how many individuals in each trade union choose to become 'associate members' of the Labour Party. The selection of the party leader, however, will now be conducted purely on the basis of One Member One Vote (OMOV) with no collective voice for the unions. When OMOV began to be introduced, twenty years ago, John Prescott correctly said it was more important than the abolition of Clause IV in the process of moving Labour to the right. OMOV meant using a passive membership – sitting at home and seeing debates within the party via the capitalist media – against the more active layers who participated in the democratic structures of the party.

At that time the union block at conference was reduced from 90% to 49%, now the collective voice of the unions within the party is being reformed out of existence. In the past the organised working class had been able to put pressure on the Labour leadership via the

block vote. It is true, of course, that right-wing union leaders often wielded it against their own members' interests. That is why we called – as part of our programme for democratic, fighting unions – for democratic trade union checks over the block vote. Nonetheless, the reduction of the block vote was an essential part of transforming Labour into a capitalist party.

Not only will the leadership election be conducted on the basis of OMOV, to get on the ballot paper will require the support of 20% of MPs, compared to the current 12.5%, which in turn was increased from 5% in 1988 in order to prevent Tony Benn getting on the ballot paper. In the last leadership election even the 12.5% bar prevented John McDonnell MP from getting on the ballot paper despite having the support of wide swathes of the trade union movement, including being endorsed by the national conference of UNITE, the biggest trade union in Britain. This is the reality of Miliband's supposed 'opening up of the party to the people' – a workers' organisation of over one million members is debarred being able to vote for their candidate because of the right wing views of a few hundred Labour MPs.

To date most of the trade union leaders have remained quiet on the Collins proposals. The Labour leadership will be demanding that they toe the line in order to prevent 'disunity' ruining Labour's chances at the general election. This is nonsense. The Labour leadership didn't worry about unity when they launched an all-out assault on the unions within the Labour Party including calling the police into investigate! And if Labour fail to win the election it will not be because the party is seen as divided, but because it is putting forward policies that are no different, in essence, from those of the Con-Dems. Putting 'a red rose on austerity', as Kevin Maguire puts it, does not help win elections.

new party

Members of the affiliated unions should call for their union's representatives at the Special Labour conference to vote against the Collins Review and to demand that Labour adopts anti-austerity and socialist policies. If, as seems likely, the Collins Review is passed, however, the trade union movement needs to draw the necessary con-

clusions and immediately call a conference to discuss launching a new mass workers' party, which stands clearly against austerity and for workers' interests.

Kevin Maguire points out that left wing unions could have the resources to start a new party, but argues that "creating a UKIP of the Left would be self-defeating for trade unions". While a UKIP of the left is in no way an accurate description of what a new mass workers' party would be, the fear of UKIP has pushed the Tories towards the right whereas the best efforts of the Labour left have been able to do nothing to push Labour to the left. On the contrary, Labour politicians appear hell-bent on out-Torying the Tories. Rachel Reeves's call for benefit claimants to have their benefit stopped if they can't pass exams in Maths, English and IT came hard on the heels of Tristram Hunt's support for academies in England and attacks on teachers' rights. Ed Balls met Osborne's announcements of £25 billion extra cuts, not with outrage but with an earnest reiteration of Labour's pledge to match coalition pledges on cuts in its first year in office.

What would be self-defeating and unacceptable to trade unionists is for the trade unions to continue to fund Labour despite getting nothing in return. This has long been the case with the Democrats in the US, although that is beginning to change, as the election of Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant in Seattle has shown. In Britain, however, where the whole history of the Labour Party is of a party based on the trade unions, this proposal will create outrage from trade unionists, particularly beyond the general election.

TUSC

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), in which we participate, is preparing the ground for a new mass workers' party, gathering around it those forces that see the need for a working class alternative, including the transport workers' union, the RMT. The challenge TUSC is mounting in this May's local authority elections in England and Wales will be the biggest left challenge since the Communist Party in the aftermath of the second world war. We appeal to all trade unionists furious at the Collins Review to join us.

Join the Socialist Party Scotland

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Have you got some news for us?



The paper of Socialist Party Scotland

E-mail: info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Website:

www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Editor: Philip Stott

New website

Socialist Party Scotland is launching a new website. Beginning on 15th February you will be able to see it live.

As well as the usual news and analysis from Scotland and internationally, there will be special sections of the website dedicated to the independence referendum.

Regular videos will be posted and you'll also be able to read the latest

issue of the Socialist newspaper on the website, if you haven't already bought it of course.

You can join the party as well via the website, as well as asking for more information on the work and policies of Socialist Party Scotland.

We hope you enjoy it and find it informative, as well as useful. And don't forget to contact us if you want to contribute to the website.



www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Where's our recovery, George ?

Brian Smith

Glasgow City Unison branch secretary (personal capacity)

Tory chancellor George Osborne tells us the economy is recovering, while continuing to pour more austerity onto the backs of working people, young people and the unemployed.

Every day we read of another horror story caused by cuts in welfare benefits, or hundreds of unemployed workers scrambling to secure some low paid job, or how the gap between rich and poor is growing at an eye watering rate.

The latest Annual Household Survey shows that median full-time earnings have now fallen by 6.2% in Scotland since 2010 leaving workers £1753 worse off.

The figures also confirm that the bottom 20% have seen the biggest real terms falls in earnings since 2010, exacerbating already significant income inequality in Scotland.

Across the UK, the working poor now outnumber the unemployed according to official statistics; low paid, insecure employment is now the norm for millions of people.

All this at the same time as the number of billionaires in the UK in-

creased last year from 77 to 88. The 1,000 richest people in the UK have wealth totaling almost £450 billion.

And still the capitalist politicians' knife plunges deeper into our public services with health services in Scotland now under extreme pressure, and most local council's social work services at breaking point.

In Glasgow, the support system for those who find themselves homeless is near collapse. Community projects that provided key support to families in our poorest areas are closing.

Against this background working class people across Scotland are fighting back through local community campaigns against the bedroom tax, school closures, cuts in day centres, etc.

Our union, Glasgow Unison, are increasingly involved in strike action against the cuts. Other local trade union branches and a few national unions are involved in strike actions to defend living standards and the public services their members provide.

However what is really required is clear, bold leadership at both the Scottish and UK levels of the trade union movement. Many activists are convinced that a mood exists amongst ordinary trade union mem-

bers to fight all austerity cuts through industrial action on a wider basis rather than through one-off disputes (crucial as many of them are in defending members immediate interests and building confidence to fight).

What we need is co-ordinated strike action across the whole economy, beginning with a 24-hour General Strike as part of a sustained industrial action programme to force the Con-Dems out.

That is what the TUC and our national trade union leaders should be organising, rather than going along with the idea of trying to influence national and local politicians of the main parties to make slower cuts.

Labour leaders are trying to break the link between the party and the trade unions while declaring that austerity will continue, if they win the election next year. The SNP are refusing to promise to end the cuts under independence.

It's clear workers need our own political party to represent us. Labour affiliated unions should make the break from Labour and help build a new mass workers' party that will oppose all cuts and fight for a socialism. Capitalism isn't failing the rich, but is it failing the rest of us. It's time to end it.



Social Care Workers on strike in Glasgow

End warfare on welfare

Harvey Duke

If the Welfare State can be described as a safety net, preventing sick, disabled, unemployed, and elderly people from falling into destitution; then, Iain Duncan Smith is the madman slashing huge holes in the net.

To him and his partners in crime in the Coalition Government, the people who fall through holes in the net have been 'freed' from 'benefits-dependency'. For many, what this means in reality is: no job, no income, homelessness, and absolute poverty.

Since 2010, the government has cut billions of pounds from welfare, whilst demonising claimants almost every day through the pages of the Daily Mail or Daily Telegraph, or by supporting vicious attack-programmes like 'Benefits Street'. More cuts are planned – one idea floated is to deprive all young people of housing benefits.

blitzkrieg

Abolition of benefits and making it harder to claim are the two main strands of the government's Blitzkrieg on the poor. The targets include the most vulnerable in society – particularly people with mental health issues, and also those with life-threatening physical conditions like cancer. More than one person in a coma or otherwise unable to move because of their medical condition has been found 'fit for work' by notorious private company ATOS, one of the most immoral companies of all time.

In a twist worthy of George Orwell's novel '1984', the terms 'incapacity' and 'disability' have been airbrushed out of the benefits system. Incapacity Benefit has been replaced by something called Employment Support Allowance (ESA) – harder to get, and harder to keep from getting booted off of on the most spurious grounds. It was



Welfare slasher, Iain Duncan Smith

originally set up under Labour and has become even stricter under this government.

People who are tested for this benefit by ATOS are not given medical tests. They are given 'Work Capability Assessments'; and if they fail – they are declared 'fit for work' even if their GP and psychologists and consultants disagree.

If they pass the unfair tests, they are deemed to have 'Limited Capacity for Work' and can be placed in the 'Work Related Activity Group', and still face the prospect of compulsory interviews to 'help' them get into work. If they fail to attend an interview, perhaps because they are ill or did not get a letter (which happens every day), their benefits will be brutally cut.

A minority of ESA claimants will be placed in the 'Support Group' – again, another Orwellian term, because – although the amount of money is slightly higher, there's no extra support.

Although this group includes the most sick and disabled people, that's not referred to in their classification: they are deemed to have 'Limited Capacity for Work Related Activity'.

They too can be booted off in the future at the whim of some official in ATOS who chooses, as most do, to

ignore medical evidence. At no stage in this truly horrific process are the terms sickness, incapacity or disability centrally relevant to decision-making. Thousands of people have died a few weeks or months after being found 'fit for work' under this system.

The British Medical Association's GPs annual conference voted unanimously in 2012 to oppose the unfair testing of benefits claimants. Their motion noted that the tests "have little regard to the nature or complexity of the needs of long-term sick and disabled persons". This decision was the result of campaigns by groups like Black Triangle, and trade unionists fighting austerity cuts.

mental health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) report: 'Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2012' clearly links austerity measures to worsening mental health for the world's population. Depression alone makes up '11% of all years lived with disability globally.'

Yet, depression is the most common condition which people have before being cut off ESA by ATOS. Of course, it's much worse after. It was the case up to rule changes in Octo-

Stop sanctions scandal



Benefits sanctions are amongst the most brutal of all attacks on the poor.

Despite the best efforts of PCS members trying to avoid applying these terrible rules, DWP managers are clearly setting targets for sanctions, and the easiest to hit are people who have mental health problems (if an ATOS attack doesn't get you, a sniper hit of a sanction will).

People who cannot read or write or have difficulties will also be sanctioned – first for 4 weeks, then for 3 months, and then – effectively, it's forever. Let no one be in any doubt – this is what IDS means when he talks of freeing people from welfare-dependency.

A 'hardship' payment of Job-seekers Allowance is just £84 a fortnight; and incredibly this can be cut even lower to pay off old

loans. This is not enough money to live on – after food parcels run out, all many people can do is beg or scavenge for food: in one of the richest countries in the world.

There is a desperate need to rally all workers against these attacks. PCS have taken the lead nationally in condemning welfare cuts and sanctions.

No workers can guarantee that they will not be the next victim – as we can all lose our job, and we can all get sick.

The magnificent struggle against the bedroom tax gives an example of what can be done with a mass campaign which has already made gains: without the demos, sleep-outs, public meetings and political pressure there would have been no extra 'discretionary housing payments'.

With the same kind of bold campaigning – the anti-ATOS protests of Black Triangle and others are another great example – the attacks of IDS and other rich politicians against the poor can be defeated.

The whole situation provides another powerful reason for the creation of a new mass workers party based on socialist ideas; a party which can raise the demand of a society free from fear.

ber 2013, that if you were cut off and appealed, you continued to get paid a low rate of benefit until your appeal was heard. Now, you get nothing and are forced to choose between no income or the equally brutal sanctions regime of Job Seekers Allowance.

The WHO report states: 'Mental disorders frequently lead individuals and families into poverty.' Poverty itself can also create poor mental health. The report continues: 'The current global financial crisis provides a powerful example of a macroeconomic factor leading to cuts in funding despite a concomitant need for more health and

social services because of higher rates of mental disorders and suicide...'

victims

For frontline workers trying to help the victims of cuts, this translates into: the young woman soaking wet from begging on the streets who can't take any more and wants help to re-start benefits stopped weeks before; or the family who were twice victims of unfair sanctions, and none of them can read or write, or, thousands and thousands of other real victims.

Fighting back against violence and cuts

Sinead Daly
Dundee

One in three women around the world will be raped or beaten in her lifetime...that's one BILLION women!

The figures in Scotland bring little comfort. In 2012/13, 1372 rapes, 90 attempted rapes and 7,693 sexual offences were reported to the police in Scotland. This represents a 16% rise compared to the previous year.

The recent high profile cases of actors and celebrities such as William Roach, Ian Watkins, Jimmy Saville, Stuart Hall, Ralph Harris, Michael Souter, Paul Gambaccini, Clifford Luton and some others demonstrate not just how wide spread an issue it is but also how difficult it has and continues to be for survivors of rape, sexual abuse and childhood sexual abuse to come forward.

One of the main reasons for this is the fear of not being believed and the amount of victim blaming, even with young girls, that exists within society. Rape Crisis Scotland reported that less than a fifth of survivors in touch with rape crisis centres have reported their experiences to the police. Focus on what women wear, the amount they drank

and their behaviours or sexual history all receive far more attention than the actions and behaviours of the perpetrators.

There was outrage when a judge described a 13-year-old as a "sexual predator" and let a 41-year-old paedophile, Neil Wilson walk free from court, with a suspended sentence! Even more shocking was the comments from the QC for the Crown Prosecution Service, Robert Colover, "The girl is predatory in all her actions and she is sexually experienced." Rightly this case is being reviewed.

However, these views and attitudes are being increasingly challenged. Last year the rape and murder of a young student in India provoked mass demonstrations not just across India but the world.

growing protests

There has been growing anger and protests in Western Kenya against the leniency of the court sentencing of 5 men for the brutal gang rape of a 16 year old young woman in June last year.

They walked free with a sentence of cutting the grass!! There have been regular protest and they have

managed to collect 1.2 million signatures to demand changes in the law.

The development of the Slutwalk movements and campaigns within many universities challenging rape culture show the increasing confidence and willingness of women to take up these important issues.

More needs to be done, not just in challenging sexism, rape, sexual and domestic abuse, but in fighting to defend key services.

Edinburgh Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre announced last month that they face closing their support service in May of this year due to losing their funding.

They are not alone, with most Rape Crisis Centre's underfunded and dependent on short term funding. There are also whole parts of Scotland with no support services at all.

With the growing attacks on jobs and services, these vital services will come under increasing pressure to survive.

We will continue to challenge sexism and the growing rape culture, but will ensure that we link these struggles to the trade union and community campaigns fighting austerity and defending jobs and services.



Women are fighting back against sexual violence

10 Q and A's on Socialist Party Scotland and the indy referendum



A section of the crowd in Edinburgh on September 21st

Why is Socialist Party Scotland supporting a Yes vote in the referendum?

Growing numbers of working class people - if we compare the situation to the 1970's and 1980's - are looking towards independence as an escape route from growing levels of poverty, cuts and falling incomes that face the majority of society. To support a No vote would, in our view, cut ourselves off from the estimated 1 million people, overwhelmingly working class, that currently say they will vote Yes in the referendum.

But what about workers and young people who are aren't convinced that independence under the SNP is the way forward?

We agree with this opinion. In truth, our support for a Yes vote is critical support - given the limitations of what is on offer from the Scottish government. In other words we are calling for a Yes vote while also explaining that the SNP's model for independence would not change the lives of the majority of working class people in Scotland. Real change requires far-reaching socialist policies.

But isn't the SNP promising a better, more prosperous Scotland after independence?

An independent Scotland under the SNP would certainly be more prosperous for big business. Under Salmond and co's plans, the multinational corporations would see their taxes cut. The SNP leadership are opposed to public ownership of the oil industry. They don't even support the renationalisation of the profit hungry energy companies. They believe that capitalism - an economic system that is in its deepest crisis since the 1930's - would be the bedrock on which a better Scotland would be built. This is ruled out in our view. Only through decisive socialist measures - democratic public ownership of the banks, oil and the major sectors of the economy - can we rebuild the economy in the interests of the working class as a whole.

What about the Nordic model. Isn't that an example of a fairer capitalism that Scotland could follow?

The Nordic model, which refers to the situation that emerged in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland

after 1945 during a period of economic boom, is no longer viable, at least for the capitalists. The high quality welfare state, low levels of poverty (but with high taxes levied on the working class) is being undermined - in the case of Sweden in a brutal way.

The end of the post-war boom from the late 1970's on, which was reinforced by the world economic crisis in 2007/08, has led to an unravelling of the Nordic model, with privatisation and deep social cuts being implemented. There is no possibility under capitalism of an independent Scotland delivering decent living standards and an end to austerity cuts.

Wouldn't anything be better than living under a brutal Tory government that we didn't vote for?

We agree that the powers of independence could be used to transform the lives of millions if they were used in the interests of the majority. However, it's clear from the SNP's white paper that they will not go down this road. Under Alex Salmond's plan Scotland would form part of a currency union, with the Bank of England adjusting the straitjacket of what a Scottish government could spend on jobs and public services. The SNP want to join the big business dominated European Union that is being used as a battering ram to attack trade union rights and inflict savage austerity on the working class across the continent. The elite monarchy would remain as head of state under independence. Under the SNP's proposals it's not so much how things would change, its how much they would stay the same.

So what kind of independence do you want to see?

We are campaigning for an independent socialist Scotland. We stand for:

- tax increases on the rich and big business
- raising the minimum wage to £10 an hour
- reverse all the cuts that have been carried through by the Con-Dem coalition.
- For the powers of independence to be used to carry through a widespread programme of public ownership and democratic control of the major sectors of the economy to lay the basis for a democratically run socialist society.
- Abolish the anti-union laws

To fight for these types of policies in an independent Scotland we need to build a new mass workers party, with the trade unions playing a leading role in this

Is it possible to build socialism in just one country?

No. Capitalism is an international system of exploitation; the rule of an elite who own and control the means of production - the factories, the workplaces etc - and who employ workers to make profit for big business, not for social need. That's why we are campaigning for an independent socialist Scotland to form part of a democratic confederation with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe and beyond.

But won't it just weaken the Yes campaign if you criticise the SNP's policies?

If anything, the SNP's emphasis on continuing with a pro big business agenda and refusing to pledge to end all cuts under independence is undermining support for a Yes vote. This is reinforced further by the experience of trade unionists and communities who face cuts by the SNP-led Scottish government and at a council level where they are in power. To win a Yes vote means convincing the majority of the work-

ing class that there would be major economic and social change under independence. This is not what the SNP are putting forward. The only answer to the smears of "Project Fear" and the so-called Better Together campaign is to put the case for a fundamental break from the onslaught of austerity supported by all the main parties. If the SNP leadership came out in favour of a 24-hour general strike of trade unions against the Con-Dem government, for public ownership of the economy and refused to carry out the cuts this would undoubtedly increase support for independence.

Isn't there a danger that supporting a Yes vote can divide the working class?

The best way to insure this does not happen is for the trade unions to lead their own campaign for the referendum that emphasises the need for pro working class policies and opposition to all cuts. In other words a campaign that unites the interests of the vast majority of working class people - regardless of how they are voting in the referendum.

Socialist Party Scotland stands for the unity of all workers across the trade union movement in Scotland and Britain. We are campaigning for the trade unions to build coordinated mass strike action - a 24-hour general strike - to fight austerity. And for the trade unions to initiate the building of a new mass working class party to fight for socialism.

I agree with what you've said. How do I get involved?

Contact us via email, phone, Facebook or Twitter (see page 2). We have campaigning branches of the party across Scotland. Socialist Party Scotland members play a leading role in trade unions like PCS and Unison as well as the Youth Fight For Jobs campaign. Join us in the fight for socialism.

How the Bedroom Tax was beaten



March 30th 2013, George Square, Glasgow.

"The response from the thousands of people in the housing schemes of Scotland who turned up at meetings and voted to be part of a campaign of resistance to this vile tax has been tremendous. All our hard work has paid off, we have set the agenda in this fight and both the Labour party and SNP have been pushed to finally put an end to the madness that is the Bedroom Tax."

Tommy Sheridan - Chair Scottish Anti-Bedroom Tax Federation

"This victory shows what can be achieved if the political will is there, but if it hadn't been for the Federation campaign, bringing local Anti-Bedroom Tax groups together around a common set of demands then the SNP and Labour would not have acted at all to protect tenants. They were ready to sit back and blame the Tories, and not do anything at all to mitigate the effects of this horrible legislation. We have had to spell out at every stage of this campaign what could be done and we've been proven right."

Gail Morrow - Federation Secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member

Devastating impact of cuts



Women workers' in Northern Ireland striking against cuts

Nicola Crawford
Glasgow

It's triple jeopardy for women living with the impact of the Tory cuts.

To date almost £15 billion worth of cuts per year have been made to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions. 74% of those cuts are taken from women's incomes.

In 94% of cases the woman is the main carer of children and so the cuts to Child Benefit disproportionately affect mothers.

Recent research shows that mothers in low-income households are prepared to go without food and clothing to protect their children from the impact of an inadequate income.

A survey conducted by Working Mum's found that 24% of mothers have had to give up work as a direct result of the cuts to the child care element of Working Tax Credits.

Single women make up 50% of recipients of housing benefits (20% to couples and 30% to men) meaning that women again are disproportionately affected by cuts imposed through the Welfare Reform Bill.

A study by housing charity Shelter concludes that caps to Housing Allowance will mean single mothers being priced out their locality, facing social isolation as they are forced to live away from the vital

support networks that single parents rely on. Unemployment rates in the UK have fallen for men but risen for women. Out of every 100 jobs created in the Public Sector, 63 go to men and 37 to women. Public sector cuts have reduced opportunities for women making it harder for women to combine earning a living with taking care of their families.

The planned £10 billion in Tory cuts to 'welfare' spending by 2016/17 will have a devastating impact not only on women's income, job opportunities and social inclusion, it will also affect their ability to utilise vital services to keep them safe from domestic abuse and violence.

31% of funding for domestic and sexual violence services has been scrapped by Tory cuts over the last year. As a result some women in abusive relationships will remain trapped and may end up badly injured or even dead.

The Socialist Party Scotland campaigns for a mass building programme of decent, social housing with affordable rents, and an end to all cuts to public sector jobs and the services they provide.

Socialists call for the strengthening of an open and democratic 'welfare state' which not only employs many women, but offers vital services and a financial safety net for working class women and our children.

Richard Neville
Renfrewshire

Bin the Bedroom Tax campaign

In February and March of 2013 Socialist Party Scotland began organising public meetings against the Bedroom Tax in the working class housing schemes in Dundee, Glasgow and Renfrewshire.

Very quickly it became clear there was the potential to build a big, active campaign. The methods we used mirrored that of the campaign against the poll tax 25 years earlier.

The building of local campaigns, uniting them together in a Federation. Organising marches and pledging to defend those that could not pay the Bedroom Tax. Campaigns against the bedroom tax were springing up across the country, with thousands of tenants looking to build a defence of their communities.

Tommy Sheridan, a veteran of the anti poll tax campaign, played a key role in helping to build the campaign, speaking at over 100 public meetings across the country.

In the West of Scotland a Federation of local campaigns was formed on a democratic basis to raise awareness, organise a march on the streets of Glasgow in defiance of the Tax, and to plan a conference for any interested campaigns to debate the best way to defeat the Bedroom Tax.

March 30th 2013

On the 30th of March 2013 5,000 marched in Edinburgh and over 8000 people marched through the streets of Glasgow

From Glasgow Green to George Square in a show of strength from the schemes not seen since the days of poll tax. But thousands not directly affected by the attack on housing benefit also came out to show their opposition.

"Axe, Axe the Bedroom Tax" was the slogan, along with the promise to build an anti-eviction army to prevent any attempts at evictions. And that call was widely accepted, with local campaigns from Inverclyde to the Lothians, Dundee to Dumfries, all willing to engage in a

campaign of civil disobedience if the need ever came.

Bin the Bedroom tax Dundee, initiated by Socialist Party Scotland members had won the first Bedroom Tax concession in Scotland from the local SNP run council.

The council agreed a heavily caveated 'no evictions' policy for a year, and the first cracks were appearing in the edifice of the Bedroom Tax. Other SNP councils followed. As did Renfrewshire Labour-led council under pressure from the local campaign.

The Scottish Anti Bedroom Tax Federation was formed at it's founding Conference on the 27th April 2013. This conference was attended by over 250 Delegates from over 40 campaigns and Trade Union branches. With Glasgow City Unison playing a vitally important role in supporting ans sustaining the work of the Fed.

From the beginning the Federation called for:

1. The Scottish government to come up with the £50million a year needed to ensure that all those affected by the Bedroom Tax would not have to pay.

2. That the Scottish government change the law to rule out evictions for Bedroom Tax arrears

3. That councils and housing associations refuse to carry out evictions.

These proposals now form the basis of the Private Members bill that has been put forward by the Labour Party MSP, Jackie Baillie. But back in April when the Bedroom Tax was introduced the Labour party was a long way from taking such a position.

Govan Law Centre

The Govan Law Centre petition to the Scottish parliament calling for a change in the Housing Act on evictions was widely supported. They also played a vital role in offering advice and support to many people affected by the Bedroom tax in Scotland. The Fed have helped large numbers of tenants through the appeals process, using the Govan Law Centre Tool-kit in an attempt to clog up the system.

Over the summer with new local campaigns still springing up and affiliating, and established campaigns calling actions to force local politicians into taking a definite position, The Scottish Anti Bedroom Tax Federation was co-ordinating the campaigning work and keeping the Bedroom Tax firmly in the spotlight.

There was a national demonstration on June the first and the Mass Sleep out event outside the office of Ruth Davidson MSP.

As the Autumn began, the Labour run local authorities began to crumble under the pressure that had been built. Renfrewshire Council were forced to set up a tenant's fund worth £600'000 in order to relieve the strain that the DHP fund was under.

North Lanarkshire council had tried to evict Lorraine Fraser, a disabled tenant who had fallen into arrears. A mobilisation was called and at a packed meeting in Viewpark council leader Jim McCabe was forced into a humiliating U-turn and announced a 'no eviction' policy.

Scottish government

In September the SNP-led Scottish government announced that they would top-up the DHP money by £20 million for 2013/14. Just before the SNP conference in Perth in October, it was announced that there would be a further £20 million put into the discretionary housing payment fund by the Scottish Parliament.

The timing of this announcement was no coincidence, as the Federation had called a demo on the Saturday of the conference. The SNP were trying to placate the campaigners but the announcement just gave them a taste of victory.

The Scottish Anti Bedroom Tax Federation and it's affiliated campaigns have shown what can be achieved with a strong campaign. We have forced the political agenda to address our demands and led the way at every stage of this fight.

We have forced Labour party policy on this issue and didn't accept the SNP position that only a YES vote would end the misery of the Bedroom Tax in Scotland.

Glasgow City Unison union with a record

There has never been a more pressing need for fighting trade unions prepared to build mass opposition to the tsunami of cuts being inflicted by the Con-Dem's and the other pro big business parties. Glasgow City Unison is the largest local government branch in Scotland with almost 11,000 members. Glasgow Unison has stood out over recent years as being in the forefront of building fighting opposition to the austerity agenda. The branch have been involved in a series of battles with the Labour-led authority and council bosses who have sought to impose hundreds of millions of pounds in cuts. Like the civil service union PCS, who, with a socialist leadership, have also pioneered the use of strike action to defend jobs, working conditions, pensions and pay, Glasgow Unison is committed to a policy of opposition to all cuts. Not just in words, but also in practice. **The Socialist** spoke to Glasgow Unison branch secretary **Brian Smith**, and the convener of the social work stewards committee **Ian Leech**, about the campaigns the union is involved with in fighting the cuts.



Unison members with Defend Glasgow Services No Cuts posters

What approach has the Glasgow Unison branch taken to opposing the cuts in the last few years?

Ian "From the start, even before the Con-Dem's were elected, our union branch took a policy of opposition to all cuts to jobs, pay, pensions, and services. Brian was elected branch secretary in January 2009, the key position in the union. For a number of years the influence of Socialist Party Scotland - and as we were known before, Militant - alongside the left in general, had been very strong, especially in the Social Work Services sub-branch of the union. There had been a number of important battles in the run-up to Brian's election that had helped to extend the influence of our approach beyond Unison members in social work, which gave us a platform to win the branch secretary's election."

Can you explain what these struggles involved?

Brian "The battles over the Single Status Agreement in 2006 and 2007 were very important for the branch. In essence we were involved in a series of confrontations with the council. Glasgow Unison was fighting for the uplifting of thousands of workers to higher grades, while the council sought to keep them in poorer paid roles. In De-

ember 2006, a branch-wide ballot of 12,000 Unison members in Glasgow voted to strike, without emergency cover, this forced the council into an extended period of pay protection. This was followed by a 20 day all-out strike of 600 Social Care Workers in July/August 2007, which resulted in a major victory, and the upgrading of hundreds of workers to higher paid roles. Other workers in areas like residential care and social work clerical staff also won significant improvements.

"These steps forward took place at a time when the approach from the national UK Unison leadership was to avoid action over Single Status at all costs. The methods of struggle we used during this time included advocating sustained strike action, where appropriate, of seeking to maximise the numbers taking action and of regular mass meetings of strikers and the setting up strike committees etc. We showed in practice that determined action could deliver steps forward. These experiences played an important role in helping to convince Unison activists in Glasgow and build the confidence of our members that we could oppose the attacks of the employers."

How has Glasgow Unison responded since the election of the Con-Dem government in 2010?

Ian "We took the initiative in January 2010, when Labour were still in power and Gordon Brown prime minister, of setting-up the Defend Glasgow Services campaign. It was clear that whoever won the general election, Labour or the Tories, they were going to try to inflict a savage assault on the public sector. Setting up DGS was an attempt to bring together the various trade unions in the city with community organisations to build resistance to the cuts that were coming. We've also played a central role in helping to support and sustain the anti-bedroom tax federation in Scotland."

Brian "From the beginning DGS and Glasgow City Unison has adopted a policy of opposition to all cuts. We were able through DGS to make links with unions like PCS, the Glasgow Trades Council and other unions in the city with a unified message of a principled opposition to austerity. DGS has been crucial in also helping the branch assist in struggles against cuts in the community, including the closure of day care centres and other attacks."

Ian "Through the Unison branch and DGS we initiated a conference of anti-cuts groups, trade unions and community campaigns that set up the Scottish Anti-Cuts Alliance in February 2011. There was a debate at that conference about whether it was appropriate to hold an opposition to all cuts policy and to insist that councillors and MSPs vote against all cuts.

"Members of groups like the Socialist Workers Party and the Right To Work campaign wanted to simply "encourage" politicians to vote against cuts, but that we should work with them even if they didn't. We opposed this approach and called on elected politicians to oppose all cuts. This debate continues today with Labour and SNP politicians routinely voting through cuts that attack trade union members. We moved a motion to the Scottish council of Unison in December 2010 that was passed supporting a No Cuts position and calling on councils and the Scottish government to set

needs based budgets. This is still official Unison policy today."

Can you give some examples of action taken by Glasgow Unison members recently?

Ian "In the social work department we're involved in a range of disputes related to increased workload and attempts by the employer to change terms and conditions. In the last six months alone we've seen around one hundred case workers walk-out on unofficial action, following the suspension of a colleague in the homelessness service. This was sparked by increasing case workload's, meaning our members simply cannot cope with the numbers of people needing assistance. This action won the reinstatement of the suspended Unison member.

"The council had begun the process of legal action to declare the action illegal under the anti-union laws. And that's a Labour council, a Labour council using Tory anti-union legislation. We refused to repudiate the action. Now we're balloting these members because the issues in the homelessness service have not been resolved, in fact they are at crisis levels, a result of not enough staff."

Brian "There has been a step-change in attitude, a significant hardening of the approach by council management recently. In the case of our residential care members working in the elderly care sector, management went over the heads of the union straight to members homes with at least three letters, demanding they sign new contracts on worse terms and conditions, for many there would be a 7% cut in wages amounting to £1,500 a year. While a majority signed these contracts under protest, we balloted them for action and almost 80% voted to strike. We've had two 48-hour strikes already. And this is a group of

"Nevertheless, we moved a motion to the Unison Scottish council, which is made up of delegates from all the Unison branches in Scotland representing 160,000 members, in December 2012. The motion called on Scottish Unison to; "immediately take the necessary steps to promote with all STUC affiliated unions the need for coordinated industrial action, beginning with a one-day strike across Scotland. This was passed with the votes of all 200 delegates being in favour. This was crucial in helping to ensure that the STUC conference in 2013 backed the PCS union's motion, with

workers who have not taken strike action before. It shows how far the social work bosses and the council have pushed these workers.

"In addition, in November 2013 we had 1,000 education workers, Pupil Support Assistants, on strike. The council wanted the staff to take on extra responsibilities, with no improvement in grade or wages. After two days of action they won around 70% of their demands, an important step forward. We've proved time and again that members are prepared to fight if they feel the union will back them and give them encouragement and support."

What is Glasgow Unison's view on the need for a 24-hour general strike?

Brian "We're clear that coordinated strike action - a 24-hour general strike - is a vital step in halting the austerity juggernaut. The incredible response to the mass strike over pensions on N30 in 2011 showed the overwhelming desire among trade unionists for coordinated action - in what was, in effect, a political strike against the government. 95% of our members took part in the strike that day. And bear in mind that in Scotland local government workers were not facing anything like the attacks on their pensions that faced their counterparts in England, or in the NHS, civil service etc. The sell-out of that movement by our own union leaders, and those of the GMB, TUC etc, has complicated the situation since then.

"Members of groups like the Socialist Workers Party and the Right To Work campaign wanted to simply "encourage" politicians to vote against cuts, but that we should work with them even if they didn't. We opposed this approach and called on elected politicians to oppose all cuts. This debate continues today with Labour and SNP politicians routinely voting through cuts that attack trade union members. We moved a motion to the Scottish council of Unison in December 2010 that was passed supporting a No Cuts position and calling on councils and the Scottish government to set

"From the start, even before the Con-Dem's were elected, our union branch took a policy of opposition to all cuts to jobs, pay, pensions, and public services."

Ian Leech

Brian Smith

...: A fighting of struggle



Glasgow residential care workers on strike in Glasgow January 2014

Unison support, that called for "a Scotland-wide one-day strike, aligned with any action at a UK level."

What are the prospects for national - Scotland or UK-wide - action?

Ian It's been more difficult since the defeat of the pensions struggle which followed the sell-out in 2011. It's fair to say some members have lost confidence in the national leadership. Pay is an issue where there might be the potential for action. Glasgow Unison called for a strike ballot over last years 1% pay offer. This was eventually agreed at a Scottish level, but only after a significant delay of months. In the end the ballot was held in July/August, the holiday period in Scotland, and it was narrowly defeated by 50.2% to 49.8%. COSLA, the Scottish employers, went for the jugular and imposed the 1% and another 1% for 2014/15.

"We've called for a ballot for strike action on this and in support of a £1 an hour across the board increase for all local government workers. Glasgow Unison believes that all Unison branches need to launch a major proactive campaign to convince members that we are serious over fighting what are effectively year-on-year pay cuts - not simply a consultation that asks for an opinion without putting a strong case for action."

Has Glasgow City Unison had an impact on Unison at a Scottish level?

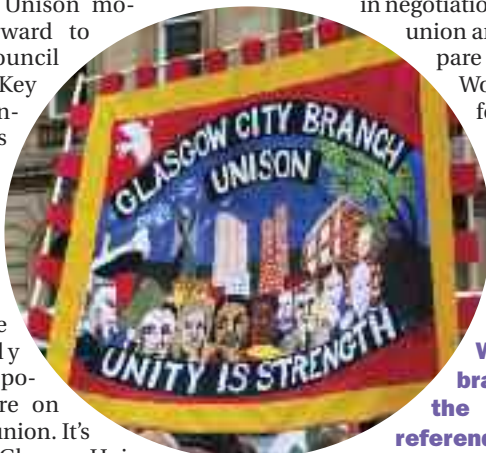
Brian "There's been a real change in the last three or four years. We've gone from being on the margins, a manageable irritant at Scottish events, to being at the centre of creating a fighting policy, at least on paper. It's amazing to think that Scottish Unison now has a formal policy of opposition to all cuts, supporting the setting of needs budgets and calling for a 24-hour general strike. All policies arising from

Glasgow City Unison motions put forward to Scottish council meetings. Key local government branches like Dundee City, North Lanarkshire, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and others have consistently supported our positions and are on the left of the union. It's fair to say that Glasgow Unison is a reference point for many Unison activists who want to fight and who looking for a clear policy. The need to extend the base of the left at all levels in Unison is a key task in the years ahead."

What is the branch's position on the link with the Labour party?

Ian "Unison is, of course, affiliated to the Labour party - unfortunately. However, our branch encourages members not to pay into the affiliated political fund. We're calling for members to check their subs to ensure their not paying into the fund that goes to the Labour party. As it is over 90% of our almost 11,000 members don't pay the APF levy. The clear reasons for this is our experience of operating under a Labour dominated council that are tearing up collective agreements and attacking its own workforce in a brutal way."

Brian "In a personal capacity we can say that the Unison should be breaking from Labour and helping to establish a new mass working class party. I stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in the 2010 general election and as an anti-cuts coalition candidate in the 2012 Scottish parliament elections. As a Socialist Party Scotland member I'm involved



in negotiations with the RMT union and others to prepare a No2EU - Yes to Workers' Rights list for the European elections in May. We need a political force that will oppose all cuts and fight for a socialism."

Where does the branch stand on the independence referendum?

Ian "There are mixed views among Unison members. It's most likely that Unison won't make a formal recommendation on how to vote in September. Socialist Party Scotland members support a Yes vote but we will be arguing that even if Unison does not recommend a Yes it should draw up a worker's and trade union charter for the referendum campaign. A charter that puts the case for an end to all cuts, for public ownership and the scrapping of the anti-trade union laws. Neither Labour nor the SNP will accept these ideas - they're both carrying out cuts to pay, public services and collaborating with austerity. This poses the need for a new party based on socialist and trade union principles."

"As well as continuing the struggle to oppose all the cuts, we'll take every opportunity to put the case for the socialist transformation of society. Support for democratic socialism is the longstanding policy of Glasgow City Unison. A socialist union branch with a socialist leadership can and does make a real difference."

● **Socialist Party members across Britain play a leading role in helping to build a leadership for Unison members that will lead an uncompromising struggle against all cuts. Get in touch to find out more. See page 2**

The class divide



You can say that again

CUTS MEAN POVERTY



New research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) shows the number of households living on incomes below the level needed to afford an adequate standard of living has increased by a fifth (900,000) in three years.

Among the 20 million households whose minimum needs are calculated in the research, the number falling short of the standard needed has increased by a fifth since 2008/9 - from 3.8 million to 4.7 million households - following the onset of the recession, cuts to benefits and tax credits and the rising cost of essentials. Most of the increase came in the final year of the three-year period.

MODERN DAY SLAVERY

An advert in Costa Coffee (Eastleigh, Hampshire) recently was spotted by a Guardian journalist; "Staff wanted ... 20 hours a week. MUST BE FREE 6AM TO 9PM, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK".

This modern day slavery is more prevalent than you might imagine. Zero-hour contracts in the economy are, according to official government figures 250,000 workers. Yet, Norman Lamb, the care minister, has admitted to 300,000 zero-hours workers in social care. A Working Families in January finds 7% of women and over 2% of men on zero hours.

CHECK THIS OUT



Are you angered by the TV programme benefits street? You should check this out. A video response to Channel 4's Benefits Street from Socialist Party supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Take a stroll through London and see who the real fiddlers,

dodgers and scroungers really are. And guess what? They're not claiming welfare benefits - that's for sure.

Go to the Shortcut link <http://bit.ly/1ck3lla>

NOT GIVING ATOS

Atos, the private company used by the government to conduct its work capability assessments of disabled welfare claimants, is notorious for accusations of harassing claimants.

The latest victim of the government's ruthless 'back-to-work' campaign is Sheila Holt from Rochdale - a long-term sufferer of bi-polar disorder.

She was sectioned under the Mental Health Act in December after suffering a breakdown when her income support was withdrawn.

Subsequently, Sheila had a heart attack and is in a coma. But this did not stop Atos from sending her another letter reportedly asking why she hasn't found employment!

IN WORK POVERTY

Research commissioned by the homeless charity Shelter has shown that one million people have had to turn to payday loans and credit cards to pay their rent or mortgage.

Shelter also report that 9,000 people unable to pay their rent or mortgage called the charity last year - an increase of one-third.

Many more cash-strapped workers are too ashamed to ask for help from friends and family.

Shelter's chief executive, Campbell Robb, said: "Sky high housing costs, stagnating wages and the high cost of living have taken their toll."

MORE PAY PLEASE

The GMB union estimates that the real value of national average earnings has slumped by 14% since the start of the recession in 2008. Surprisingly, a speech by the head of the bosses' organisation, the CBI, urged its members to pay their workers more!

John Cridland, director general of the CBI whose FTSE 100 members are paid 136 times the national average wage - around £2.1 million in 2012 - complained that "too many people are still collecting only the minimum wage". Perhaps the underlying concern of the ruling class over declining living standards is the fear of a social explosion.

Unfortunately, Mr Cridland didn't embrace any fundamental redistribution of wealth programme but instead piously talked about companies giving workers a 'helping hand during the recovery'.

1984/85 miners strike: A civil war without the guns

The miner's strike of 1984/5 has correctly been described as a civil war without guns. That description may be too kind to the ruling class as they did consider using the army, as can be seen from the latest government papers released from the National Archives.

RONNIE STEVENSON

The strike lasted about a year and its legacy lives on, even after 30 years, in the communities and in the minds of those who lived through it.

The National Coal Board (NCB) had announced the need for pit closures in 1983. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) imposed an overtime ban. Ian McGregor, the NCB boss, announced that the plan was to close 20 pits and do away with 25,000 jobs – a lie desperately repeated by the NCB and the Tory government and supported by the media and right wing in the labour movement to undermine the miners' struggle.

That lie has also been exposed by the release of the National Archive papers, which clarify that the real plan was to close 75 pits and axe more than 60,000 jobs.

So the miners, "the enemy within" as Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister at the time, described them were not lying when they claimed the real plan was to close many more pits. It was this fear of the destruction of the mining industry and the mining communities that prompted the strong reaction to the accelerated closure of Cortonwood and Bulcliffe Wood in Yorkshire. The strike movement of the Yorkshire miners spread to all areas of the British coalfield during March 1984.

The National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM's) federal structure left the decision making to each area, but one by one they decided to strike as the full implications of the Coal Boards intentions became clear. The NUM special delegate conference on April 1984 decided to support the action in all the coalfields. A resolution for a national ballot was overwhelmingly rejected.

Well-attended pithead meetings and ballots (in some cases) made the decisions to strike and mandate the delegates, so democracy ruled the day.

There are many aspects of the strike, which are rich in lessons for the working class in its coming struggles to change the way we live. The strike built slowly at first but soon the whole of the British coalfield was on strike, except the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Coal reserves soon dwindled. The miners repeated the tactics of the 70's strikes of flying pickets to travel around the country to persuade those not joining the strike to come out, or persuade those thinking of going back to work to stay out.

Mass picketing was an important element of the strike. Some miners and their supporters believed that it alone would win the dispute.

They were recalling the success of the flying pickets and the significance of the closure of the Saltley

depot in Birmingham in 1972. The fact that there was almost a general strike of the engineering workers in Birmingham on that day was perhaps at least as significant factor in the closure. Nevertheless the closure of Saltley was a key turning point in the victorious outcome of that strike.

This time the situation was different. The Tories and the police in particular were determined that the sort of mass picketing would never succeed again. Orgreave coking plant saw a major trial of strength in June 1984.

Up to 10,000 miners were assembled. There were over 4000 police in riot gear with hundreds on horses ready to do battle and, from their point of view, a battle it was. Truncheons were drawn right away and after the 'cavalry' charge, in which hundreds of miners were batoned down, the 'cavalry' were applauded by the beating of riot shields with batons before the rest of the police were dispatched to break up the picket through sheer brute force. As we now know the army were on standby as well and they would have been be armed whether the intention was to use guns or not.

brutality of the state

Soon, up and down the country, police rigged out in full riot gear were brought to the picket lines at pits and anywhere miners gathered.

The full naked brute force of the state was brought to bear on the miners. Police vans, buses carrying scabs and scab lorries were all kitted out with metal visors and blacked out windows. Miners in cars were regularly stopped by police whilst lorries driven by scab drivers were allowed wherever they liked to get the coal to the power stations and steel plants. Driving the wrong way round roundabouts and travelling at excess speeds on the wrong side of the road became the norm for the "Yuill and Dodd's" lorries, which careered around the country roads of the West of Scotland.

The courts were used to criminalise miners caught up on the picket lines and many miners were then never allowed to work for the NCB again. This was indeed a war without bullets but using everything else the state had in its arsenal.

The denial of benefits led to the mining communities trying to ensure that no mineworker or his/her family were starved back to work.

solidarity

Soup kitchens were set up to share food and feed the families as cheaply as possible. Money was raised through mineworkers travelling to the non-mining communities to collect money on the streets and food outside supermarkets. The working class gave generously with donations of money, food, clothes, toys etc. Many miners support groups were set-up to assist with the strikers efforts to get donations and publicise their just cause with stalls, street meetings, public meetings and workplace visits.

In Glasgow many collections were held at football matches where the support of the public resulted in large amounts being raised in support of the miners. At some of the



Thatcher used the police to try to defeat the miners. Below, women played a crucial role during the strike.

bigger games around Hampden Park the tenements rocked to the sound of thousands chanting slogans in support of the miners.

women

This type of activity led directly to the formation of Women's Support groups which involved miner's partners in the strike. Many women who had not been used to attending meetings and public speaking demonstrated their ready aptitude for the tasks of sustaining the strike, travelling throughout Britain and beyond to seek support for the fight of their communities for their survival.

As the strike unfolded it became clear that the Tory government had prepared for this confrontation and were determined to crush the miners and not allow them the victories they had won in earlier disputes. There was to be no repeat of the Miners' victory over Ted Heath, a previous Tory Prime Minister.

It has already been well documented that the Tories had plans to take on and defeat the miners, particularly through stockpiling large stocks of coal at pits, the power stations and the steel works, huge users of Britain's coal.

They also prepared an alternative system of transporting the coal through building up strategic haulage firms to cut across any rail workers actions to stop the transport of coal by rail. The latest release of National Archives papers expands on this by showing that the NCB chairman MacGregor and Thatcher were colluding with senior politicians from all sides, civil servants, right-wing union leaders and media bosses to demonise the miners and win the dispute.

Against this background it became clear that support from the rest of the labour and trade union movement was necessary to defeat such a determined employer supported by the state apparatus.

24-hour general strike

Militant, the predecessor of Socialist Party Scotland, raised the demand for a 24-hour general strike in support of the miners. The threatened action by the Nacods pit deputies and the dockers were, as Thatcher admitted, the two occa-



sions when the government believed it could lose the strike.

Undoubtedly, a mass solidarity strike of other workers in support of the miners would have defeated the government.

Such wholehearted support was not there from the many of the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party. They used every excuse in the book to stop proper solidarity industrial action or expressing support.

One issue was the absence of a ballot. There was no ballot when 90% of the workforce was out on strike.

A ballot could have cut across this and would have been won with a strong campaign from the miners' leaders, but the fact that the vast majority were on strike was conveniently brushed over by the faint hearts.

Another excuse used by some trade union leaders was the need to preserve the steel works by allowing enough coal to keep the ovens warm and avoid them being permanently

damaged. This allowance was abused and the scab lorries were used to supplement the agreed coal being brought in my train.

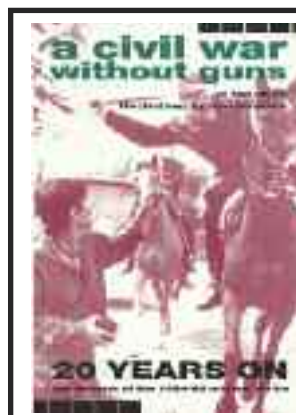
The violence of the miners strike was also used – conveniently forgetting that the violence in the strike was that perpetrated by the 'armed' police at the picket lines and in the mining villages throughout Britain.

The 1984/5 strike became a litmus test of those who really wanted to change the way we live.

Unfortunately the majority of the trade union and labour leaders were found to be as wanting as the rank and file of the working class were found to be willing to fight.

The gradual drift back to work and the ultimate defeat of the miners cowed the working class for some time, but inevitably militancy arose again.

A new generation today will take on board the lessons of 1984/5, central to which is the need for unified action by the working class as a whole, and will seize the chance to change the way we live.



A civil war without guns by Ken Smith.

A book written to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the strike. Available from Socialist Party Scotland.

See page 2 for contact details

Socialist Sawant wins in Seattle



Kshama Sawant won an unprecedented victory in Seattle in November 2013.

The election of Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant to Seattle City Council, the strong showing of Ty Moore in Minneapolis and the election of Labor candidates in Ohio in November 2013 showed that the radicalisation in US society has opened up a space for socialist ideas and the class struggle.

MATT DOBSON

The backdrop to this radicalisation has been a prolonged but shallow economic recovery after the crisis of 2007-8 and the "great recession" which followed.

The wealthiest 1% in America has gathered 90% of the new wealth, while the majority of jobs that have been created are low waged. De-

mands to increase workers share of the wealth are beginning to dominate the political arena.

The generalized anger of workers and youth towards the inequality caused by capitalism that saw the spread of the Occupy movement in 2011 has now progressed towards the discussion of concrete demands such as a \$15 an hour minimum wage and how to win them. In the last year significant "fights for \$15" have developed with a strike movement of fast food workers being prominent.

There is political dysfunction and division in the political establishment two party system, with both the Democrats and Republicans losing their voting base and being riven with division.

A section of the Democrats, sensing the mood in society, are moving in a left populist direction in an attempt to regain lost voters who have become disillusioned with the

Obama administration. This has been reflected in the election of a mayor in New York, Bill de Blasio, that ran on "tale of two cities, rich and poor tickets". The Democrats are attempting to win voters in the upcoming mid terms by raising the issue of the minimum wage around ballot initiatives in a number of states.

Obama, reflecting a section of US capitalism, has announced an increase in the minimum wage for federal workers, but only for new employees. This measure represents a desire to expand the economy as well as trying to shore up there electoral support from the Labor leaders.

As workers gain confidence through struggle, and if a clear alternative is put forward, pressure to independently challenge the Democrats will build.

This was seen in Ohio with workers forcing back anti union legislation in 2011 and then deciding to

run candidates, although a complete break has not been made as they endorsed some Democrats. Significant debates and a number of endorsements came from local union organizations in Minneapolis and Seattle to the Socialist Alternative election campaigns.

Fight for \$15

In Seattle the movement for \$15 gained further confidence from the Sawant election, coming after voters in SeaTac, a small city outside Seattle, recently passed a ballot initiative for \$15.

Under pressure, the newly elected mayor has also declared his support for \$15. However big business will not let this pass without a fight. Already they are mobilizing their resources and using the tactic of stirring up and hiding behind, the opposition of small business.

Socialist Alternative has raised the demand that all businesses who claim they cannot afford to pay \$15 an hour should open their books and subsidies from the taxation of big business and the super wealthy should be granted to small enterprises in need.

Kshama Sawant will sit on the mayor's committee to look into raising the minimum wage in Seattle, but has already served notice that she will leave the committee and launch a mass campaign for a ballot initiative if significant progress is not made by the spring.

The 15 Now campaign has been launched by Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative along with a growing list of union organizations and activists. 15 Now aims to organize a mass movement across the US to counter the power of the corporations with mass rallies, protests and strikes.

15 Now is already endorsed by trade union branches and community organisations in Seattle, prominent labor movement activists and

Rage Against the Machine's Tom Morello.

Several thousand marched in Seattle on January 20th, Martin Luther King day. Visually and vocally the 15 Now campaign dominated the march with 15 Now red placards putting forward slogans such as "Seattle Needs a raise" and "Because the Rent Wont Wait".

There will be a major conference of 15 Now in Seattle on February 15th to discuss the struggle in the city and train activists to build campaign groups in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Socialist Alternative activists will also be launching the campaign across the US on that day. Campaign groups will then build for a week of action from the 7th -15th March including initiatives around International Women's Day.

Political radicalization isn't just confined to the north significant movements against anti union legislation have developed in areas such as North Carolina with mass "Moral Monday" and "Truthful Tuesday" protests.

There is huge interest, both in Seattle and nationally in the US, in Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative.

Kshama's speeches and campaigning are covered in the Seattle media daily and most national mainstream media have covered her election and her socialist ideas since she was elected. Tens of thousands watched her response on You Tube to Obama's state of the union address.

Socialist Alternative is rapidly growing in profile and numbers and will play a key role in the rising struggles of the US working class for better condition's and political representation.

● Read more about Kshama Sawant and the 15 Now campaign at: www.socialistalternative.org www.15now.org

Miners strike as election looms

The Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) salutes the decision by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) to join the strike in the platinum industry by taking its members in the Amplats smelters at Rustenburg out of work.

WASP STATEMENT

This is a welcome act of solidarity with the mineworkers of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) who are in their second week of strike action in demand of a basic wage of R12 500.

The struggle for a living wage is one that needs to unite not only all workers in the mining industry, but workers across the economy as well as the unemployed, youth and students.

A victory for one must be a victory for all! WASP has therefore encouraged NUMSA members and other mineworkers, including WASP members in the Limpopo mines, to come out in solidarity with the R12 500 demand.

WASP calls for all striking work-

ers, regardless of trade union affiliation, to jointly form workers committees as forums in which rank-and-file workers can chart the way forward for their struggle and give guidance to the trade union leaderships.

WASP, with its affiliate the National Transport Movement (NTM - the 50 000-strong break-away from Cosatu-affiliated transport union SATAWU) in the lead, also calls for the formation of a Socialist Trade Union Network, with the aim to constitute a forum for comradesly discussion and the forging of unity amongst workers on national level.

General election

The R12,500 living wage will be a central demand in WASP's 2014 election campaign and WASP invites the independent workers' committees to nominate candidates to stand for election under the WASP umbrella.

WASP is appealing for international labour movement support. Messages of support and the publicising of the campaign will be vital.

But what is most crucial is the funding necessary to wage an effective election campaign. The money for the election deposits

alone is R605,000 (£38,000). In total we need to raise R2 million (£125,000).

Please write cheques to "South African Miners Fund" and post to South African Miners' Solidarity, PO Box 66682, London E11 9ER or transfer funds to the account details below.

Name of account: Wasp
Bank: Absa
Branch: Gandhi Square
Bank address: 180 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Branch code: 632005
Account number: 4081935745
Swift code: ABSAZAJJ
If asked for a Clearing Code please use: 632005
If asked for Recipient's Address please use: 33 Yster Crescent, Eldorado Park, Johannesburg, 1812

For the reference please put: your country + the name of your organisation.

Please send an email to appeal@workerssocialistparty.co.za to notify us to expect the donation and so we can send confirmation of receipt and a message of thanks.

● Read more from WASP at: www.workerssocialistparty.co.za

Davos summit reveals bosses fears

The recent World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos showed that world capitalist leaders fear that inequality will lead to mass revolt.

Danny Byrne

The 'Global Risks 2014' document maps out what they see as the major threats to their system. It includes: "fiscal crises in key economies, structurally high unemployment/underemployment, water crises, severe income disparity, global governance failure, food crises, failure of a major financial mechanism/institution, profound political and social instability".

The WEF document says: "The generation coming of age in the 2010s faces high unemployment and precarious job situations, hampering their efforts to build a future and raising the risk of social unrest..."

And all this after Global accountants Deloitte recently uncovered a shocking \$2.8 trillion cash pile in the vaults of the world's biggest non-financial companies, with five companies alone hoarding the equivalent of the United Arab Emirates' GDP!

So what do these great leaders offer up as a solution to these problems? Their perspective is for continued anti-worker policies and

austerity 'sacrifices', this time in order to make sure that our 'sacrifices' so far did the job!

Even in the austerity-choked countries of southern Europe, workers and youth are being told that 2014 will be the year when their 'sacrifices' (read suffering) at the altar of capitalist markets finally begins to pay off. While brutal austerity in both these countries continues.

Yet the world economy remains in the deep end, overwhelmed by the contradictions of the profit system. This log-jam can only be lastingly broken by democratically planning the vast wealth they control, thus reorganising the world economy on a socialist basis. Only a 'revolt' that is organised to fight for socialist change can lay the basis for the economic growth that we so desperately need.

Super rich get richer

● 85 super-rich people in the world, in total, own as much wealth (\$110 trillion) as half the world's population of 3.5 billion people.

● In the US the share of income going to the top 1% has doubled since 1980 to 20%. For the top 0.1% it has quadrupled.

● Capitalist investor Warren Buffet, (\$53.5 billion wealth), pays only 17.7% in income tax while his secretary (on an above average salary of \$60,000) pays 30% in tax. (Oxfam)

Bakers union launches fast food rights campaign

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Youth Fight For Jobs

On 25-26 January, activists from the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) met for their first young members' conference in Blackpool.

Several workers from Wigan's Hovis Factory attended, fresh from a victorious struggle to prevent the use of zero-hour contracts. This victory served as an inspiring backdrop to the event.

A sense of confidence that if you put up a fight, you can win, was present, and the lessons and experiences of the Hovis struggle informed much of the discussion.

BFAWU has now taken the initiative 'Fast Food Rights' campaign. This was publicly launched at the conference with BFAWU working alongside a coalition of campaigns

and supportive organisations, including Youth Fight for Jobs.

The campaign's aim is to help unionise the largely unorganised workers in this industry, and build the fight to end the super-exploitation that takes place in it.

Many of the activists at the conference worked in Greggs, so had lots of first-hand experience of organising in a fast food environment.

The demands for secure contracts and a living wage of at least £10 an hour (with no youth exemptions) were drawn out as particularly important for mobilising young workers.

In the US, the campaign for \$15 an hour minimum wage, which began with fast food workers, has been a big part of the huge political shifts that have taken place, shown most clearly by the election of a socialist city councillor, Kshama Sawant, in

Seattle last November.

Youth Fight for Jobs was invited to the conference to speak from the platform. Recently, through our initiative 'Are you Sick of Your Boss?', we have been campaigning on issues like zero-hour contracts and a living wage, and have been able to involve a number of young workers.

We feel confident that 'Fast Food Rights' will give renewed potential for organising young workers into trade unions and taking up the fight for decent conditions.

The campaign starts on 15 February with a national day of action targeting Burger King, Costa and McDonalds.

We'll be organising protests in towns in Scotland, as well as England and Wales. Why don't you join us and get involved!

www.youthfightforjobs.com
youthfightforjobs@gmail.com



Fast Food workers in the US have been fighting for a living wage

Give us real jobs, not benefit sanctions

Steven Manley
Youth Fight For Jobs, Dundee

The unemployed working class have frequently been hit with barriers to gaining employment, unfortunately the Job Centre doesn't seem to make it any easier for them.

There is an expectancy that the unemployed should have the skills to follow a strict set of rules when looking for work. Including being expected to record information in a book and detail the dates, how long it takes them and what the results were each day.

People who don't fill out these books are immediately hit with sanctions upon their fortnightly payment of up to £90 on job seekers allowance. This means that those on an already low income with no employment will have no money to live on for up to a month in some cases.

On a daily basis I have encountered people who will apply for any job just to avoid sanctions; they don't necessarily want the job but know that they are safe.

People are under constant pressure and are still faced with that fear regardless of how up to date they might be in their job search.

People also struggle to find work to match their skills and are therefore applying for jobs which they have little chance of getting.

This shows how the system has not only failed to provide people with decent jobs but also how it fails to accommodate the growing levels of unemployment in Britain.

It also provides further exploitation toward people who haven't asked to be out of work which has led to anger and despair amongst the working class.

anger

That anger has no direction but is ultimately misdirected on groups who aren't responsible including immigrants who many claim have a better chance of finding work than they do.

Putting forward a socialist alternative where a movement is organised and directed toward providing decent jobs and opportunities is essential.

Continuing to put forward a socialist alternative with the idea of building a party focused on supporting the interests of the working class is needed to put an end to years of misery which people have endured under this system.

Unionise apprentices to fight exploitation

A Youth Fight For Jobs member
Scotland

In October last year, I began my apprenticeship as a spray painter. This however has not offered a route out of poverty.

With an hourly wage of £3.52 per hour, this has been a route towards super exploitation. At the age of 20, I want to move out of my family home and get a flat of my own, but with a tiny income where I am entitled to no benefits this is near impossible.

For young apprentices in Britain, we are seen as a good source of cheap labour that can be easily replaced if we step out of line and start to demand better pay, working conditions and an end to bullying from management.

This is the situation that has faced many friends of mine who have entered work in the construction industry, only to be sacked within a year.

Working in a factory alongside skilled joiners and sprayers, I have heard stories about how the workforce were made to pay for the situation that the bosses faced after the onset of the economic crisis.

Around half of the workforce lost their job. Double time pay for overtime was slashed to time and a half. Even the Christmas night out was something that the bosses stopped

coughing up money for. It is common for some of the workforce to work 50+ hours a week when overtime is factored in just to make ends meet. Some of the joiners joke that they may as well build themselves a bed as it feels as if they barely leave the factory! A complete scandal when we have thousands of joiners and construction workers unable to find lasting employment.

On my first day I approached the shop steward to ask for a union registration form and quickly joined the GMB.

As part of my apprenticeship, I have to attend a tech college some weeks. I am known amongst many young apprentices for being an active socialist.

Some have come to me in the past week asking me to sign them up to a trade union as they want basic protection at work.

unionisation

The unionisation of apprentices is a key question which I will continue to encourage where possible. If you are an apprentice and you are reading this I would encourage you to do the same.

Some argue that unions aren't for apprentices, but as one of the lowest paid and most precarious sections of the working class this argument hardly holds water. We

urgently need to organise to protect our interests as much as any other worker has to.

The scandal of sub minimum wage pay for apprentices must be taken up by socialists and trade unionists.

The campaign led by Socialist Alternative in the US for a \$15 dollar an hour minimum wage has struck a chord with many workers struggling to make ends meet.

A campaign in Britain for a £10 an hour minimum wage, the ending of the pay freeze and a maximum working week of 35 hours without loss of pay, would resonate with the working class the length and breadth of Britain.

We must also continue to campaign for the creation of apprenticeships through a program of public works to end the scandal of youth unemployment.

We cannot allow the capitalists to drive workers and youth into the dirt in their attempt to drag their system out of the economic crisis that they face. It is also crucial that the TUC now name the day for a 24 hour general strike.

This must involve workers in the public sector, but also the private sector. Private sector workers coming out on strike would allow the labour movement to strike a decisive blow to the bosses where it really hurts, their profits!

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Why not find out more about us

Socialist Party Scotland is the Scottish section of the worldwide socialist and Marxist organisation, the Committee for a Workers' International. The CWI is active in 45 countries across the world.

Our sister parties include the Socialist Party in England and Wales and the Socialist Party in Ireland.

We have a long history of struggle, and experience of leading mass campaigns in Britain and internationally. We work to build new mass parties of the working class armed with a Marxist programme to defeat the attacks of the bosses and capital-

ist governments and to build a movement internationally that fights for a socialist future.

www.socialistworld.net
www.marxist.net



Super-size my pay - and can we have some respect with that?

SIGN-UP HERE TO THE 'SICK OF YOUR BOSS' CAMPAIGN!

Get involved in the campaign that says #enoughisenough to being messed around with your hours, to not getting proper breaks, to zero-hour contracts, to bullying management and low pay!

#enoughisenough
@youthfight4jobs



We are a generation who are denied simple rights such as rest breaks, and have to run our lives according to the needs of our employers. All retailers including Tesco, Primark and Sports Direct are making mega profits, running into bil-

ions of pounds, while we struggle to move out on our own, and are even denied enough money for a night out! We need to organise to fight back. We need to stand together to demand not only more pay, but decent working conditions. We need

our jobs in order to pay the bills but we are being squeezed so tightly that even our mobile phones are becoming a luxury, despite the fact we need them in case a shift comes up.

Join Youth Fight For Jobs and fight for your rights.

Back home safe campaign

By a Socialist Party Scotland reporter

Following the fatal helicopter crash of the coast of Sumburgh in Shetland in August of last year, Unite the Union has launched the Back Home Safe Campaign which is demanding improvements in offshore helicopter safety standards.

After five major incidents where helicopters have had to ditch in the North Sea in only the last four years – resulting in a total of twenty fatalities – confidence in helicopter safety is understandably at an all-time low amongst offshore workers.

A Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI) into the fatal crash in April 2009 has only just begun almost five years after the incident meaning the families of the workers involved have also had to endure a lengthy wait before they can even begin to try to find out the truth of what caused the accident and gain some justice.

From this FAI questions have been raised about the maintenance schedules of some helicopters.

Another concern is that in 2005 the Safety Regulation Group of the UK Civil Aviation Authority published a paper entitled 'Summary Report on Helicopter Ditching and Crashworthiness research', which outlined six key recommendations to improve safety – yet, disgracefully five out of the six are still to be implemented.

Norway

The recommendations of a similar report in Norway following helicopter ditchings in the Norwegian oil and gas sector were implemented in full with a massive improvement in the safety of the Norwegian helicopter fleet resulting from this, even though the Norwe-



The wreckage of the Super Puma which crashed off Shetland in August '13

gian sector uses the same helicopters as the UK sector with its far inferior safety record.

Another difference is that the Norwegian oil and gas sector is run by a nationalised company which means that the same drive for greater profits at the expense of health and safety does not exist.

The Norwegian sector also enjoys having 92% of workers organised in a trade union, making the workforce far more powerful in the running of the industry.

Norwegian workers talk of how they have had to fight long and hard for the good level of pay and conditions that they enjoy – it wasn't handed on a plate to them by a benevolent government or company!

Workers in the UK sector envy the better pay and conditions of the Norwegian counterparts, but the lesson to be learned is that we must begin to make a serious effort at organising the offshore workforce in the trade unions.

The increased resources that Unite are putting into organising offshore workers is a step forward

for workers in the industry and this has been recognised by the offshore workforce who have begun to join the union in larger numbers.

But trade unions should also make the call for all UK oil and gas to be brought into democratic public ownership under the democratic control and management of the workforce.

public ownership

Linking public ownership of oil and gas to the struggle against the wider austerity cuts would also help unite working class communities behind the trade union movement and cut across Tory 'divide and rule' tactics which pitch those in work against those out of work, and public sector workers against private sector.

Oil and gas companies make billions of pounds profit from the North Sea every year. If this wealth was publically owned and controlled here would be far more money to improve, schools, hospitals and other public services.

Education workers anger at SNP council



By Jim McFarlane
Dundee City Unison

SNP run Dundee City Council are proposing to cut a further £7.6 million from the council budget for the coming year.

The leader of the Administration had the gall to claim that these cuts would not be to the detriment of frontline services. The worst hit departments include Education.

Incredibly, at a time when there should be investment into children's futures the council want to move 20 Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) into Nursery Schools away from the vital work they carry out in primary schools.

The SNP Government has pledged to increase nursery provision from the current 475 hours a year up to 600 hours. That is of course to be welcomed, however limited that is. The Scottish government are providing extra funding to local councils to achieve this aim. Dundee City Council are choosing not to employ more Early Years Practitioners within the nursery sector but instead are using that money to supposedly balance the books.

The EYPs are organising and

have sent a letter to all councillors saying

"During the 18 years READ has been implemented in primary schools across the city there has been an improvement in attainment on a yearly basis. So successful was Dundee's flagship policy it has been adopted by other local authorities across Scotland and beyond. During these years, we as practitioners, often guiding and supporting teachers with no knowledge or practise of working in early years, have not been told that what we had been doing was not achieving the principles and aims of READ.

"Sadly it seems all our hard work and commitment to helping these young children as they embark on their educational journey is being removed by what can only be seen as a cost-cutting exercise.

"We believe that removing EYPs from the classroom in schools that are in 'deprived areas' will have a detrimental effect on some of the more vulnerable childrens continued learning needs."

The workers along with other UNISON members plan to lobby the budget setting meeting. The councillors of all parties have clearly set out that they accept the Tory government's austerity agenda. Rather than standing up for the communities they claim to represent they have capitulated to the demands of the Tories and big business without even a hint of a fight.

We need socialist councillors who are prepared to defend jobs and services. They would link up with council trade unionists to demand back the stolen millions from local authority budgets over the years.

PCS elections. Elect a fighting leadership

The elections for the leadership of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) will start soon, with nominations closing on 6 March.

Socialist Party members in PCS are part of Left Unity, which is standing candidates with the PCS Democrats - as the Democracy Alliance.

Socialist Party members who are standing include Chris Baugh for Assistant General Secretary, Janice

Godrich for President and John McNally for Vice-President.

The union's Democracy Alliance-led leadership has a proven track record of opposing the Con-Dems' austerity attacks by fighting for jobs, services and working conditions.

PCS branches are being asked to nominate Democracy Alliance candidates - a full list is available on leftunity.org.uk Help make sure of a fighting leadership for PCS.

Museums action in Edinburgh

PCS union
www.pcs.org.uk

Over 140 members at the National Museums of Scotland are taking strike action in a row over payments for anti-social working hours.

Members are appealing to management to restore anti-social working hours payments to staff employed since January 2011 who don't get the weekend allowance currently paid to longer serving staff. Management arbitrarily cut the allowance 2 years ago leaving some staff earning as little as £6.74 an hour.

Members were on strike on Boxing Day and donned the picket lines with Santa outfits to give away mince pies and collect for Shelter, thinking of

others who are even less fortunate in these austerity-hit times.

Branch secretary Robert Burns said, "We won the fight to reinstate weekend payments a number of years ago and we will do so again. Management may think this is a way to run a national institution, but we don't. It may be a long struggle but we will continue fighting until all our members get a decent wage for the hard work that they do."

● PCS members also protested at the National Galleries of Scotland at the end of November. All of these workers are demanding fair treatment from the employers and the Scottish government.

Glasgow care workers strike action

Ian Leech
Glasgow Unison

Glasgow care workers have completed two forty-eight hour strikes in the Elderly care sector of Glasgow City Council.

The strikes have come as a result of the imposition by the Social Work management of a new 12 hour shift pattern. Management state that the move from an 8 hour to a 12 hour pattern is required 'in order to compete with the private sector'. The hard reality is that many staff, amongst other attacks, face a pay cut of 7%.

The dispute has been triggered following management's refusal to negotiate further with UNISON around the proposals that the union view as having a detrimental effect on many workers. Due to the changing shift pattern 122 workers will lose £1495 per year shift allowance another 60 part time staff will lose £794.

A full consultation with the members raised a number of additional concerns, in particular around the treatment of many staff who, in some cases, have been working for four years on temporary contracts. The management propose to consolidate them at much lower grades than they are currently appointed to. Once again a cut in salary is proposed, some as big as £12K.

In the days prior to the action the Labour run City Council sent

letters to each and every member of staff 'inviting' them to sign up for the changes. Feeling bullied and intimidated and in fear of their jobs, many did. This is just a further example of how the council is conducting its industrial relations as they manage the cuts handed down from Westminster and Holyrood.

The action thus far has been solidly supported. As with any of the caring professions, taking strike action is not an easy decision to make.

There have been some lively and well supported picket lines and, given that 16 elderly homes are being picketed, a lot of the noise and energy is saved for expending at the lobbies of the Social Work HQ in Glasgow city centre.

balaclava's

Following the first 48-hour action the Director of Social Work sent an email report to Councillors. In it he complained that pickets were wearing 'balaclava's and dark coats' on picket lines (January in Scotland at 9.15pm can be a tad cold!). He also complained about 'visitors' to picket lines!

Over the course of the two strike periods the mood of the strikers has become more determined. One striker stated in a meeting that "we have come this far, now lets hit management harder!"



This is, as with the previous Glasgow Council dispute involving Pupil Support Assistants, a section of the workforce new to strike action. The care workers had indicated that they 'just want to be left alone to do our jobs'. However management has stated that, in connection with the cuts, "no-one will be left alone"

The second 48-hour strike drew more members into activity. A strike meeting was arranged and a full discussion and debate was conducted. The meeting was lively and upbeat. From the floor came a proposal to strike for 72 hours over the St Valentines weekend.

After many contributions, many serious, some humourous, the members voted unanimously for the proposal. Send messages of support to: enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk

Fight for a living wage and trade union rights

By a Glasgow fast food worker
and Usdaw rep

Retail workers are on low wages and insecure part-time contracts, with bosses prioritising the 'needs of the business' over our welfare.

Stores are judged on profits that they make. What this means for workers is that every last drop of productivity is squeezed out of us in every hour that we work.

Every task is timed. This means maximum efficiency for the employer but puts staff under unbelievable pressure as they don't have a minute to spare and if anything crops up unexpected such as a spillage.

The majority of retail workers earn less than £7 per hour and are forced to rely on tax credits and housing benefit to make up our wages to an amount that we can live off.

But these benefits are not straight forward to claim. In this sector full time contracts are a rarity, with zero hours or part time contracts the standard.

If you are contracted for 16 hours then that is all the employer is required to provide, but you could be asked to work your shift and one for a colleague who is sick.

With these changeable hours it is difficult to be assessed accurately for benefits. One week you get full time hours, the next you are left with not

enough to buy food. And even finding out which days you will be working can be a real hassle.

It's not being uncommon for managers to do rota's less than a week in advance. The rota it is often changed with last minute adjustments without asking staff.

Quite how anyone is expected to plan their lives on such short notice, some with childcare obligations, really is beyond me.

A common complaint by retail workers is that shops are too hot in summer and too cold in winter.

Most retail companies will have policies for low temperature working including extra breaks for hot drinks and common sense solutions like providing jumpers and gloves for staff, but the reality is that management are reluctant to provide these as extra breaks put time pressure on them as they are left short on the floor. Jumpers and gloves cost money.

There is no maximum temperature for working so managers are even less likely to fix air conditioning, instead choosing to let staff bake in stifling heat.

One extreme example I have dealt with the shop was reaching 40+ degrees and staff were expected to work, being told by an area manager to go to the staff room and eat an ice lolly! We need to organise within retail, in order to challenge the culture



Fast food workers in the US have taken strike action in the fight for a living wage of \$15 an hour.

that exists towards staff.

We make millions of pounds per year for our employers and they treat us as no more than a business expense that needs to be minimised. We need to put an end to the chronic underemployment and an end to zero hour contracts.

We need secure contracts. Most Trades Unions have a policy of fighting for a living wage that is currently £7.45 per hour but in order to win that they have to provide a fighting lead. The Fast Food Rights campaign (see page 10) is calling on a £10 per hour wage. The Youth Fight for Jobs

campaign is supporting this important. It's about time low paid and super-exploited workers won a decent living wage and proper rights at work.

Given that we see how much cash runs through our tills we know that our employers can afford it.

what we stand for

work and income

- For the unions to take immediate action to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage, linked to average earnings.
- Reject Welfare to Work; for the right to decent benefits, training or a job without compulsion.
- A maximum 35-hour week without loss of pay.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, sickness and holiday rights from the first day of

employment. End zero-hour contracts.

- Scrap the anti-union laws. Build fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time officials should be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. End the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industry. No to nuclear power. No to Trident
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, to help end environmental pollution.

public services

- Fight all cuts. No to privatisation. Renationalise all privatised utilities and services.
- Free, high quality education for all from nursery to university; with a living grant. No to the return of tuition fees in Scotland. Cancel the student debt and end the cuts in education funding.
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private contractors from all parts of the NHS.
- Keep council housing public. For a massive programme of publicly owned housing to provide good quality homes at low rents.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of workers and service users.

rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal laws that trample of civil liberties. For the right to protest. End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a women's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right of asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

A mass working class party

- For a mass workers party that draws together workers, young people and activists from other movements to build a political alternative to the big business parties.
- Trade unions should disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and play a central role in helping to build a new workers' party.

socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops now from Afghanistan.
- Tax the super rich. For a socialist government that takes the major companies in Scotland into public ownership and the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy. Run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- For a socialist Scotland and a free and voluntary socialist federation of Scotland with England Wales and Ireland.
- A democratic socialist, environmentally secure plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people.
- No to the bosses neo-liberal European Union. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world free from poverty.