

Worcester: end the cuts and the coalition!

ON 12 February, 250 trade unionists and students marched through Worcester city centre in a trades union council protest against massive cuts.

Sean McCauley
Worcester Socialist Party

The demonstration, fronted by a lively samba band, was full of trade union banners and homemade placards denouncing both government and local council spending cuts.

Worcestershire county council is axing £60 million from its budget. 1,000 redundancies are threatened, many of which will come from chil-

dren's services.

The NHS Worcestershire chief executive has said that £60 million cuts will result in the sacking of doctors and nurses. 200 health service workers have already lost their jobs and 120 beds have been closed at the main hospital in Worcester.

Marchers proceeded to a rally to hear a speaker from NAPO, the probation service union, warn of drastic cuts to supervision of those at high risk of re-offending.

Pete McNally, from rail workers' union Aslef, highlighted that trade unions should lead a serious fight-back, starting with a one day public sector general strike.

Matt Wrack, general secretary of

the FBU firefighters' union, spoke of the inspiration the students' movement had given to trade unionists.

Matt said that if workers and young people in Egypt could overthrow a repressive dictatorship, then we too could end the increasingly disunited Con-Dem coalition government.

One speaker from the audience brought the solidarity of anti-cuts activists in Gloucester.

Other speakers made comparisons with the struggle that defeated the poll tax and former prime minister Thatcher, as 18 million people defied the law and refused to pay the regressive tax.

Greenwich marches against brutal council cuts



Marching to the beat of workers in Greenwich.

photo Lorraine Dardis

ON SATURDAY 12 February around 200 trade unionists, community campaigners and service users marched in Greenwich borough, south London, against the local council's brutal cuts package.

Paul Callanan
Greenwich Save Our Services

The march was called by Greenwich Save Our Services which was initiated by Socialist Party members. Banners and flags from local branches of Unite, PCS, NUT, NSSN, the Pensioners' Forum and Keep

Our NHS Public were all present. The march grew as it went through Woolwich's busy high street.

Greenwich council has unveiled a cuts package that will 'save' £90 million over the next four years.

The first wave, which will slash £30 million in one year, includes cuts to carer's allowances, parks and open spaces including the closure of a popular animal park in Charlton, the closure of advice centres for teenage mothers, and a 40% voluntary sector cut.

The Labour council has also handed out redundancy notices to

all its workers.

Workers are told to accept new contracts on worse terms and conditions or face losing their jobs.

At the rally, Mick Callanan, a Unite grounds maintenance steward and Socialist Party member, pointed to the student protests at the end of last year and said that "they showed the way in the fight against the cuts and now we should be good parents and join them".

Onay Kasab, Unite 1563 branch chair, said that the march needed to be the "start of the movement in Greenwich against the cuts".

what we think

Reject 'TINA'-fight for socialism

THE PAGES of the Socialist are bulging with reports from workers, young people and other service users who are organising to fight the cuts.

Con-Dem ministers and Labour councillors play the blame game. Councillors claim they have no choice but to axe vital services. Ministers say councillors have 'freedom to choose' how they implement spending cuts and could save some (popular) services by cutting others.

Both of these positions are unacceptable and working class people have no choice but to fight all cuts - whoever makes them.

Polls show that, despite a constant and exclusive diet of TINA (there is no alternative) from big business politicians, backed up by their media friends, almost a third of people believe the cuts are unnecessary. This number will multiply as the fightback develops, as it will be accompanied with increasing realisation of the amount of money that is swilling around in big business circles.

It's estimated that a tax on Barclays' £2.7 billion bonus pool alone would allow the government to reverse cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance, disability allowance and housing benefit.

A YouGov poll in 2010 showed that "74% of the population would favour a tax on the wealthiest six million (who have an average of £4 million of private wealth per household) to pay off the national debt and therefore avoid the cuts".

However, none of the main political parties has any intention of doing anything like this. Health minister Andrew Lansley has received an estimated £20,000 from private health care companies, while the Mirror reports that such companies have paid out £750,000 to the Tories. The Con-Dems and their Labour predecessors act in the interest of the directors and owners of these companies and those in other sectors of big business and finance.

"Too far, too fast" is not an effective rallying cry. Labour leader Ed Miliband is worse than useless in opposition, merely criticising the speed at which cuts are carried through.

In national and local government Labour has carried through a Tory agenda of privatisation. For instance, in the NHS the 'internal

market' was massively expanded under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, preparing the ground for the Con-Dems to smash the NHS completely.

The Tories' motives go way beyond a temporary austerity drive. This was made clear when David Cameron blurted out last August: "Should we cut things now and go back later to try and restore them later? I think we should avoid that approach."

Working class people need our own mass party - one which fights all the cuts. A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development of 700 employers revealed that firms in all sectors plan to shed 6.2% on average of their workforce in the first quarter of this year, up from 3.8% in the previous quarter.

A mass workers' party could demand a 35-hour week without loss of pay. And that the billions paid out in bonuses to bankers should instead be invested in a programme of socially useful job creation.

Many more measures along these lines are necessary, but we also need to take into account that capitalism, a system motivated solely by private profit, means there will always be crises, always be poverty and inequality. That is why, as well as fighting the cuts, the Socialist Party proposes a socialist alternative. That would mean ordinary people deciding how our lives are run, how the wealth and resources in the economy can be used to meet our needs - not to stack up in the vaults of bank executives and in the assets and luxuries of the rich.

Instead of making cuts, a socialist government would nationalise the banks and major corporations and place them under democratic workers' control and management. Compensation would be paid only on the basis of proven need. A state monopoly on foreign trade and transactions could stop the wealthy removing money.

A socialist planned economy would make us no longer subject to the whim of the markets. The resources made available would transform all our lives - providing living standards and services that are unimaginable under capitalism.

If you agree, join the Socialist Party. See the 'join' form on page 8.

Anti-cuts protests and events

Saturday 19 February
Brighton anti-cuts coalition
Regional anti-cuts day school
10am-5pm, Sussex University

Bristol and District Anti-Cuts Alliance
Demonstration and rally
11am, Castle Park, Broadmead

Pontypridd demo against the cuts
Called by RCT Unison
11.30am, Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd

Shrewsbury Anti-Cuts Group demo
10.45am, Outside Shirehall, Shrewsbury

Lewisham carnival against the cuts
1pm, Town Hall, Catford SE6 4RU
3.30pm, City Hall, Cardiff

Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union
March against cuts in jobs and services
12noon, Assemble Abbots Park, Leyton, East London

Tuesday 22 February
Devon Against the Cuts protest
City council meeting
5.30-7.30pm, Guildhall, Exeter High Street

Thursday 24 February
Cardiff Against the Cuts
Lobby of council budget meeting

Wednesday 2 March
Liverpool trades council
Lobby the city council
4.30pm, Liverpool town hall

Thursday 3 March
Portsmouth Against Cuts Together
Gig Against the Cuts
7.30pm, Wedgewood Rooms, Southsea

Monday 7 March
Chesterfield anti-cuts meeting
Fight ALL Cuts!
7.30pm, Chesterfield Library, New Beetwell Street, S40 1QN

Protest at 'shocking' Barts and London job losses

AROUND 150 people protested outside the Royal London Hospital on Friday 11 Feb against shocking plans for cuts in the NHS.

Management plans to cut 630 posts, including 258 nurses and 83 diagnostic and clinical posts, across Barts and The London NHS trust. They are also planning to cut 100 beds, and the number of four-hour sessions worked by consultants by at least 550 a year.

This is in addition to cuts of 500 jobs in the local primary care trust,

cuts in community health services, such as district nursing of around 50% across London, and massive cuts in mental health services.

Staff from the health service, local residents, trade unionists and campaigners joined together to pledge to fight these cuts.

Naomi Byron

Read more anti-cuts reports at www.socialistparty.org.uk