

# *Foundation for Proportional Representation-based Socialism*

Website: [www.PRsocialism.org](http://www.PRsocialism.org) Forum: [tinyurl.com/PRsocialismforum](http://tinyurl.com/PRsocialismforum) Newsletter 11 (5 May 2011)

## *After Osama bin Laden, unite good Muslims, Christians, Jews and non-believers!*

The Project for a New American Century wanted “a new Pearl Harbor” and then came 9/11. A coincidence? It certainly had the effect of dividing Muslims from non-Muslims (particularly Christians and Jews). Or is bin Laden not really dead at all, or did he die years ago? There are so many conspiracy theories; it’s hard to tell fact from fiction!

## **Turn 30 June pension strike into a general strike!**

Four public sector unions, the UCU, PCS, NUT and ATL, have either balloted for strike action or have decided to ballot, on the issue of attacks by the coalition government on pensions – workers are expected to contribute more, work for longer and receive less when they retire. They plan to coordinate action and strike together on the 30th of June. Other public sector unions should join them, and even the National Association of Head Teachers (that has never struck before) has voted 99.6% to strike, largely because such middle class people are hit most by the change from final to average salary pensions. Some union leaders, like those of Unison, want to postpone a strike until the autumn. That is a recipe for demoralisation. Put pressure on the leaders to initiate a ballot now; Unison’s conference in June will be too late.

Pensions are an ideal issue to strike against the attacks by the ConDem coalition, also including redundancies and a pay freeze. Let's defeat them on this as a step towards bringing down the government and hopefully leading to a very democratic socialist society, with proportional representation, workers’ control of industry and direct democracy (e.g. referenda initiated by the electorate like in Switzerland).

## **Vote Socialist / Anti-Cuts on 5 May and prepare for a Greece-style revolt!**

The council elections, and elections to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Irish Assembly, on Thursday 5 May, are opportunities for radical socialist or Green parties opposed to cuts to make a breakthrough. In England, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), bringing together the two largest revolutionary socialist parties (the SWP and Socialist Party) plus others, is standing in about 180 council seats. TUSC is standing in some areas with “Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts” on the ballot paper, and “Socialist Alternative” in others (the Socialist Party’s electoral name that people are used to).

TUSC could win some seats, by calling for “needs budgets”, without cuts or council tax rises, demanding extra money from central government (like the Liverpool Labour council (led by Militant, now the Socialist Party) did successfully before being defeated due to a refusal of other Labour councils to fight. Most Labour councillors will be little difference in practice to Tories or Lib Dems, but those who do oppose cuts should be supported.

TUSC is also standing in Wales. Note that some Welsh nationalists (in Plaid Cymru), like Leanne Wood, describe themselves as socialist; such candidates should also be supported.

In Northern Ireland, the Socialist Party and People Before Profit Alliance oppose cuts. There is a need to counteract the divisive sectarian politics that has divided working class people there on religious grounds for so long.

In Scotland, the left vote is unfortunately split after the former leader of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), Tommy Sheridan, successfully sued the News of the World, setting up the breakaway party Solidarity. Tommy is now in jail for perjury. The SSP has recently shown 4% support in an opinion poll and stands a chance of winning seats despite Solidarity splitting the vote (it has united with Respect’s George Galloway in the Coalition Against Cuts in Glasgow).

After the elections, action by workers like the general strikes which convulsed Greece are key. The ConDem coalition's cuts programme will lead to economic stagnation at best. Capitalism leads to crisis, and another banking crisis could be on the cards when governments (that previously bailed out the banks by borrowing money from other banks) go bankrupt (only prevented so far in the Eurozone by bailouts which working class people are expected to pay the bulk of in big austerity drives). Such a second banking crisis was predicted by Newsnight’s Paul Mason.



# ConDems panic over NHS reorganisation!

After over 500,000 people marched in London on 26 March, Tory Andrew Lansley announced a three-month freeze and rethink of the Health and Social Care Bill. The Bill would remove any degree of public accountability for healthcare provision and undermine collective pay bargaining. Hospitals will close as competition with the private sector takes place. What happens if GP consortia go bankrupt? The ConDems can and must be forced to back down on this proposal; lives are literally at stake.

**March to save the NHS**  
**Tuesday 17 May, 5.30pm**  
**University College Hospital**  
**Gower Street, WC1**

## End police violence! Justice for Ian Tomlinson!

The family of homeless newspaper seller, Ian Tomlinson, have finally earned a degree of success for the struggle they have waged, along with other campaigners, to get justice, with an inquest jury deciding that he was “unlawfully killed” by a police officer during a G20 protest in April 2009, resulting in several relatives shouting “Yes!” at the verdict. PC Simon Harwood had no visible lapel number (a clear sign that he intended causing trouble) but admitted to being the officer involved after video recordings of the incident appeared on the internet and TV. Harwood contradicted himself several times in court.

The officer had previously avoided trial due to the first forensic pathologist’s report showing Ian had died of natural causes, but he changed his evidence in court. The Director of Public Prosecutions had originally refused to prosecute due to the contradictions between pathologists’ reports, but Harwood now faces disciplinary action and a criminal charge.

Police violence is nothing new, as many living in inner cities and council estates like Wythenshawe in Manchester (where Hall Lane police station was notorious as exposed by a Socialist Party campaign highlighting horrific injuries sustained by Rastafarian Shaun Morgan for having his hi-fi too loud, causing several more victims to come forward).

## No cuts – nationalise banks and use bailout money! Close tax loopholes – force the rich to pay tax!

The scale of the economic crisis in Britain is so severe due to previous Tory governments decimating manufacturing and industries like coal and steel to try to smash the trade unions, with the economy now relying on services largely based in the City of London. After the run on Northern Rock, that looks foolhardy. There are big opportunities for the left, and the right blaming immigration. We need to put across our ideas skilfully, particularly with respect to where we suggest the money should come from to avoid the cuts planned by the main parties. Whereas most socialists oppose wars, Trident and ID cards, as well as taxing the rich of course, the economic problems are too great for such savings to be sufficient.

Around £1.3 trillion (i.e. £1,300,000,000,000) of our money was spent or guaranteed by the previous Labour government on bailing out the banks. Socialists should argue strongly for nationalising all the banks, but this would cost money the government doesn’t have unless we only compensate pension schemes. This would allow whatever’s left of the bank bailout money to be used for the benefit of all, avoiding cuts. We should also argue for all banks, whether currently nationalised, part-nationalised or private, to be run democratically from below with most control in the hands of borrowers, savers and workers (plus government representatives). Marxists typically argue for workers’ control, but it seems clear that those whose money is at stake should have at least as much control as those who happen to work at a particular bank. If the European Union objects, a socialist government will need to threaten to withdraw (encouraging solidarity and the prospect of socialists quickly coming to power across Europe).

The Tories and Liberal Democrats massively underestimate money lost to the Treasury due to tax avoidance and evasion, which the Tax Justice Network estimates at £95 billion, and the recent budget contained measures to save an estimated figure of just £1 billion! It may be that international agreements are necessary to get the really big sums of money that the rich avoid in this way. It may also be that rich people and corporations relocate to elsewhere in the world to continue avoiding paying a fair share of tax. There are two answers to that – don’t let them take their assets with them and encourage revolutions in other countries so they have nowhere to run to!

## Join the struggle for Very Democratic Socialism

The Facebook group “Very Democratic Socialism” is intended to discuss and work towards a very democratic form of socialism – in which the government is elected by proportional representation, there is workers’ control of industry and there is an element of “direct democracy” (whereby everyone in society can discuss and vote on important issues, perhaps by referenda initiated by a petition signed by some proportion/quantity of the electorate like in Switzerland).

Members of the group are free to make suggestions concerning how such a future society would work, including the form of PR and what to do when the government comes into conflict with workers’ committees – called “dual power” by Marxists (we advocate a permanent form of dual power plus direct democracy or “permanent triple power”).

Advocating a very democratic form of socialism is important to be popular enough to win majority support (essential for a successful revolution) and to avoid a counter-revolution if the masses regard society as undemocratic afterwards.

The previous two editions of the Foundation for PR-based Socialism newsletter (9 and 10) contained articles on the Alternative Vote (AV) referendum, which takes place on the same day as the elections (5 May). If you want to hear the views, go to the Foundation website at [www.PRsocialism.org](http://www.PRsocialism.org), or debate them on Facebook.