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**Communist Party
of Great Britain
(Marxist-Leninist)**



**Ditch
Labour
to fight
the cuts!**

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Addressing strikers on 10 May, Bob Crow had this to say: “We should be taking action across Britain today; not just PCS, UCU and the other unions, but *everyone* taking action. We should be turning back the tide. The rest of the trade-union movement has got to start waking up. The next trade-union day of action, which I understand is going to be called in October, needs to be a 24-hour strike against the effects of austerity. We need the entire trade-union movement to link up.”

Few who call themselves socialists could disagree with this heartfelt cry, but if passionate exhortation were all that were needed to unify and mobilise workers for a serious struggle against the cuts, we would be storming the heavens tomorrow, not waiting until 20 October for the TUC to march us up the hill and then back down again. What is needed right now, however, in addition to fire in the belly, is a clear understanding of the *nature of the crisis* unfolding in capitalist society.

Capitalism IS crisis

The truth is that this crisis is not just about the excesses of ‘crony capitalism’, the greed of the bankers or the shameless grasping of the politicians who are bought and sold by big business. This crisis runs right to the heart of the *capitalist system of commodity production*, and cannot be ended by the working class unless we first get rid of the capitalist state which defends bourgeois property rights – most importantly, the right of capitalists to privately own the means of production and to use them to exploit the labour of wage slaves.

The class war now being waged against the living standards of workers in this country will carry on no matter which bourgeois party is in power, and cannot stop while the capitalist state remains. If we really mean it when we say ‘make the bankers pay’ and ‘can’t pay, won’t pay’, then there are real revolutionary implications that must be faced up to. Under the material conditions imposed by the crisis, it is impossible to build a successful working-class resistance to cuts and austerity without keeping clearly in our sights the need to overthrow capitalism itself.

Fake solutions

Most militant workers will have been disgusted by the attitude of Labour’s shadow business secretary, Chuka Umunna, at the recent Ucat conference in Scarborough. He was overjoyed by the ‘example’ set by Vauxhall workers at Ellesmere Port, who have agreed to longer hours, lower pay and 24/7 working in order to stop General Motors from closing their factory (a German plant will be closed instead).

Umunna described the workers’ retreat as “a shining example of trade unions as a force for economic progress for our country, working in partnership with management and the government”. Blithely ignoring the fact that the interests of workers and the interests of capitalists are *diametrically opposed* to one another, he pushed for unions to take on the role of helping capitalists make greater profits, saying: “if the voice of

protest is important, the voice of progress must be heard as loudly too” – capitalist progress, that is.

Illusions spread by ‘left’ Labour and its friends are harder to detect. After all, if our problem really was just a right-wing cabinet of Eton boys imposing austerity for the hell of it, then getting rid of the ConDems and pushing for an ‘alternative’ mix of public investment and progressive taxation to enable us to ‘grow our way out of recession’ might make some sense. But the truth is that *all* the capitalist parties are committed to cuts, because austerity and war are the only ‘solutions’ imperialism has to offer when faced with capitalist crisis.

Another common illusion is that the crisis is not really as bad as it’s painted; that it’s just a bogey conjured up by our rulers to terrify us. But the reality is rather the opposite: the true scale of the crisis is never owned up to by our rulers, who correctly fear that it will sooner or later bring the working class face to face with the need for revolution.

The way forward

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has called upon militants to “*Pile on the pressure to ensure we resurrect the N30 coalition which shook the ConDems*”, and the substantial strike action in the public sector last November was indeed a magnificent show of proletarian strength, with 1.3 million coming out in protest at the theft of their pensions.

But what happened after that? At the first opportunity, the TUC grossly abused the trust placed in it by union members, pressurising public-service unions into accepting sector-specific framework agreements in local government, health and education. These agreements caved into government propaganda that pension ‘reform’ is ‘inevitable’, leaving only the detail of the cuts to be negotiated sector by sector.

The NSSN called for those unions that held out against the TUC sell-out to coordinate a rebellion, but despite their best efforts only PCS, Unite and UCU managed to organise a further one-day pensions strike on 10 May. Clearly much of the impetus built up six months earlier had been lost.

Rather than focusing on efforts to ‘resurrect’ last November’s one-day strike, would it not be more useful to work out what made the seemingly robust ‘N30 coalition’ so vulnerable to manipulation and division by the class enemy? It needs to be spelt out: the Labour party stands for the defence of British imperialist interests, and it uses its TUC and union placemen to stop workers from doing real damage to those interests, no matter what the human cost at home or abroad.

We call upon militants to step up the campaign to break their unions’ links with Labour, and to get rid of social-democratic habits and influence in our movement. It’s time to forge a *real* resistance capable of taking direct action and of uniting workers in a common struggle to overthrow capitalism so we can free ourselves from the downward spiral of war and poverty into which this bankrupt system is consigning us.

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Get in touch with local activists, find out more about the party and join the struggle! Send this in and we’ll contact you:

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