



Socialist Party manifesto 2010

Fed up with New Labour, LibDems and Tories...

... axing our services,
... swindling their MPs' expenses,
... supporting war in Afghanistan?

Vote socialist

Preface

We are living through the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. Although the economy, which shrunk by a massive 5% has now stuttered into growth, a further decline - a 'double dip' - is far from ruled out.

So the 2010 general election comes at a decisive time. The British economy is still deep in crisis... who do New Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats expect to pay for it?

Not the bankers! £1.2 trillion has been thrown at the banks, ringing up a colossal national debt. This has been greedily swallowed up and £6 billion was paid back out in Christmas bonuses alone!

Not big business fat cats! Despite massive lay-offs and redundancies many multinationals have continued to make record-breaking profits. Tesco boasted over £3 billion profit during the depths of the recession last year.

Not the top politicians! Tory Lord Ashcroft has millions stashed away in tax havens so barely pays any tax. MPs implored the rest of us to 'tighten our belts' after voting themselves a pay rise, taking their salary (excluding expenses) to a very comfortable £64,766 a year.

Rather, New Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all agree that working class people should pick up the tab for the bankers' mess.

Death by... 10-25% cuts!

The 'public sector' is our services - hospitals, schools, council services and the jobs of hardworking public sector workers like nurses, teachers and bin workers. But public sector spending is the target of choice as the politicians try to bring down the huge government debt created by the bank bailouts and effects of the recession.

Working class people are viewed with such contempt that the establishment parties openly compete over who can promise the most severe cuts. Labour chancellor Alistair Darling has boasted that cuts will be 'deeper and tougher' than Thatcher's. The Conservatives say they will cut 'faster' than Darling and the Liberal Democrats call for 'savage' cuts.

Many people, particularly older workers, will be sickened at the thought of a Tory government. The memory of Thatcher's onslaught against workers in the 1980s is deeply ingrained. It is understandable that many will feel the need to go out, and through gritted teeth, vote New Labour in an effort to see off the Tories.

But this will not solve the lack of a political voice for working class people. There is no fundamental difference between the attacks that a Tory government will inflict on us and the attacks a New Labour government will make. The 'lesser of two evils' is still 'evil' and we need something far better.

Sleaze and more sleaze

The political system is in crisis. Never have the politicians been so utterly discredited in the eyes of so many millions of people. In the last twelve months alone the MPs' expenses scandal, the Chilcott enquiry and the corporate lobbying scandal have rocked the country. The sheer scale of abuse is unprecedented and seeps from every party. The hypocrisy of Labour's election slogan 'a future fair for all' will be laughable to millions.

Workers and their families, students, pensioners and young people have been disenfranchised. The transformation of Labour into New Labour and its adoption of an exclusively pro-big business, pro-free market and anti-working class agenda explains the plummeting turnout in general elections.

But this is not apathy, this is anger. This is disillusionment. This is an outright rejection by a near majority of 'politics' as something they do to us.

We need a party that stands up for working class people.

Join the socialists!

**Putting the millions before the
billionaires!**

Socialist policies

New Labour has allowed a massive increase in inequality. Conservative and LibDem policies show that they would have done the same if they were in office.

What would socialists do differently?

Work and Income

New Labour's record

- Maintained a poverty level minimum wage which continues to discriminate against young workers.
- Watched the gender pay gap increase so that women are earning on average 22.6% less than men.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- Trade union struggle 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.
- All workers including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment. Enforce equal pay.

Unemployment

New Labour's record:

- Allowed unemployment to rise to nearly 2.5 million, officially 7.8%, but in reality much higher, particularly among the young.
- Claim to be tackling unemployment while making plans to sack 100,000+ of the government's own employees.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- No job cuts. Full employment through a massive programme of socially useful public works with a living wage of at least £8 an hour and a maximum 35-hour week.
- No cheap labour apprenticeships and unpaid internships. Guarantee at least the minimum wage and a job at the end.

Pensions and benefits

New Labour's record:

- Launched a vicious propaganda campaign against the right of public sector employees to a decent pension after allowing private sector bosses to take pension contribution holidays and close virtually all final-salary pension schemes.
- Kept those kicked out of work in poverty with a measly £60 a week, even less for the under 25s.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with earnings now.
- Reject 'welfare to work'. For the right to decent benefits without compulsion or means testing.

Public services

New Labour's record

- Spent £63 billion on PFI building contracts in the NHS, more than five times the value of the assets built.
- Introduced university tuition fees and then announced more than half a billion pounds worth of cuts to the higher education budget - pay more, for less!

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, free at the point of use, in full public ownership and under democratic control.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education available at any age. Abolish tuition fees and introduce a living grant.

Housing

New Labour's record:

- Allowed house repossessions to reach a 14-year high, with 46,000 homes repossessed last year.
- Allowed the worst housing crisis since World War Two to develop with next to no council homes built while five million people wait for social housing.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- No repossessions. Nationalised banks should offer cheap loans and mortgages for housing.

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing to provide good housing with low rents.

Infrastructure

New Labour's record:

- Continued to subsidise private companies on the railways by nearly £5 billion last year while trying to wreck Royal Mail in the same way, through privatisation.
- Allowed energy corporate profits to soar. Gas and electric companies made profit of £105 per customer on average last year.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system. Renationalise the railways and the buses.
- End fuel poverty. Cut fuel bills immediately. Take the gas and electric companies into public ownership.

Democracy and sleaze

New Labour's record:

- Whatever they like! Whether it is going to war or privatising public services, the government has ignored the views of those who elected them.
- Stuck their noses in the trough. MPs from all three establishment parties have been claiming dodgy expenses on top of their generous £64,766 per year salaries.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- No MP to receive more than the average wage of a worker, to be re-elected every two years, to be accountable and subject to recall and to have their expenses open to the scrutiny of their constituents.
- Abolish the House of Lords.
- Introduce a democratic form of proportional representation.

The banks

New Labour's record:

- Continued the Tories' policies of deregulating the City - allowing the banks and finance companies to do whatever they like.

- When this resulted in a collapse of the banking system, taxpayers' money was used to underwrite the banks to the tune of £1.2 trillion.
- Allowed most of the 'banksters' to remain in charge and to continue claiming huge salaries.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- Nationalise all the banks on the basis of democratic public ownership. Compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.
- End city fat cats' bonuses, golden parachutes, and gold-plated pensions.
- For a socialist government to exercise a monopoly of foreign trade, as a means of controlling all imports and exports including capital movements. No 'flight of capital'.
- Reject the diktats of the ratings agencies, the European Central Bank and other unaccountable and unelected international finance bodies. For international workers' solidarity and economic planning across borders.

The economy

New Labour's record:

- Doing the bidding of the giant corporations, banks and finance companies.
- Like the Tories, overseeing the destruction of manufacturing industry, so that it now makes up just 13% of Britain's GDP.
- Let companies - such as Bosch, Vestas, Visteon, Woolworths and many more - throw their workforces on the scrap heap.

What the Socialist Party calls for:

- Open the books of the major companies that dominate the economy; let popular committees of workers, trade unionists and consumer groups see where the profits have gone.
- For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies that dominate the British economy, to be run under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and in a way that safeguards the environment.

How would we pay for all this?

The top politicians and fat cats would have us believe that socialist policies are unrealistic and unaffordable. But there is more than enough wealth and potential wealth in society to bring in the policies we have outlined.

The 100 richest individuals in the UK have a combined personal wealth of over £250 billion. Just £90 billion of this would solve the so-called 'structural deficit' of the UK at a stroke.

Big business would squeal that they could never afford to pay so much, but they are happy that we should pay - with longer working hours, worse working conditions and cuts in public services. It is the logic of the market - of capitalism - that dictates that cuts in public services and workers' living conditions are the only way forward. But we do not accept the logic of a system that is driven by profit and greed rather than meeting people's needs. The Socialist Party is fighting for every possible improvement in working-class people's lives. The last year has shown that where workers fight back, victories can be won.

Nonetheless, we recognise that under this profit-hungry capitalist system, we will always face a constant struggle to defend and improve our living conditions. That is why we fight for socialist change.

Socialism

All of the policies outlined here are only the first steps towards constructing a new type of society. Modern capitalism has created riches and innovations beyond the wildest dreams of our grandparents and great-grandparents.

Yet we are constantly being told that we have no choice but to accept erosion of our quality of life, increased poverty, worsening public services and longer working hours.

Capitalism's limits

Humanity is capable of space exploration, has mapped the human genome, and can recreate the conditions of the big bang in the Hadron Collider. Yet the world cannot be fed on the basis of capitalism. For most of human history it has not been possible to satisfy even the most basic human needs for everyone on the planet.

Now, as a result of the labour and ingenuity of working people, the potential exists to eliminate want forever. The barrier to achieving this is the capitalist system itself.

Based as it is on the private ownership of the economy, capitalism creates immense inequality and deprivation when the potential exists for providing a decent life for all.

A socialist government would take the big corporations, which dominate Britain's economy, into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management, in order to plan the development of society for need instead of profit. This would only be possible with the active support of the majority of working people.

A genuine socialist government would not take into public ownership small businesses, such as local shops, many of which are currently forced out of

business by banks withholding credit and by the competition of the multinationals.

Nor would it, as opponents of socialism claim, stand for the taking away of personal 'private property'. On the contrary, socialists are in favour of everyone having the right to a decent home and the other conveniences of modern life.

Making socialist ideas a reality: organising and fighting back

The Socialist Party does not expect to be able to persuade the fat cats and the pro-big business politicians of the error of their ways. Working class people need to get organised to make change happen.

For fighting, democratic trade unions

The trade unions, vilified in the media, are the largest, democratic, voluntary organisations in the country. They are the first line of defence when workers are attacked.

Nearly seven million workers are members of trade unions. These organisations need to be strengthened and expanded as workers resist increasing numbers of attacks. The number of high profile industrial disputes in the past twelve months shows this process is beginning.

The Socialist Party campaigns in the trade unions for the election of trade union leaders who stand up in the interests of their members.

Fearful of the potential power of the trade unions to defend workers, New Labour has maintained the Tory anti-trade union laws, the most draconian in western Europe. The usefulness to the bosses of these laws was demonstrated in the recent British Airways cabin crew and Rail, Maritime and Transport union disputes. The courts were used to overturn the democratic decision of thousands of workers to take strike action.

The trade union movement needs to put the repeal of these laws at the top of the agenda. Socialists are not in favour of unnecessarily putting the resources of trade unions at risk; however, there are occasions where, on the basis of careful preparation, the anti-trade union laws need to be defied.

If trade unions are then threatened with sequestration the whole of the trade union movement needs to be mobilised in their support. The construction workers' strikes last year gave a glimpse of how - if a movement is powerful enough - these draconian laws can be swept aside.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws!

- For trade union members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all officials to be elected, subject to recall and paid only a worker's wage.
- For unionisation drives in areas such as call centres, hospitality and retail, including among young and migrant workers.

For a new mass workers' party

Unless we are organised politically as well as in trade unions, we will constantly be fighting with one hand tied behind our backs. The majority of trade unions still fund New Labour, yet the government is kicking workers in the teeth.

We argue for the trade unions to break the link with New Labour and to use their funds to build a new mass workers' party to draw together all those opposed to, and fighting against, the policies of the bosses' parties. To be effective such a party will need to adopt a bold socialist programme. We call on the few socialists in the Labour Party to leave and join us in the building of a genuine working class party.

The Socialist Party initiated, with others, the Campaign for a New Workers' Party (www.cnwp.org.uk). Building on this good start, the first significant step towards such a party was made in June last year in the European elections with the No2EU-Yes to Democracy coalition. Importantly, this had the backing of the RMT trade union. Many of the constituent groups are working together in this election with the formation of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- A new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Labour Party affiliated trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party.
- Unaffiliated unions to use their political funds to support anti-cuts election candidates and to aid the building of a new workers' party.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

The Socialist Party is standing under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - www.tusc.org.uk). Again, RMT branches are at the forefront of building TUSC, standing their own candidates in some areas. Leading figures, such as Bob Crow, general secretary of the RMT and Brian Caton, general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association have given wholehearted support in a personal capacity.

TUSC is an important step towards offering a genuine alternative for the most militant and combative sections of workers and working class communities. After the general election, and regardless of the vote, the Socialist Party will work to see TUSC, or any new and expanded formation, continue to develop as an alternative pole of attraction for workers and young people.

Join the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party has a proud record. Our branches around the country involve themselves in the day-to-day struggles of working-class people, from campaigning to keep schools and libraries open, to supporting demands for more regular bin collections.

Our members in the trade unions and workplaces are among the most militant in campaigning and organising to improve the pay and conditions of workers. Our young members organise in campaigns and groups like Youth Fight for Jobs, Socialist Students and Youth Against Racism in Europe to help young people fight for their future.

International

Our struggle does not stop at the shores of Britain. Capitalism is an international economic system. Multinational companies exploit the entire world in the pursuit of profit. Accordingly the struggle for socialism is an international one.

We are affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI, www.socialistworld.net) which organises in more than 40 countries worldwide. We stand in solidarity with the workers and oppressed of the world in the struggle against poverty, terrorism and war and for a socialist world.

A new workers' party, while crucial, is not the end of the struggle to change society, but an important part of it. On the basis of a democratically planned economy the vast wealth created by workers, the development of production, knowledge, science and technology could promise humanity a bright future. But first we must organise ourselves to end capitalism.

The Socialist Party is made up of people like you - of workers, pensioners, students and young people. We organise democratically and everyone's contribution is valued no matter how great or how small. To get rid of this rotten capitalist system, the cause of so much suffering the world over, and to bring about the socialist future, we need you!

If you agree with this manifesto, then join the fight for socialism - [join the Socialist Party](#).

Socialists: Fighting back!

Ordinary people have not just accepted the bosses' attacks lying down. Last year cleaners in the HQ of a City broker formed a trade union and fought a successful battle for a pay rise from the minimum wage to £7.20 an hour. In 2009 unemployed and Socialist Party youth formed the campaign Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) to organise the increasing numbers of unemployed young people. Winning support from major trade unions, YFJ has three successful national demonstrations under its belt.

This year, more than 200,000 mainly low-paid government workers in job centres, tax offices, vehicle licensing and other civil service departments have

staged strikes against an attack on their redundancy pay. These workers are organised in the PCS civil servants' trade union, within which the Socialist Party plays a leading role.

There has also been the action of the British Airways cabin crew against union hostile BA boss Willie Walsh and ballots for industrial action by railway workers to defend the safety of the railways.

Students at Sussex University along with their lecturers have staged strike action, occupations and mass protests to try to reverse the management's attack on jobs and courses. The Socialist Party supported all these struggles.

Environment

The UN Climate Panel predicts a temperature increase of six degrees within a century. Already today, 300,000 deaths every year are related to the direct or indirect effects of climate change.

The capitalist politicians' absolute failure to make any progress on tackling the environmental crisis is breathtaking. But socialists are not surprised by this failure. On the basis of the market, and as long as the profit motive rules, the problem cannot be solved.

While pro-big business politicians are happy to use climate change as an excuse to raise taxes etc, they have no real solutions to the problems of the environment. The unwillingness of the Green parties in Britain and around the world to be prepared to break with capitalism has often led them to end up in alliances with the bosses' parties.

The profit motive prevents the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices. To seriously tackle climate change and other environmental problems we need international economic planning and socialist policies. This is the only way of eradicating the huge waste and pollution inherent in capitalist production.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power.

Afghanistan

The war in Afghanistan is already nearly a decade old. The loss of life of the Afghan people is horrific and getting worse. The death rate among British troops is escalating, with more than 280 killed since the conflict began.

Many generals talk about an open-ended conflict. Afghan civilians live without access to basic amenities like clean water and electricity. Unemployment is

rife. This is deplorable. The Socialist Party has campaigned against the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq since the beginning. The working class men and women fighting in the British army should be brought home immediately. This does not mean we accept that Afghanistan should be left to the reactionary Taliban and corrupt Karzai government.

The track record of the US and British governments, and their support for corrupt puppet politicians and warlords, shows that their agenda is about control of resources, power and prestige. Socialists believe in international working class solidarity.

Through international campaigns, the trade union movement and the Committee for a Workers' International we campaign for the right of the people of Afghanistan to decide their own future. We campaign against the corrupt elites and call for a workers' and peasants' government.

The Socialist Party says:

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Say no to the racist BNP

The far-right, racist British National Party (BNP) claims that it is on the side of working people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Wherever its councillors have been elected, the BNP has voted for cuts. In Barking the BNP didn't only vote for the New Labour council's cuts, they proposed extra cuts of their own.

Since BNP leader Nick Griffin was elected to the European parliament (less than a year ago) he has claimed £200,000 in expenses, in addition to his £82,000 salary! So much for standing up for working-class people!

The BNP is a racist party that lays the blame for the problems local communities face - poor housing, privatisation and council service cuts - at the door of ethnic minorities and asylum seekers. This is made easy for the BNP. After all, the rightwing tabloid press regularly stoop to this kind of propaganda. The establishment parties sometimes also attempt to cut across the BNP by echoing their ideas - which instead only fuels them.

By whipping up racism the BNP diverts blame from the real culprits behind the problems of working-class communities - big business, the government and local councils. And when the BNP has been elected it has done nothing to fight for the local people it claims to represent.

The Socialist Party says:

- No to the racist and divisive BNP! For a united struggle for decent jobs, homes and services.
- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Defend the right to asylum

Workers' MPs on a worker's wage

The parliamentary system operates so those involved live a rarefied and distant life from those who elected them. Even before expenses, MPs' wages put them in the top 10% of earners.

Expenses put them in the top 6%! Socialists believe that 'representatives' should be just that - representatives. Their living conditions should reflect those of the people who elected them. They should be just as angry as the rest of us about the threat of anti-working class policies such as university fees, privatisation and job cuts.

The Socialist Party requires all of its candidates to commit, if elected, to only taking the average wage of a worker. In the 1980s, Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party, had three MPs, all of whom took only a worker's wage. Our councillors and trade union representatives take only strictly necessary expenses, needed to carry out the tasks they were elected to do.