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



**Build the shop
stewards'
network;
break the link
with Labour!**

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The sudden eruption of the student revolt at the close of 2010 did much to change the political climate in Britain, posing a real threat to the defeatism with which the labour aristocracy infects popular reaction to the cuts.

Students show the way

Whilst Chancellor Osborne's spending review in October had sparked angry local demonstrations and a London march organised by the National Shop Stewards' Network (NSSN) and the RMT, the only gesture in the direction of leadership from the TUC was the promise to have a bit of a demo in March.

With the firemen's dispute on hold and Transport House telling everyone to bide their time and wait for the spring, the scene seemed set less for a winter of discontent than a winter of enforced apathy, enlivened only by some welcome strikes on the London Underground and elsewhere.

The Millbank occupation on 10 November challenged this mood dramatically, taking by surprise in equal measure the forces of the state and the opportunist leaders of the National Union of Students (NUS) and University and College Lecturers' Union (UCU).

As occupations and demonstrations spread like wildfire, with growing evidence that the revolt over tuition fees and the EMA were generalising into a youth revolt against all cuts, the efforts of Labour opportunists like NUS president Aaron Porter to put the brakes on proved increasingly fruitless.

We will see in the next few weeks just how much of this momentum will be maintained into 2011. What is already clear, however, is that this student revolt will only be able to develop and mature to the degree that the working class is able to join the fray directly, pushing aside social-democratic faint-hearts and lending proletarian backbone to the shared struggle.

How can we best fight the cuts?

The revolt of the students, timely and inspiring as it is, cannot substitute for the revolt of the proletariat.

That is why so much importance attaches to the efforts of the shop stewards' movement to unite the working class in resistance to capitalist cuts.

It would be a great misfortune for the NSSN to be weakened by sectarian division at this crucial moment. Yet in the approach to the latest conference (22 January), the NSSN has been riven with open and bitter discord.

In December, the Socialist Party (SP), the single most influential political force within the national steering committee, secured a majority in favour of launching a national anti-cuts body.

In the view of the SP, this body would work with other similar campaigns to coordinate a national level of resistance. In the view of an opposing faction, this venture would blur the trade-union focus of NSSN and also duplicate the function of existing anti-cuts campaigns like the Right to Work (RTW) campaign and the Coalition of Resistance (CoR).

It is important that comradely discussion at the impending conference will serve to clarify the real points of difference, muddled at the moment by squabbling over incidentals – which campaigns started earliest, which particular Trotskyite faction dominates which campaign and so forth.

The broad pattern however seems to be an unhelpful tussle

for influence between two competing Trotskyite groups, the SP and the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), complicated by a no less unhelpful syndicalist faction who regard the intervention of any political party in the affairs of the NSSN as detrimental to grass-roots solidarity amongst union reps.

It is interesting that the SP-dominated national steering group casts doubt on the reliability of the SWP-dominated Right to Work Campaign and the Coalition of Resistance when it comes to the question of fighting all council cuts, whether implemented by Tories, LibDems, Plaid Cymru or the Labourites.

They correctly assert that this question "*will increasingly become a major issue of the anti-cuts movement as Labour councils start to implement Con-Dem cuts, like Neath/Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taff in Wales, who between them have issued 17,000 90-day notices to their workforces. This has resulted in the threat of a 2 percent pay cut in Neath/Port Talbot on top of a three-year pay freeze!*"

Indeed, trade unionists in Llanelli attending an anti-cuts conference called by the Welsh TUC in November report being told to hang fire till after the Welsh elections, in the hope that a more benign assembly might then cushion the impact of the cuts!

'Old' Labour and the Socialist Party

The SP are entirely correct when they assert that ignoring the treacherous role of Labour councillors and inviting them into the anti-cuts movement "*is to give them a left cover and will divide the council workers from the anti-cuts campaigns*".

We can only endorse these sentiments, pausing however to recall the long history of Militant entryism that helped keep Labour afloat in working-class strongholds like Liverpool in the 1980s and only ended when Kinnock pushed them out of Labour as surplus to imperialist requirement.

The call for a new workers' party never sullied Militant lips so long as "*Labour, the party of the mass working class*" continued to offer left reformism a berth in steerage.

Even today, when the SP to its credit is prepared to take the fight to Labour councils, it *still* told Unite members voting in the recent election for general secretary to get behind the 'left' leadership candidate with the most solid 'old' Labour credentials (Len McCluskey) and have no truck with the Respect candidate, who at least had the bottle in his election literature to raise a question mark over Unite's servile relationship with the Labour party (Jerry Hicks).

The SP should follow its own advice with greater consistency.

Break the link with Labour

If the NSSN is to succeed in its ambition to unite the working class in common resistance to the capitalist cuts, it will need to prioritise breaking the link with Labour, 'old' and 'New' alike.

This is the path the NSSN must take if it is to give national leadership in the struggle to build a campaign of non-cooperation with the austerity drive.

All serious efforts in that direction will get the support of communists and deserve the support of all workers.

Break the link with Labour; build the NSSN.

Don't let social democracy block our resistance to capitalist cuts!

22 January 2011