

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.



Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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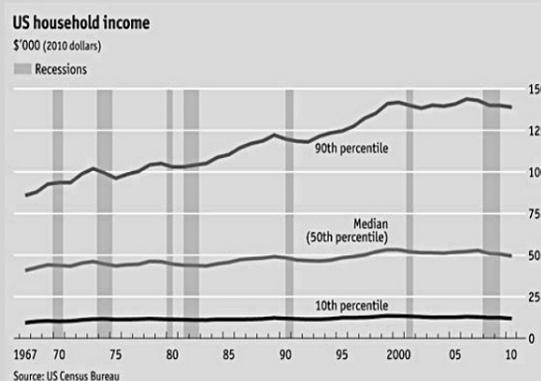
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US inequality rises



Nearly a quarter of American children are living in poverty. In 2010 their number increased for the fourth year in a row. Meanwhile, the number of US households getting more than \$100,000 a year has risen in 2011, and their spending is holding steady while the poor afford less.

Veteran Israeli socialist Adam Keller spoke to *Solidarity*.

Many people in the Israeli protest movement, including many key organisers, are left-wing on the Palestinian issue.

But the movement as a movement took a decision very early on not to touch the question of the occupation, the settlements and so on, despite the vast money spend on the army, the settlements, the Wall. A lot of left-wingers think they will inevitably move in that direction. I'm not so sure. It's not that people don't know there's a link, it's that they don't want to make it, because they're afraid of losing a big part of their support. And they would lose a lot of support — perhaps a majority.

UNITY

There is, however, one side of the protests which is more hopeful.

It is almost universally accepted in the movement that the Arab citizens of Israel are also part of it, that they are included in the people for whom it is demanding social justice. Many slogans along the lines of "Jews and Arabs unite" have been raised. At one point quite early on in the movement, a group of far-right racists tried to set up a camp inside the tent city in Tel Aviv, and raise slogans about throwing Arabs out of Israel. They were thrown out of the camp, and a decision was taken that everyone is welcome except racists.

That doesn't change the fact that the failure to raise

the occupation is a major limitation, but in terms of Israeli politics it is very, very significant.

The next leader of the Israeli Labour Party will be decided on Wednesday 21 September. In the first round, it was almost a tie between Shelly Yachimovich and Amir Peretz. Both are broadly social democratic, but if I was going to make a choice I would prefer Peretz as he is more open about the question of peace. Yachimovich says that the left has talked too much about the Palestinians, and that it why it alienates the lower classes. On the other hand, Peretz was previously Labor Party leader, and he blew the immense hope he had generated by joining Olmert's neo-liberal government as defence minister and overseeing the brutality of the war in southern Lebanon.

There is also an ethnic element in the election, since Peretz is a Moroccan Jew from a working-class background, and very open and proud about this.

Last week there were no big demonstrations, but there was a "round table" mobilisation with thousands of people all over the country sitting down to discuss.

The government feels under pressure. The commission it set up is about to report, and is likely to propose some concessions — though nowhere near what the movement has demanded.

One sign of the impact of the movement is the debate that has broken out in the government. The Minister of Defence has vigorously

Dockers block scab trains

American dock workers have taken militant unofficial action in a battle with port operator EGT Development over union busting.

The company recently opened a \$200 million grain terminal in Longview, Washington, which it sought to run with non-union labour despite a contractual requirement to do so. Following initial protests by the International Longshore Workers' Union (ILWU), EGT signed a recognition agreement with a different union. Every other West Coast grain terminal is staffed by ILWU members, making EGT's actions a direct attack on the union which ILWU activists say is merely a precursor to EGT going non-union altogether.

On Thursday 8 September, workers stormed the

Longview terminal and sabotaged the transport of scab grain supplies, leading to a violent confrontation with police who used clubs and pepper spray on the workers and made 19 arrests.

The battle has been ongoing since July and has seen workers at several ports take wildcat action, including sit-downs on railroad tracks to block scab trains. No scab grain has moved since July and ILWU members have continued to protest despite a court restraining order intended to keep them away from Longview.

They were bolstered by flying pickets from Seattle, who walked off their jobs to travel to Longview in order to support the action.

• More from *Labor Notes* magazine at: tinyurl.com/usdockers

Israel's protesters eject racists

opposed any reduction in military spending, and said that new spending should come from higher taxes on the rich and businesses! The Minister of Finance has opposed this on the familiar grounds that it will lead to an exodus of millionaires and the collapse of the economy.

There is no longer an automatic acceptance of a free market economy. What changes the movement will win, however, remains to be seen.

ABBAS

There will be big Palestinian demonstrations on Friday, to coincide with Abu Mazen's [Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas'] speech at the UN.

The Palestinian Authority wants big rallies in all the cities, but wants these to stay in the city centres, and go nowhere near confronting the IDF or the settlements. Whether they will mobilise the masses within these strict limits is a difficult question to answer. There may be clashes between demonstrators and the PA security forces, before it even comes to a clash between Palestinians and Israelis.

We should look at the precedent of the Second Intifada [the Palestinian uprising which began in 2000, and was brutally repressed by the Israeli military].

Palestinians tried to hold non-violent protests, but when the IDF reacted with violence, the situation spiraled out of control. This time the PA is very keen to avoid violence — and the IDF says it is too. They

have perfected their use of "skunk", foul-smelling water that can be used on protesters, so that it can be sprayed from the air.

I think there's probably an element of truth in the claim that Israel wants to avoid violence, but that doesn't mean they won't use violence in the event.

Palestinian activists are quite divided over the UN bid. If it was realised it would mean the realisation of a two-state solution, and of course a big minority of Palestinians oppose that. On the other hand, many think that, even if the US did not veto — which it will — status at the UN will not change the facts on the ground and is a distraction.

Many civil society organisations in Palestine are not taking a position either way, which I think reflect a general unhappiness but not having a clear alternative.

Regardless of what happens at the UN, it is a symbol of the Palestinian leadership's newfound willingness to confront the US. Over the years it has become more and more obvious that the US is not an honest broker; that Israel is always in the room, whether it formally is or not. But a crucial turning point has come with Obama, since he has been such a disappointment and allowed Netanyahu to run rings around him. So the Palestinians think, why not?

This is part of the longer term process of the gradual decline of US power in the world, and it is highly significant.

Labour: fight the cuts!

Katy Clark, Labour MP for North Ayrshire and Arran, spoke to *Solidarity* in the run-up to Labour Party conference, which opens in Liverpool on 25 September

The Labour Party has had 70,000 new members join since May 2010, but it normally takes individuals quite a long time to get through the structures and gain influence, especially in today's Labour Party.

I know a number of people who joined the Labour Party last year in a surge of enthusiasm, but it's quite difficult for new members to become delegates to conference. In fact, I suspect most new members haven't really got that involved.

The danger then is that the surge of enthusiasm dissipates. The Labour Party hasn't always been very good in welcoming new members. Often they find bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of political discussion.

It varies tremendously, of course. If you're lucky and you meet some good people first off, then it works out well. If you're not lucky, you have an alienating experience and maybe just continue as a paper member.

The Labour Party has got to give leadership to the people angry at what the Government is doing. That is decisive.

We have to make people realise that the cuts are not necessary, and there is an alternative.

We still have the New Labour faction arguing for matching the Tory spending cuts and for more privatisation. We have other people arguing other things. The outcome of that debate is going to be decisive.

In the summer, when Ed Miliband distanced himself from the 30 June strike, the responses were interesting. Many people in the Labour Party realise that the attacks which the Government is making are fundamental, and we need to be united in fighting them.

The Labour Party should be pleased that union members want to take action against the cuts. We should make the case for decent pensions and decent services, and

make sure that we don't allow the ripping up of community assets which have taken generations to build up.

The way "Refounding Labour" has been run is appalling. Some people were genuinely enthusiastic about "Refounding Labour", but the process is very important. If it's a process where people aren't listened to, then there's a lot of anger about that.

Delegates and Labour Party members have got to make their voices heard, and not be bounced into things without discussion. A lot more discussion is needed, for example, about the proposal to abolish Local Government Committees. The rule changes pro-

posed in Scotland are quite dramatic.

I would hope that the detailed constitutional changes are put out for further debate, rather than being forced through at short notice.

The most important thing about the rule changes is not the detail of them, but how they're being forced through, or may be forced through.

Some of the proposed rule changes may be positive, but they won't be what determines the political outcome.

That, in the end, is down to those who hold leadership positions.

• More on Labour conference: bit.ly/restitch. Scottish rule changes: bit.ly/scottp

The greed for profit

By Dave Kirk

The four workers killed at Gleison Colliery in the Swansea Valley worked at a small "drift" mine, one of very few left in Wales. It appears that blasting at the mine caused catastrophic flooding and a roof fall, trapping those working nearest the coal face.

Most of us thought this kind of story was in the Britain of the past. It is not, and it is one of our jobs as socialists and trade unionists to remind people of the toll of injuries and death in workplaces today.

171 workers died in workplace accidents in the period from May 2010 to April 2011. The figure was up on the previous year.

On average, every hour of every day someone in Britain dies of "occupational"-related cancer. Most of these deaths go unreported by all but the local press. The national press prefer stories about health and safety "gone mad".

The government has set out to attack health and safety regulations. David Cameron even mentioned "health and safety culture" as one of the causes of the riots over the summer.

Lord Young's report recommended reducing inspections by the Health and Safety Executive and a commission to look at reducing regulation on business. This commission is due to report soon.

The attack on legal aid will severely hamper workers' attempts to seek legal redress for their bosses' negligence and indifference.

Profit has always been more important to the capitalist system than the lives and well-being of workers. The history of our movement, from the struggle for the 10 Hours Act and then for an eight hour day, in the nineteenth century is also the history of the fight for the right to work without being maimed, killed or having our long term health destroyed.

We must make the unions and the Labour Party fight to defend those victories and to extend them. That is the way to ensure the obscenity of workers dying avoidably due to profit actually becomes history.

Set up strike committees for 30 November

By Ira Berkovic

Unions have set 30 November as the date for another one-day strike against pension cuts.

The teaching unions NUT, ATL, and UCU, and the civil service union PCS, have still-valid mandates for action from ballots earlier this year.

Unions such as Unison, GMB, the Fire Brigades Union, and teachers' union NASUWT are now balloting. It is important that the ballots be for discontinuous action (rather than for a single day's strike); and activists should demand that unions name a date for a further strike *now* rather than waiting until after the November action.

Workers must also start putting in place structures through which grassroots union members can take control of the dispute and provide a counterweight to any attempts by the likes of Unison leader Dave Prentis to slow down, derail or sell out the campaign.

VOTE

Local strike committees of all unions balloting for action in November should be set up immediately to discuss plans for the day.

This should include organising effective picketing and political assemblies (rather than mere rallies with a litany of bureaucratic speakers) where strikers can discuss and vote on strategies for the dispute.

Shop stewards should build workplace meetings at every level possible to keep union members in-

formed, involved and confident about walking out on 30 November.

While defending existing pension rights must be the immediate aim of the strikes, strike committees and strikers' assemblies should also begin to discuss and formulate a positive programme for our own radical reform to win fair pensions for all, including private-sector workers, people dependent on the state pension, and newer public-sector workers, who are worse off because of deals made by the unions in 2005-7.

Strike strategies must be developed that can apply maximum pressure to government and public sector employers, including rolling and selective action and actions-short-of-strikes (such as work-to-rules) in between strikes. Unions should organise strike levies and hardship funds to support action by strategically-selected groups of workers.

Union members must also insist that their leaders demand a return to across-the-board negotiations on the pensions reform rather than negotiating on each scheme (local government, health, civil service etc.) separately within a fixed overall framework of increases in retirement age, higher employee contributions, worse accrual rates, and slower inflation-upgrading of pensions (CPI rather than RPI). The scheme-by-scheme negotiations push unions into haggling for concessions for some groups of members at the expense of others, and make the unions suscepti-



Make Dave Prentis (General Secretary of Unison) and the other union leaders fight

ble to divide-and-rule tactics from government. If the Coalition offers some concessions to workers in one scheme, it may be hard to mobilise those workers to continue striking against cuts to someone else's pension.

The November strike must be seen as just one flashpoint in an ongoing battle that continues *until we win*. If the details and strategy of a wider programme of action are not considered until after 30 November, the government will easily be able to ride out a campaign of incidental, disconnected single days of strikes. Public sector unions must also link up with live campaigns in private-sector companies, such as the Fujitsu IT workers' battle and the fight against job losses at the Bombardier

train manufacturing plant in Derby.

The government have planned their assault on our class with military precision and are on a war-footing against organised labour. We must respond in kind.

By building workplace

meetings and rank-and-file strike committees to put pressure on union leaders to live up to their fighting rhetoric and to situate 30 November within a sustained campaign of action, we can begin to do that.

TUC discusses fightback

Maria Exall, TUC General Council, reports on the 2011 TUC congress which discussed the pensions fightback.

See: bit.ly/o2qjum

Civil servants: can't live with them, can't live without them



The conventional wisdom in journalism is that short snappy headlines work best. That bias is particularly popular in the tabloid press where the job of combining reporting and strident comment in memorable headlines has become a special art form. Think "Gotcha" or "Up Yours Delors". Sometimes, however, this craft collapses under the weight and volume of prejudice it is expected to carry. So it was with the Sunday Express on 18 September.

Sunday is the day for salacious stories of promiscuous footballers and soap stars, drunken royals or, occasionally, corrupt politicians. *Express* readers may, therefore, have found the following headline difficult to digest:

"Paid to party on your tax; How civil servants were given time off work for drunken sports day hours after voting for a mass strike."

The story was exemplar of all that the *Express*-world thinks is wrong with modern Britain and that must have pushed aside any doubts about the clumsy inelegance of the article's heading. The *Express* usually likes to shout at browsing shoppers so that even those who fail to pay money for their poison are at least aware of the current public enemy number one and their latest crime. Here that

could not be done in less than 25 words.

First you have civil servants — that's bureaucrats, pen-pushers, general n'er-do-wells. *Express* readers clearly needed reminding that this pathetic breed is paid for by taxpayers. But what have the pen-pushers been up to?

It turns out that they were allocated a day away from their normal duties to attend an event at Loughborough University at which they took part in various sports and activities.

It was one of those team-building exercises as beloved of modern management as they are dreaded by most workers.

It isn't made clear by the *Express* but almost certainly the workers had no choice but to attend. But the *Express* says "civil servants were given extra paid holiday to attend an alcohol-fuelled sports event just hours after their unions voted for a mass strike". A working day when you are told to be away from your normal duties becomes "an extra paid holiday". And as it is a residential event at a college with a bar it is "alcohol-fuelled".

Most bizarrely of all according to the *Express* it is a particular insult to the rest of us (taxpayers) as it took place after a completely unconnected event — the decision by most public sector unions to take strike action to defend their pensions.

A close reading of the story suggests that the paper had invested so much time and effort into "uncovering" it that they just had to run it very prominently and make of it as much outrage as they could. They had at least six blown-up pictures of civil servants in various states of fancy dress (Smurfs, Marilyn Monroes, a nun) or sporting prowess (a shot-putter, a runner). They clearly had a reporter as well as a photographer at the entire event as the timetable of

events and conversations were relayed to us in tedious detail. And no activity, however unexceptional and normal, is described without all-important "shock horror" adjectives. The music was "deafening", dancers were "gyrating" and when they sang it was "uproariously". All in all it appears to have been a scandalous couple of days which did the country great damage.

Or did it? The *Express* can't seem to make its mind up. They wanted to say that these people would have been better back at base doing their normal job. Much was made of the presence of Border Agency staff who "have lost track of 100,000 asylum seekers over the last five years" and Revenue and Customs staff who have a "huge backlog of 18 million unresolved income tax cases". But in the same article a different conclusion is hinted at. One (predictably) anonymous civil servant is quoted as saying "with this many civil servants off work you would imagine the country would grind to a halt, but it hasn't, so some might say 'Why do we need them?' "

So are civil servants a huge waste of money, a vast government-run job creation scheme funded out of the hard-earned wages of the poor old taxpayer? Or are they vital public servants who keep our society running smoothly? Do we need more of them working for longer or would we not notice if they weren't there? The *Express*, despite its almost religious certainty on most issues, can't make its mind up.

They can be certain of only two things; civil servants are not serious workers like, say, bankers, accountants and Alan Sugar, and strikes are a very bad thing. Even if the work done by the strikers is a waste of time.

Preparing for Workers' Liberty conference



The AWL's annual conference, which decides our policy, sets the framework for our activity and elects our leadership for a year, will take place in London on 22-23 October. AWL has grown by nearly 50% in the last year; this will be our biggest conference for some time.

In many political parties, there are all kinds of tricks and filters to prevent conferences from exercising real control over those who run the organisation. One mechanism is limiting the amount of information that the membership have about what will take place at the conference, and thus the amount of input they have into it.

This is the case in the Labour Party and many trade unions — but also, for instance, in much smaller left-wing groups like the SWP. As a somewhat smaller organisation, the AWL has the advantage that all members can attend our conference. However, that is not the basic difference.

The preparations for AWL conference are open to all members of the group. The documents commissioned by our National Committee — on general perspectives, the unions, students, the North African/Middle Eastern revolutions and building the AWL — have been circulated to all members. Any AWL member can propose amendments or submit additional documents. As usual, we are holding a series of regional preconference meetings for members to discuss the documents; the first of these have already taken place.

AWL members who joined less than six months ago can attend and speak, but not vote on the documents or in the elections for our National Committee. We maintain this system of "candidate membership" not because we want to limit our democracy, but because we take it seriously. Comrades should have gone through a basic process of political education and induction into AWL activity before they can become full citizens in the group. We are part of a political tradition going back most of two hundred years, and have our own tradition going back more than forty.

We want to maintain and develop these traditions, which is why we insist on a minimum period of political education and integration before comrades can vote.

• If you're not an AWL member but would like to come to the conference, email sacha@workersliberty.org



Israel is an apartheid state

It is no exaggeration to talk of Israeli apartheid, as Palestinian and Israeli activists such as Tikva Honig-Parnass and Saree Makdisi have pointed out.

The West Bank and Gaza are no better than Bantustans. South African delegations have pointed out that conditions are worse and controls more extensive in both than they were in the South African prototype.

A system of closures and curfews has strangled the Palestinian economy in the West Bank — but none of its provisions apply to the Jewish settlements there.

Whole sectors of the West Bank, classified as "closed military areas" by the Israeli army, are off limits to Palestinians, including Palestinians who own land there — but not Jewish settlers.

Persons of Palestinian origin are routinely barred from entering or residing in the West Bank — but Israeli and non-Israeli Jews can come and go, and even live on, occupied Palestinian territory.

Israel maintains two sets of rules and regulations in the West Bank: one for Jews, one for non-Jews.

Then there is the systematic discrimination against non Jewish citizens and inhabitants of Israel.

Rail union leader speaks up for Israeli links



At this year's Trades Union Congress (12-14 September in London), an amendment on the Israel/Palestine conflict from the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) called for TUC affiliates to "review their bilateral relations with all Israeli organisations".

Alex Gordon, president of the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT), spoke against the amendment, arguing that British unions should strengthen, not weaken, their relations with workers' organisations in Israel. Gordon said:

"My union has welcomed the Workers' Advice Centre (Ma'an) to our conference in previous years. We've supported class struggle that is going on now by workers in Israel, and we fully intend to continue to support struggles by Israeli workers, by Palestinian workers and by Arab-Israeli workers who are fighting for peace and workers' rights. We are concerned about the implication of a review of bilateral

Israeli law affords differences in privileges for Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of the state — in matters of access to land, family unification and acquisition of citizenship. Israel's nationality law prevents Palestinian citizens of Israel who are married to Palestinians from the occupied territories from living together in Israel.

Israel defines itself to be the state of the Jewish people, rather than the state of its actual citizens (one-fifth of whom are Palestinian Arabs).

Paul Field (from website)

Socialism means freedom

Dave Osler's column in Solidarity 216 discussed whether Marxists are in favour of "liberty" as it has been expressed in the bourgeois-political discourse of "rights". I agree with Dave's conclusion that yes, we are, and for a far greater "liberty" beyond it — workers' liberty.

The excrement heaped on socialism by decades of Stalinism buried the fundamental idea that socialism was about liberation and freedom; the working class winning for itself more free time, more liberty in the literal sense. The crude equation of socialism merely with nationalised property or economic planning obscures this fundamentally libertarian core of socialist politics.

As the government and the state heap ever more restrictions on our freedom, making us work harder and longer for less, throwing us off benefits, out of our homes or into jail, reasserting socialism as a politics of freedom must be a key priority for the left.

Ruben Lomas, east London

relations with all Israeli organisations. Our view is that we should be supporting the Israeli peace movement, and we should be supporting the Israeli trade union movement where it stands up for Palestinian national rights. That is the best route to peace in the Middle East."

The PCS's motion is part of a growing trend in the British labour movement that sees all Israelis and Israeli organisations, including the mainstream Israeli unions, as irredeemably implicated in the crimes of the Israeli state. While it is true that the main Israeli union federation, the Histadrut, has traditionally been supportive of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and, until the 1950s, promoted Jewish-only labour practices, it remains an organisation which mobilises workers against their bosses. And besides, it is not the only labour-movement body in Israel.

Moves by British unions to break links with the Histadrut mean dismissing the 650,000 Israeli workers within its ranks rather than trying to help them, through a framework of solidarity, to develop internationalist politics and fight for national independence for the Palestinians.

• "A Drunk Man Looks at the Israeli Flag". *Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) activist is found guilty of racially aggravated conduct.* www.workersliberty.org/node/17413

Unite for a workers' Europe

In June 2011 the Greek government agreed a four-year cuts programme of €28 billion, and was told by the EU that was €5.5 billion too little.

Italy's latest cuts total €70 billion, again over several years. Ireland's, about €8 billion. Portugal's, the same. Spain's, €15 billion.

In total the governments reckon €135 billion of cuts might get them straight. The *Financial Times* (16 September) reckons €230 billion for the one-off loss if the governments don't meet their IOUs. Suppose those €135 billion cuts are represented by one apple, and €230 billion is one orange.

The European Union's economy produces 90-odd apples and 50-odd oranges each year. The assets of the European System of Central Banks total about 15,000 apples or 9,000 oranges.

If the EU were like a family, with a family income of £30,000 a year and easy access to lots of credit, the south European debt crisis would be like an unlucky family member in trouble because the bank has called in an overdraft of between £300 and £600.

The family would help out the unlucky one. The EU is not like a family. The governments of the EU are set on using the crisis to cut social overheads and clear the terrain for new competitive profit-making. Even those governments which have no problems on the credit markets — Germany, and Britain too — are cutting.

The principle of the cuts is not to seek spare cash, for the emergency, from where it is plentiful, but the opposite: to use cuts to widen the gap between poor and rich and reinvigorate profit-making.

The assets of Italy's wealthy classes (more numerous and richer than Greece's) amount to 70-odd apples and 40-odd oranges ("close to €10,000bn": Corrado Passera, head of Italy's largest bank, *FT* 17/09/11). France's, Germany's, and Britain's wealthy would each own comparable stashes.

Rich Greeks' wealth in Swiss bank deposits alone amounts to four apples and three oranges (€600 billion: Der



Italians strike against austerity

Spiegel, 7 February 2011).

The total market value of shares on the London Stock Exchange is about 15 apples or nine oranges, and the increase in that market value between June 2010 and June 2011, two apples or one orange.

The total market value of shares on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange is about seven apples or five oranges, and its increase between June 2010 and June 2011, two apples or one orange.

The governments want to make each national working class pay the cost of plans to make its national finance-capital a good competitor on global markets — or, for the south European states, at least to allow the commercial banks to get their money back and have the losses of eventual default or write-off fall elsewhere.

Above all, the governments want to stop the working

classes of Europe uniting and focusing attention on the hundreds of "apples" and "oranges" held by the wealthy and big business.

The measures that would resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class and at the expense of the wealthy, rather than the other way round, are: expropriation of Europe's banks and high finance, and their conversion into a Europe-wide public service for banking, mortgages, and pensions, under democratic control; taking-over of the south European debt "gap" by EU and eurozone institutions; a tax on the wealthy and on property across Europe; establishment of social and welfare minima across Europe, levelling up to the best levels achieved in different countries.

Unite the labour movements of Europe in a battle for a workers' united Europe!

Support the Palestinians at the UN

Democrats and socialists should support the Palestinian Authority's attempt to get United Nations recognition for a sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 1967 borders.

Firstly, because the Palestinians have a *right* to a state of their own. Secondly, because the situation in which the Palestinians are now locked is one in which they cannot hope to win.

The declaration of a Palestinian state focuses the fundamental question — two states as the only possible solution.

It is a logical and necessary development of the process initiated by the Oslo agreement of 1993. Despite the continued Israeli occupation and the secession of Gaza, the rudiments of a Palestinian state do exist in the West Bank. This is widely recognised — for instance by the IMF and the West Bank.

It is no more than a restatement of the 1947 UN partition decision under which Israel came into being. (The territory then allotted to a Palestinian state was taken in 1948-9 by Jordan, by Egypt, and, a small bit of it, by Israel). UN Resolution 242, from 1967, already calls on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. The settlements are illegal in terms of UN resolutions.

The declaration fulfills in an unexpected — and of course a grossly inadequate, no more than symbolic — way a variant of the commitment from 2003 of the Quartet (UN, European Union, Russia, USA) to a sovereign Palestinian state by 2011.

HYPOCRISY

Progress to a Palestinian state by agreement with Israel would be far better? It would. But all such talk by the Israeli government is sheer hypocrisy. It wants no settlement involving an independent Palestinian state.

Agreed progress towards peace is chiefly blocked by obdurate Israeli rejection of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state in contiguous territory, side by side with Israel.

And it is not only a matter of deadlock. The position of the Palestinians is relentlessly eroded.

It is the intention of the Netanyahu government, as of previous Israeli governments, systematically to eliminate the possibility of a Palestinian state. At best they would settle for a "Palestinian state" comprising separate pockets of Palestinian territory, under Israeli control.

The declaration of a sovereign Palestinian state will not of itself change any of that. Immediately it may aggravate

the situation.

But it is a symbol, and symbols are powerful things. Israel's "facts on the ground" — the settlements — point one way. Symbols can point to, prefigure, facts-to-be, and map out the ground.

The Arab Spring has radically changed the situation Israel faces. The old autocracy in Egypt had, since the 1970s and after wars the last of which was the Yom Kippur war of 1973, reached an accommodation with Israel. Now the Israeli embassy in Cairo is burned down.

Arab regimes more open to mass pressures will be a great deal most hostile to Israel than the old regimes. We can see a shift too in Islamic Turkey, long an ally of Israel.

The Palestinians can never hope to win unless Israel is compelled by international pressure to settle with them, with something like an acceptance of Palestinian rights.

Progress towards an agreed Israeli/Palestinian settlement faces two giant roadblocks. On the Israeli side, progress to a just settlement is blocked by Israeli colonisation in Arab land since 1967. There are now half a million settlers on the West Bank.

On the Palestinian side, the roadblock is the demand for the "right of return" of the five million descendants of the 750,000 Arabs who fled or were expelled from Israeli territory in 1948.

In practice that is a demand for the abolition of the Hebrew state. It is in flat contradiction with the 1988 Palestine Liberation Organisation recognition of Israel, and its proposal of a two-state solution to the conflict.

But the unilateral declaration of a state implicitly jettisons the linkage of a Palestinian state with the demand for the "return" of five million people to what is now Israel. It disentangles the issues in a way that might prove impossible in negotiations.

Henceforth the Palestinian standpoint will be for recognition of the state that they have declared, and its territory, with practical negotiations about the settlements — maybe the dismantlement of some, and the swapping of land for the Palestinian territory occupied by the others. (It has been claimed that the Palestinian move for UN recognition pre-empts discussion on adjustments to the 1967 borders. No, it doesn't. It only strengthens and clarifies the Palestinian position).

By uncoupling the question of a Palestinian state from the "right of return", the declaration abandons, or anyway sidelines, the historic revenge-seeking, moralistic, irredentist drive of the Palestinians and the Palestinian-descended di-

aspora to destroy Israel.

In any case, the two roadblocks to agreement, Palestinian and Israeli, are not equivalents.

"Return" is simply a demand, which some at least of those who talk about it must inwardly accept to be unachievable. The Israeli settlement policy is a fact, and a growing, expanding, burgeoning fact.

Israel accepts no limits to expansion of the settlements. The settlers, and the Israeli road and defence systems that go with them, undermine and in time will destroy the very possibility of a Palestinian state.

From the point of view of Israeli national interests, the declaration, by notionally, prefiguratively separating out two distinct territorially-based people, the Palestinian nation and the Hebrew nation, will help secure Israel and those claims of Israeli nationalism that are politically and morally viable.

SCUTTLED

If the option of a Palestinian state is finally scuttled by the expansion of Israeli settlements, then the only alternative will be for the Palestinians and their supporters to fight for full integration of Jews and Palestinian Arabs in a common state.

Those who believe in a Jewish state cannot want it to have such a large and alienated non-Jewish minority. Not the least objection to Netanyahu and the Israeli right is that even as Jewish nationalists they are stupid — stupefied by power and the misuse of power against the Palestinians — blind Samsons, pulling down the pillars of the Israeli entity.

A declaration of independence will provoke far more violence than there has been for some years. It may spark a new intifada, only now in the context of the "Arab Spring" and a part of it. It may lead some of the settlers to go to war against their Palestinian neighbours. A simmering war may flare up into something far worse. That will happen only if the Israeli government allows it to. The declaration may also lead to Israeli economic sanctions, or even US sanctions, against the Palestinian Authority.

There may be all sorts of unpleasant side-consequences. If we sat in the councils of the Palestinians, those might make us hesitate to vote for the unilateral declaration of a sovereign Palestinian state. But the choice of the elected leaders of the Palestinians is what matters here.

If they go ahead, they are entitled to the support of socialists and democrats everywhere.

McUnive some, e

Ed Maltby examines the government's Higher Education White Paper

According to the White Paper, private firms will be given degree-awarding powers, allowing them to teach and award higher-education degrees at Further Education colleges.

The market will be opened to allow multinational corporations to take over UK universities or set up their own institutions.

In general it will be easier for a wider range of types of organisation to gain degree-awarding powers. This promises to create a large market in cheap arts and humanities degrees (around £5,000 a year) taught by Edexcel at FE colleges.

Next stop down that road: universities like the so-called Hamburger University in the USA, run by McDonalds. (The US original cannot yet quite award degrees, but it has got its course credits accepted by other colleges for degree purposes).

Private universities, such as the University of Buckingham, will be helped by the Student Loans Scheme being extended to their students.

CREATION OF A MARKET

The overall goal of the government is the extension of market forces in education. In this sense it is coherent with the general policy of the last few governments.

The government aims to limit the fees charged by universities and to allow private providers to compete.

The government will limit the number of applicants that a university can recruit if it charges top-whack fees. All universities will be given a certain basic number of students that they can recruit, plus an unlimited number of students who score AAB or better in their A-levels.

Universities that can't recruit sufficient AAB students in addition to their basic quota will need to dip into the "lower-scoring applicants' pool". To qualify to recruit more sub-AAB students than their basic allocation, these universities will have to charge £7,500 fees or lower.

Top-tier universities will have no trouble recruiting enough AAB students on £9,000 fees.

Bottom-tier universities will have to lower their fees in order to be able to recruit more students from the lower pool, and so to cut costs, drive down wages, cut unprofitable courses, and focus on a particular market niche. The quality of education, teaching resources and contact time will suffer.

Mid-range universities will attempt to invest their way into the elite group. In an attempt to attract AAB students, they will undertake large "prestige" investments, hire star lecturers, construct impressive buildings, launch marketing campaigns and so on. We can expect a leap forward in the marketisation of universities.

The government will manufacture penury in education, forcing "lower pool" universities to charge no more than £7,500 per year per student, while removing central government teaching grants for all the arts and humanities by 2015. This will almost certainly force some universities to close, especially in London, as the funding plans have no London weighting.

The White Paper indicates that there will be no government support to bail-out failing colleges. Bankruptcy will mean either shutting down the institution or having it bought out.

Universities will probably also outsource more and more parts of their operations. The selling off of student accommodation, already widespread, is likely to continue, and that model will be applied to other services too.

The government's proposals include making it easier for universities to change their corporate structures to a "legal form of their choosing".

"Changing to a charitable company limited by guarantee could be a first step for public universities to move towards becoming for-profit companies." [researchresearch.com]

Universities have tax benefits from their current legal status as charities, but the new market regime may create new incen-

UCU branches join student demonstration, London, 9 December 2010

University staff under attack

By Lucy Clement

As the full implications of the government's plans for universities become clear, university staff are gearing up for a national fight over pensions, and local disputes over job cuts.

In the pre-92 universities, members of the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) have voted for both strikes (58% in favour) and action short (77% in favour) in a row over cuts to pension provision. From 1 October their existing final salary scheme will be closed to new members and replaced by a much inferior career average scheme; members of the old scheme will see contributions rise and benefits fall. Post-92 staff, covered by the Teachers' Pension Scheme, have a live ballot for action to continue.

The increase in pension contributions will more than swallow up the miserly £150 flat-rate pay rise offered this year. (As we go to press, the result of the consultative ballot on that offer is about to be announced.) Whether the White Paper plans can be stopped is closely related to the outcome of the current UCU dispute over pensions. If university staff put up a serious fight there, that will make a real difference to the prospects of defeating the White Paper proposals.

One of the implications of the White Paper is a serious threat to national pay bargaining. For some time it has been allowed to fray around the edges: different institutions start employees at higher or lower points on the scale, and professors have never been covered anyway. The White Paper — with its two-tier system of "AAB" and "£7.5k" institutions — will only make that worse.

Already this year, high-ranking Imperial College, outside the bargaining system, has offered its staff £500 or 2% (whichever is greater). But at South Bank, also outside the national scheme, staff have not even had the minimal 0.5% and 0.4% rises agreed in earlier rounds of national negotiations. As some colleges vie to recruit star staff in the hope of attracting star students, and others rush to the bottom, the pressure to break with national bargaining will be high.

Increased marketisation of higher education brings with it the threat of redundancies as university managements prepare for wholesale closures of courses that can't be filled at the new fee levels. UCU is balloting over up to

300 redundancies at Middlesex University, but the old universities are not immune: Birmingham is looking at 200 job cuts between now and 2014, for example, and the Classics Department at Royal Holloway is threatened with closure.

Many universities have an effective recruitment freeze, and depend on hourly-paid and fixed-term contract staff to continue teaching. The permanent staff who remain have soaring workloads and it is common to hear that class sizes have doubled in the past decade. Now, outside Oxbridge, few tutorial groups are smaller than ten, and at new universities groups of 16-18 are not uncommon. While the 1960s expansion of universities meant new institutions — and new jobs — the 1990s expansion was growth on the cheap.

Staff will also suffer in a university system where students are transformed into consumers. There is no room in the White Paper for the idea that higher education might be a collaborative process involving student and tutor working and learning together. Instead it is to be a commodity: the student will pay and the tutor deliver. And students paying £9,000 a year will be ever more demanding of good results.

The pernicious culture of US universities, where staff regularly deal with laments that "my parents aren't paying for me to get a C" and where managers give informal guidance that "we don't fail students on this module," will be transplanted here. There will be increasing pressure to design courses in the interests of market demand — as opposed to intellectual coherence.

The full fall-out of the White Paper reforms is, as yet, hard to predict. It seems likely that as well as the obvious impact on teaching, there will be university mergers and take-overs, increased outsourcing of "back-office" functions, and more collaboration between institutions. The White Paper says nothing about postgraduate study or research: there is great uncertainty about what will happen in those fields.

The bottom line is that a greater role for markets in the university system will inevitably mean less job security, a diversion of resources away from teaching and into management, and a model of education where opportunities for study are determined by what is "financially viable" rather than by intellectual curiosity.

Universities for elitism for others

tives for some to become plcs.

Publicly limited companies can raise large amounts of money through such mechanisms as bond issues (hundreds of thousands of pounds). Universities who want to “spend their way” to elite status are particularly likely to take this route. Leeds College of Music has already been taken over and dissolved into Leeds College of Music Limited, a publicly-limited subsidiary of Leeds City College.

The governance structures of post-1992 universities make it possible for members of Boards of Governors to personally enrich themselves, as the BoG members of post-1992 institutions will become the initial shareholders in the case of a stock market flotation.

All this pushes towards less democratic structures on campus. The overall trend will be to subordinate every aspect of campus life to capitalist discipline and business-oriented management.

DEBT AND STUDENT LOANS

In accounting terms, the government can say it has made a big saving by shifting the burden of higher education funding from central grants and onto student fees covered by loans.

However, the volume of credit that the government will extend to students via the Student Loans Company (SLC) is set to increase dramatically. Loans to cover tuition fees will triple; and student loans will be extended to cover part-time students and students attending private institutions not previously covered by the SLC.

The credit burden for the government is made worse by the fact that student debt cannot be recovered in the same way or at the same pace as commercial debt. There is a limit on the rate of interest it can charge — although the government plans to change this — and it expects to recover only 70p out of every £1 it lends.

The Government predicts the debt will reach £190 billion by 2041 — roughly the same size as the current welfare budget.

Government plans to minimise the level of debt include:

- Encouraging HE institutions to offer fee waivers instead of bursaries to poorer students. Instead of having a bursary to support themselves through their studies, these students will owe less money to the government, but take on a greater level of private, commercial debt for living expenses.

- Giving itself the option of changing the level of interest it charges on student debt. The government has inserted a clause into the 2011 Education Bill, likely to be voted on in October, which will allow it to re-set the level of interest on student debt by administrative decree and without consulting Parliament. The end objective is probably to reorganise student debt so that the prospective stream of repayments becomes good enough to be sold to a bank.

- Using its “lower applicant pool” system to pressurise universities into charging lower fees (around £7,500) in order to reduce the overall level of debt.

We should respond: “Free education — tax the rich!” Education should be funded centrally, through progressive taxation. We should demand a living grant for all students. We should also oppose attempts to change the interest rate on the debt and to replace bursaries with fee waivers.

STRUGGLE AND DEMANDS

The intensification of marketisation will mean attacks on the rights of workers. Universities will try to systematically screw more profit out of their staff. This means shifting the burden of teaching onto low-paid postgraduates on insecure contracts.

South Bank University and Imperial College have already dropped out of the national pay-bargaining scheme. As the sector becomes more divided and diverse this scheme is likely to come under greater attack.

Universities will start cutting courses which are seen as unprofitable, and staff who are too stropy or surplus to the new market requirements will be sacked.

Students should link up with campus trade unions and start a campaign in advance against the market-style chaos that will accompany the scramble of universities to position themselves for the market.

University managements will start investing money in ludicrous building and marketing programmes and other bells and whistles and threatening the institution with ruin if the gamble doesn't pay off.

Students' Unions and activist groups should read through their universities' financial reports and scrutinise the minutes of Board of Governors meetings to keep an eye out for such developments. The detail of university finances will become highly political. For example, an increased debt-to-income ratio is a warning sign that the university may be considering radical reforms such as becoming publicly limited in order to attract cash and investment fast. Activists will have to read such documents as the UCU's “Insider's Guide to University Finance” in order to learn how to anticipate management's plans.

Students should oppose market-oriented advertising splurges and prestige projects, instead demanding that teaching, research, resources, staff pay and student care are seen to before all other considerations.

There will likely be a proliferation of local struggles, on a range of issues linked to the overall White Paper marketisation drive. It is necessary for these struggles to be linked up into a national political drive to force the government to withdraw the White Paper. Otherwise the gains and victories of these local campaigns will be limited.

The national, democratic political co-ordination offered by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts is important for local student activist groups and student unions.

- NCAFC: <http://anticuts.com/>

Scottish students occupy

About 100 students from across Scotland occupied an Edinburgh University lecture theatre over the weekend of 16-17 September. Before ending their occupation they agreed to disrupt management at Scottish universities with an ongoing campaign of rolling 36 hour occupations across Scotland.

Edinburgh is one of two institutions set to fix fees at the most expensive rate in the UK for students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Robin Parker, NUS Scotland President in supporting the occupation said,

"It's absolutely no surprise that Edinburgh University students are incredibly angry about their university's decision to cash in on English, Welsh and Northern Irish students. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those opposing £36,000 fees for students from the rest of the UK."

Because the University tried to block food from entering the occupation, supplies, including a large donation of curry from the Edinburgh Central Mosque, had to be hoisted into the building with ropes.

Naomi Beecroft, a University of Edinburgh second year Linguistics student said,

"We aim as much as possible to disrupt management.

They have refused to undertake an adequately broad student consultation on a decision that could prove to have disastrous consequences for our university. We aim to avoid any disruption to teaching."

Patrick O'Hare, President of St Andrews University Students' Association who was taking part in the occupation said:

"The occupation is a courageous move in solidarity with future generations of RUK [rest-of-UK] students who will be priced out the market or saddled with tremendous debts.

"The increases at St Andrews and Edinburgh are especially abhorrent and not justified by the bursaries packages which will reach a comparatively small number of students.

"In St Andrews, the amount cut from the RUK teaching grant was around £3,323 per student, so fees of £9,000 are more than an attempt to cover that loss. Both Principals and the Scottish Government should take their share of the blame; Principals for charging above the advised rate, and the Scottish Government for introducing Tory policies for RUK students.

"These fees are a betrayal of future generations of RUK students, and students and their representatives will continue to oppose them."

Partial victory in ESOL fight

By an ESOL teacher

A funding guidance document published on the Skills Funding Agency website in August quietly revealed a u-turn on cuts to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

The government has (belatedly) backtracked on proposed changes to funding eligibility, which would have seen as many as 70% of current ESOL students unable to access classes. This is a victory that we should celebrate and communicate to our students, colleagues and supporters who have been campaigning hard since the start of the year through Action for ESOL.

We must also acknowledge that this is not a full victory.

In July colleges made pre-emptive cuts and teachers lost jobs. Some teachers are being re-employed, but on worse contracts, and others can't get their jobs back because they took voluntary redundancy. Provision and jobs have been lost and there are industrial lessons we need to learn from this.

Furthermore the situation at the start of term is chaotic. The change has led to an increase in admin as new courses are created, putting increased pressure on administrative staff.

A full picture of enrolment is yet to emerge but there are many colleges where numbers are down. There may be many students who do not know about the u-turn and don't think they are entitled to any funding. Other colleges, who scrapped ESOL and created functional skills courses, are unable to change this, meaning that students are not able to get the English language lessons they need and teachers will be working doubly hard to try and squeeze some English teaching into courses designed to do something else.

Finally, the victory is only guaranteed for one year. There

is no long term commitment to the provision of English classes for migrants, so we're ready to continue campaigning.

The Action for ESOL campaign held a well attended national meeting on Saturday 16 September. There were interesting political and pedagogical discussions, a manifesto for ESOL was collectively drafted and working groups set up.

We're not starting again, but we are at the beginning of our fight for free and improved ESOL provision for all, and better working conditions for teachers.

As the whole of education faces further attack the ESOL campaigners seek to be part of the broader fight for free education.

• actionforesol.com

Anderson. She initially refused to negotiate with the strikers, who included students protesting fees hikes and security workers fighting for living wages.

Similar protests also took place at the German University in Cairo.

Chilean students to march on capital

Thousands of students in Chile, south America, are preparing to march on the country's capital, Santiago, as their long-running battle against the government continues.

Protests began by focusing on the spiralling costs of higher education and the privatisation of universities, but as the trade union movement mobilised behind the students the movement's politics broadened. Chile's trade union federation, the CUT, called a 48-hour general strike at the end of August, which mobilised 600,000 workers.

Protests have seen violent clashes between activists and the state, with the number of arrests nearing 1,000. A 16 year-old boy was killed during clashes at demonstrations supporting the general strike.

Camilla Vallejo, president of Chile's national students' union, said the aim of the Santiago demonstration would be to pressure the government into withdrawing education bills currently before Congress.

Resist state clampdown

By Pdraig O'Brien

Three supporters of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) were arrested on 19 September following a banner-drop at Liberal Democrat conference in Birmingham.

In a move plainly intended to intimidate anti-cuts protesters, the three were charged with a minor road traffic offense (causing danger to road traffic users — although the prosecution admitted that no damage or injury resulted from the three's actions).

Two were bailed, on condition that they stay away central Birmingham until their trial; and a third has been remanded in custody until 26 September, when a second hearing will decide whether or not he will be bailed until his trial in late October.

The student and workers' movements must protest against the imprisonment of an activist for peacefully hanging a banner!

Claire Lister, a witness, said "The banner drop was very peaceful and no disruption or danger was caused to motorists. When the police arrived at the bridge the men left immediately and went willingly into custody."

Michael Chessum, of the NCAFC and National Union of Students National Executive Committee, said, "It is appalling that students taking part in peaceful protest are being victimised in this way. It is ludicrous that anyone would be remanded in custody for a minor traffic charge. Whether it's kettles, intimidation, or tactical charges — it is becoming increasingly difficult for students and young people to say that they have a meaningful right to protest."

The treatment of the NCAFC supporters is consistent with a worrying turn towards more hardline treatment by the courts.

Sentences handed out by magistrates to those convicted of offences during the August riots were over twice as long as those convicted of similar offences in 2010. Crown court sentences averaged 18 months, as opposed to under a year for similar crimes last year.

The statistics, which come from the Ministry of Justice, also show that a higher proportion of those convicted of riot offences had no previous history within the criminal justice system than did those convicted for similar offences in 2010, casting doubt over justice secretary Ken Clarke's claim that the riots were the work of "existing criminals on the rampage". An investigation by the *Financial Times* this month found that over 33% of those arrested in relation to rioting in London lived in the poorest fifth of the city.

Students and other activists should pay attention to this trend and step up campaigns against police and legal crackdowns.

Students of the world

Win for Egyptian uni strike

After strike by 2,000 workers and students at the American University in Cairo (AUC), which lasted more than a week, university bosses issued a statement on Monday 19 September in which they appeared to concede the strikers' main demands.

The strike had focused on winning a cap on fees, a reversal of a recent 9% fees hike, greater student representation in the running of the university and a series of workers' demands including wage increases and a reduction in working hours.

The AUC said: "The American University in Cairo reached an agreement today with the Independent Syndicate representing AUC custodians, landscape workers, and security guards, and with the Student Union representing students. The agreement provides better salaries and employment conditions for workers, more transparency on processes and procedures affecting the AUC community, and more opportunities to engage students in the University's annual budget process."

The strike, which began on Sunday 11 September, protested outside the offices of university president Dr. Lisa

Cable Street 1936: When workers stopped the fascists

Ruah Carlyle looks at the 4 October 1936 Battle of Cable Street, where anti-fascists stopped the police clearing a route for Oswald Mosley's fascist march in East London.

In 1936 Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists turned its attention to East London, and there built the only truly mass base fascism ever built in Britain.

The East End branches of the BUF became, by spring 1936, the centre of BUF activity. Why? What was it about East London that focused BUF attention? The Jews of the East End provided the fascists with a unique target. East End Jews were concentrated in small areas: in 1929, 43 percent of the national Jewish population were concentrated in Stepney alone.

East London had been an immigrant gateway for centuries. In the 17th century, French Protestants, Huguenots, sought refuge there from Catholic persecution. The mid 19th century saw a big influx of Irish immigrants. After 1881, when systematic pogroms set Russian and Polish Jews to begin their exodus to the west, large numbers of them settled in the East End, first in Whitechapel then fanning out towards Stepney and Mile End.

Anti-Jewish agitation, loud or muted, active or latent, had existed in the East End since the time of the first large Jewish settlements.

It was against this background that, in September 1936, Mosley announced that the BUF would march through the East End on 4 October. It was to be the biggest show of fascist strength ever, in this their strongest area. It could have developed into a pogrom.

On 4 October, the thousands strong Blackshirt march was to begin in Royal Mint Street, pass along through Gardiners Corner (now the top of Whitechapel Road) and on to four separate street meetings in Shoreditch, Limehouse, Bow and Bethnal Green. It never even got going! The march was stopped dead. As many as a quarter of a million people, East Londoners and outsiders, jammed Gardiners Corner. Only an army would have cleared the way for the Blackshirted thugs. An army of police tried and failed.

Tramdrivers abandoned their vehicles in the middle of the road. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Phillip Game, had drafted in a third of the London police force, 6,000 policemen, the whole of the mounted division, and had a primitive helicopter, a gyroscope, flying overhead.

Despite these forces, which made numerous charges at the anti-fascist crowd, breaking many heads, no thoroughway for the fascists could be cut.

DIVERSION

The Police Commissioner then proposed a diversion through the dock area around Wapping, and along Cable Street. There a virtual war was fought between the police and the defenders of the anti-fascist barricades. British, Irish and some Somali dockers fought the police. The anti-fascist barricade was constructed of furniture, paving stones and a lorry.

Pretending to retreat, the anti-fascists lured the police forwards, and took up positions behind secondary barricades while from the upstairs tenements on either side of the street other anti-fascists threw bricks, stones, bottles, marbles for horses' hooves, and boiling water down on the bewildered police.

While the outnumbered and powerless fascist heroes waited in vain for a path to be cleared for them, the police faced chaos. Rare in British street battles, stray policemen were taken prisoner by the barricaders. For those moments the rule of the British state in East London was suspended.

At about 5pm, after a three hour battle, the Commissioner said to Sir Oswald Mosley that he would not longer be held responsible for the safety of the fascists. Speaking as one knight to another, he said: "If you go ahead sir, it will be a shambles!" The beaten police cancelled the fascist march, and sent them off to the Embankment. They did not pass!

Cable Street coincided with the siege of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. The anti-fascists, overwhelmingly working-class, painted the slogan "No Pasaran" ("They Shall Not Pass") all over East London, linking Mosley's march with Franco's rebellion in Spain. They took the workers of Madrid as their model and inspiration.

A Stalinist myth surrounds the Communist Party's role in the Battle of Cable Street. The CP had a grand anti-fascist reputation, but an increasingly spurious one.

Up to 1934 the CP had been in the throes of the Stalinist policy known as the "third period", when, so they said, revolutions were just about to happen everywhere. This was nonsense, and in Germany led the CP to play into Hitler's hands, but it had meant that the British CP was willing to throw itself physically into fighting fascism, perceived as



It was anti-Stalinist socialists, organising on the basis of directly confronting fascist organisation, who were the main force in organising the heroic Battle of Cable Street. Today's anti-fascist left should learn from them.

the last-ditch defenders of a dying capitalism.

By 1936 this view had changed dramatically. Stalin was pursuing a policy of creating a "democratic anti-fascist front" of the USSR with the capitalist powers France and Britain against the German Nazis; the British CP, like CPs everywhere, was now advocating a Popular Front. This meant allying with non-working-class organisations opposed to German fascism, and in Britain by the late 1930s this would include "progressive Tories".

The British CP was trying to gain respectability, aping mainstream politicians in the hope of allying with them. As a result, the CP did not always oppose Mosley militantly, because they feared that continued militancy would make it impossible to ally with "respectable" politicians.

By 1936 they were shying away from physical confrontations. Abandoning class politics, they more and more attempted to compete with the fascists as British nationalists, and even as protectors of religious freedom against "compulsory idolatry" in Germany. They were loudest in demanding blanket police bans on the fascists, and counterposed campaigning for bans to organising on the streets. That was their initial approach to what became the Battle of Cable Street.

LOST CONTROL

The CP only threw their considerable weight behind the East End anti-fascist mobilisation when it was clear three days before that they had lost control of their own local members and sympathisers, who would follow the Independent Labour Party's call on workers to block the route of the fascist march.

At first they told workers not to oppose the fascists in the East End, and instructed CP members to go to the Embankment and then Trafalgar Square instead.

Joe Jacobs, a local CP branch secretary who later broke with the party, was instructed by his superiors four days before the fascist march not to get involved and instead to build for a demonstration, miles away in Trafalgar Square, in support of the Spanish Republic against the Spanish fas-

cists.

His instructions were clear: "Keep order, no excuse for the Government to say we, like the BUF, are hooligans. If Mosley decides to march, let him. Our biggest trouble tonight will be to keep order and discipline."

In his posthumously published autobiography, Jacobs explains the reason for the eventual change of line very clearly: "The pressure from the people of Stepney, who went ahead with their own efforts to oppose Mosley, left no doubt in our minds that the CP would be finished in Stepney if this was allowed to go through as planned by our London leaders."

The Labour Party and the trade union movement were against the fascists, but they also opposed direct action — physical force — to stop their activities. Like the Liberals, they instructed people to rely on the police to prevent disorder.

But unlike the establishment the labour movement feared destruction at the hands of the Nazis, not just discomfort. Even those who opposed direct action helped arouse the working class. The Labour Party and TUC research department published many pamphlets and leaflets which compared the BUF to Italian and German Fascism. In this climate, the militant "actionist" opponents of fascism gained support for physical opposition, even from normally non-militant Labour Party and trade union members.

The Independent Labour Party, not the CP, was the most consistently confrontational anti-fascist force in the East End and beyond.

The ILP had been one of the early constituent organisations of the Labour Party. It had split from the Labour Party in 1932, moving to the left. By 1936, the ILP, though it was still a hybrid political formation, in which bits of reformism, pacifism, and revolutionary socialism were confusingly mixed, was much nearer to being a communist party in the old sense of the word than the official "Communist Party"

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When workers stopped the fascists

Continued from page 9

was. Some of its members were Trotskyists.

The ILP broke up fascist meetings by way of massing opposition, heckling and fighting. They barred fascist processions, organised petitions, and defended Jewish areas — particularly in the East End — from attack.

The Jewish Board of Deputies vehemently opposed the fascists, but it told the East End Jews to rely on the police. On no account should they oppose the fascists physically; that, the Jewish leadership insisted, would only add fuel to the fires of anti-semitism.

To many young Jews, political or not — and large numbers of Jews were members of the Communist Party, the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party, and of Jewish left-wing groups like Hashomer Hatzair and the Workman's Circles — the proper response to fascists marching through Jewish areas was simple: don't let them!

The Jewish community had its own ex-servicemen's anti-fascist militia, the Blue and White Shirts. British Jews, branching out from their orthodox background, were often attracted to revolutionary politics, many joining the CP. There were also many smaller, local anti-fascist bodies.

Cable Street entered working-class legend. It is rightly remembered as something the working class and its allies won against the combined might of the state and the fascists.

The Battle of Cable Street led directly to the Public Order Act. Rushed through the House of Commons, it became law on 1 January 1937. The Public Order Act is often and falsely seen by reformists as a significant hindrance to the fascists, and by some as the thing that finally killed off Mosleyism.

ILLUSION

That is an illusion. The Act banned political uniforms, gave the police added powers to ban marches at will, and strengthened laws against racist abuse. Though it was an annoyance to the fascists, the Act did not cripple them and did not "finish them off" as some too legalistic interpretations of its effect seem to suggest.

Even after the defeat at Cable Street, the BUF achieved and sustained a mass base of support in East London which, if repeated elsewhere, would have given them major political weight and at least the possibility of power. Not until the Second World War was the BUF really finished off, when fascism abroad became the universal enemy, and the BUF was increasingly viewed publicly as merely a satellite of the Nazis.

The POA was a broad blanket measure, designed more to help the police control left-wing opposition movements, for example the hunger marchers, than to suppress the BUF. For decades after Mosleyism had vanished down the great sewer of history, the POA was being used against the labour movement.

The POA did nothing to stop anti-Jewish harassment (despite a few prosecutions). It did not even stop the large-scale violence. On 3 October 1937 there was great violence when the Mosleyites, no longer Blackshirts, tried to march through Bermondsey, South London. Despite appeals by Doctor Salter, the much respected local Labour MP, to let the fascists pass and "protect their free speech", local people erected barricades and there was serious fighting, not far from the scale of Cable Street.

The Public Order Act did not quell the BUF any more than the banning of nazi uniforms at one point quelled Hitler. If it appears so in retrospect, that is only because the BUF went into decline soon afterwards. The POA played at best a secondary and conditional role in that decline.

The fundamental determining factors in the BUF's eventual failure were that economic conditions and the political relations built on them did not favour a radical counter-revolution in Britain.

Yet it was not "objective conditions" that stopped the police forcing a way for the British Hitlerites into Jewish East London: it was a quarter of a million workers massing on the streets to tell them that they would not pass, and making good the pledge by erecting barricades and fighting the BUF-shepherding police. A year after Cable Street, it was the working-class and the socialist movement which again put up barricades in Bermondsey to stop the fascists marching.

The great lesson for today is that the determination of the labour movement and Jewish community limited the effects of BUF terror and opened the prospects of defeating the BUF, irrespective of what the establishment did, including the labour movement establishment.

• This is an abridged version of an article in *Workers' Liberty* 35. Full text: bit.ly/cablest

The life and fate of October 1917

Pat Yarker discusses the life and work of Russian novelist Vasily Grossman.

On Sunday 18 September BBC Radio 4 began a week-long dramatisation of Soviet writer Vasily Grossman's epic novel *Life and Fate*, set during the battle of Stalingrad. Grossman wrote his panoramic text in the 1950s and presented it for publication during Khrushchev's cultural thaw in 1960.

He was told by the Politburo his novel was so dangerous it could not be published for at least two centuries. All copies, drafts, notes and materials were taken from him.

Grossman was born in the Ukraine in 1905 to a family of well-off assimilated Jews. He studied chemistry at Moscow State University and worked as a mining safety inspector and as a chemistry teacher in the industrial region of the Donbass. His first novel was set here. Twice Grossman's writing would be nominated for the Stalin Prize, to be vetoed both times. Grossman, the Soviet leader suggested, had Menshevik sympathies.

Neither Party member nor out-and-out dissident, Grossman's early novels and short-stories are said to be conventional Socialist Realism. I think his experience of total war re-made Grossman into a writer capable of penetrating the life of his times and presenting in words what he found.

Seventy years ago this month, Leningrad was besieged by Hitler's forces. Kiev had fallen, and the Ukrainian Jews were being massacred, Grossman's mother among them. Turned down for active service, Grossman had become a correspondent for Red Star, the Red Army newspaper. He spent over a thousand days at the front-line, moving as it moved from Leningrad to Moscow to Stalingrad. Physically courageous, and lucky, Grossman talked with everyone he could. He noted the sights and sounds of battle, its texture, taste and smell. The usual smell of the front-line, he wrote, is a cross between a morgue and a blacksmith's. He noted incompetence, desertion and collaboration, as well as extraordinary valour and tenacity. He wrote about the eradication of the Jews in his homeland. His account of entering Treblinka, the first in any language, was spiked by Red Star, but published in Yiddish and quoted at the Nuremberg Trials. On the day Berlin capitulated, Grossman stood among the detritus in Hitler's office in the Reich Chancellery.

Life and Fate follows the fortunes of an extended family,

the Shaposhnikovs, and their linked and widening circles of friends, acquaintances, colleagues and lovers. Soldiers and scientists, peasants and workers, apparatchiks, torturers and Stalin himself figure among almost two hundred characters. The novel ranges from prison-queue to Kalmyk steppe, from a Moscow tenement to the encircled ruins of a house in Stalingrad, from a labour-camp in the gulag to a Nazi concentration-camp, from the newly-built gas-chamber within which Eichmann and his entourage sit down to eat, to a cell in the Lubyanka where an Old Bolshevik has his 'confession' beaten out of him. Grossman tries to imagine it all, and face what he called the ruthless truth of war. His unshowy prose does not flinch from the journey to the gas-chamber, or from an act of resistance in its shadow. He finds words even for what it was to cross that threshold.

Radio is an interesting medium to translate the novel-form's ironies, which are the ironies of life and history. It is partly through these that Grossman engages with vital questions of his day. *Life and Fate* asks what has become of October 1917. Are not Nazism and Stalinism two sides of the same coin?

First and most eloquent to argue this view is the repellent Liss, an SS interrogator confronting Mostovskoy, good comrade and friend of Lenin and Bukharin. Yet what is it to be "good" in times like these? The Tolstoyan, Ikonnikov, regarded by Mostovskoy as a deranged reactionary, is shot for withholding his labour. He will not work to build a death-camp. He leaves behind some scribble about "stupid kindness... a kindness outside any system... the private kindness of one individual towards another... senseless, incidental..." Grossman studs his novel with examples of such kindness.

When the Stalinist state "arrested" Grossman's book he wrote to Khrushchev: "I have written in my book what I believed, and continue to believe, to be the truth. I have written only what I have thought through, felt through and suffered through. I have not repudiated it... I ask for freedom for my book." To no avail.

Grossman died in obscurity in 1964. Yet his novel came to see the light of day. A copy was microfilmed, smuggled to the West, and published in 1980. And in 1988, under Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, *Life and Fate* was published in the USSR. The English translation is by Robert Chandler. I hope you'll read it.

Intransigence and betrayal in the General Strike

Tim Thomas continues a series of articles on the British Film Institute's Ken Loach retrospective with a review of *Days of Hope*, his TV series looking at class struggle in early 20th century Britain.

Jim Allen, author of the reprehensible play *Perdition*, wrote the script for this 4-part TV production. Allen's themes, intensely focused on the class struggle, are about intransigence and betrayal in real historical circumstances — here, the history of working-class organisation from the First World War to the General Strike.

Ben, played by Paul Copley, decides to join up with his mates though he defends the rights of conscientious objectors, one of whom is his brother-in-law, a Christian Socialist and later a Labour MP. Ben fights first in an imperial war against the Germans and, almost immediately after that hollow victory, against the uprising in Ireland where he finds himself witnessing the subjugation of the civilian population. The brother-in-law spends these years in the glass house.

In the second episode, Ben comes home, breaks the stock on his rifle and is immediately embroiled in a lock-out (the 1921 Durham miners' lock out). There is an instructive encounter with the local pit owner: the men have waited in the rain for the party to finish up at the manor. Sandwiches are provided for them on a silver *salva*. Cigars are offered. He wants to know why they "don't all just get on", and tells them that "in these difficult times we've all got to make sacrifices, you know". The miners have laid dynamite in the mine and captured a couple of policeman. They have come a long way and they know the consequences. "You know", the owner says, "I always keep my word". They agree to de-escalate on the basis they can get back to work and that there will be no victimisations. Hands are shaken. The same night, the police arrive and arrest the lot of them. Long jail sentences are served.

The third part deals with the first Labour government. Ben comes out of prison a Communist Party sympathiser. His brother-in-law is now a rather naïve MP, given to drinking wine and taking his Quaker wife to fancy restaurants. There is a telling scene when a trade delegation from the Soviet Union visits the House of Commons. Already there are intimations of a change in Soviet attitudes. Is the Commu-

nist Party going to stop supporting British workers' revolutionary activity for the sake of the kind of trade agreements that will be exclusively in their interests ("building socialism in one country")? Already opportunistic managers from pre-revolutionary times are joining the Soviet party. Is something stifling the energy of the revolution?

The question hovers around until the final episode: the General Strike. Here the incredible hypocrisy of Labour and TUC leaders, especially Bevin and Thomas, only too eager to return to "normality" and renew their servile respect for King and Country, is matched by the Communist Party subservience to the Stalinist line. Everything is moving right. The slump is only five years away.

Is this film relevant today? It was written during the re-awakening of the class struggle in reaction to the economic policies of the Heath government with Thatcher's "freedoms" not so far in the future. There is a mirror held up for us too. We have a respect for history. We see in it an unfolding dynamic and we are faced today with the same enemies: the bankers, the owners, the strike breakers and fascists, the Janus-like trades union leaders. Will history repeat itself? Will intransigence or betrayal win?

In my final article, I want to have a brief look at some of his other films and advance some criticism of his political activism.

Pace quickens in construction fight

By Darren Bedford

Five of the eight construction contractors threatening to withdraw from the union-negotiated agreement governing workers' pay and conditions have issued the Unite union with legal notice of their intention to introduce new contracts from 7 December.

The move by the contractors, who include industry giant Balfour Beatty, represents a significant raising of the stakes in what could become a labour war in the construction industry. Previously, the contractors had intimated that they would wait until March 2012 before withdrawing from col-

lective agreements. Workers have upped the pace of their campaign accordingly.

A 150-strong demonstration blocked the entrance to the prestigious Olympic stadium site in London on Wednesday 14 September, and workers elsewhere in the UK, including at Balfour Beatty's Papermill site in Manchester, also demonstrated. Further actions are planned at the Farringdon Crossrail site in London for 6:30am on Wednesday 21 September and Manchester's BBC Media City at the same time.

The rank-and-file paper *Site Worker*, which has been integral to the coordination of the campaign so far, has emphasised the desperate

need for strike action by workers working on sites operated by the "big 8". *Site Worker's* Alan Keys said "the 8 have declared war, and 5 of them are going for a rout by issuing the 7 December deadline letters. Rank-and-file workers on these sites must respond by downing tools and walking off site."

Electricians and pipe-fitters at the Balfour Beatty-operated Grangemouth site took wildcat strike action on the morning of Wednesday 21 September and activists are now calling for construction unions to ballot their members for official strikes. Keys said: "Unite needs to be put under pressure to negotiate

a proper deal for us. A ballot for strike action of all electricians, pipe-fitters and other trades would make that more likely." *Site Worker* is calling on Unite members to bombard national officer Bernard McAuley with

emails demanding that he names a date for a national ballot.

Keys said: "We can't afford to sit back and wait or it will be too late and we will be on £10.50 an hour [the current across-the-

board rate is £16.25/hour]. We must force the issue and spread these actions across the country."

Keys called for "blockades [and] occupations until an agreement has been reached."

Doncaster, Birmingham, Shropshire

By Gerry Bates

Workers at Doncaster, Birmingham and Shropshire councils will strike on 22 and 23 September as local government bosses seek to impose further cuts.

Doncaster Unison secretary Jim Board said the council wanted a "bloodbath". "The average mid-grade worker would lose £3,000 — while being expected to work for longer", Board said. "People would have to strike for a month for it to cost them anything like that."

The council's plans also include 1,000 job losses. With strikes called at extremely short notice, just a day after the council's announcement of its latest round of cuts, stewards and activists at the council have gone into overdrive to build for the action. "We've got days to get out and push for maximum

participation. We're confident we can do that. And we're going to be making the links with the national campaign over pensions", said Board.

Birmingham city council workers will also strike against a "nightmare contract" that could see low-paid care workers (earning less than £15,000) lose nearly 33% of their pay. Other workers stand to lose up to £6,000 from their annual salary.

According to Unison secretary Caroline Johnson, changes to hours and working time protocols in the new contracts mean "no more Monday to Friday; we're all 24/7."

Under the new terms, workers could be made to perform any role within a "job family" and could be forced to work evenings and weekends — in any location within the vast Birmingham conurbation — for no extra pay. A programme of over

100 workplace meetings, including 30 in the last week, has helped rank-and-file members take ownership over the dispute. Over 800 workers have joined Unison since February.

The Doncaster and Birmingham strikes are due to take place on Wednesday 22 September.

On 23 September, workers at Shropshire council will walk out for 24 hours and march on a full council meeting as part of their battle against 5% pay cuts which management (like bosses at a host of other local authorities) is attempting to force through by threatening all 6,500 workers with dismissal unless they agree to the new terms.

The strike was endorsed by a ballot majority of 66%.

Workers will assemble at 9am in the Abbey Foregate car-park in Shrewsbury.

Southampton strikes back on

By Stewart Ward

Social care workers at Southampton council voted on Wednesday 14 September to take further strike action on Thursday 6 October as workers' war against the Tory council's pay cuts approaches its fifth month.

Other groups of workers will meet to discuss joining October's strike.

Since June, workers across council departments have been involved in a bitter conflict with the city's council as it seeks to impose across-the-board pay cuts of between two and 5.5%. The workers' unions, Unite and Unison, have run a creative and ambitious dispute, employing strategic tactics designed to max-

imise impact and pressure on council bosses while reducing the financial burden placed on striking members. Strike tactics have been formulated and decided upon in mass members' meetings rather than imposed from above by unaccountable union officials.

Some on the left have criticised the union for failing to mobilise its members across the council for one "big bang" day of all-out strike action, but the dispute's longevity and the workers' clear determination to continue fighting are a testament to the usefulness of rolling and selective action in terms of keeping workers mobilised over a long period of time.

When not striking, unions have kept up pressure with actions short of

strike, and some 2,400 workers are continuing a work-to-rule, ongoing since June.

The sustained action has already forced council bosses back to the negotiating table for the first time in over a month. Unions said "some progress" had been made in talks which resumed on Tuesday 13 September. According to Unison, bosses have agreed to look at shifting the burden of pay cuts onto employees paid over £65,000 and reducing the impact for lower-paid staff.

The social workers' vote for further strikes gives unions extra pressure to apply to ongoing negotiations.

• More info: soton-unison-office.org.uk

Plymouth Unison wins re-recognition

By Pdraig O'Brien

Public sector workers' union Unison has won re-recognition at Plymouth City Council after bosses unilaterally broke off relations with the union following its refusal to sign a new agreement on staff pay and conditions.

After the union's legal team advised them that accepting the new terms could have implications relating to equal pay legislation, because of the way in which lower-paid workers (who are more likely to be women) were most adversely affected, Unison withdrew from the agreement and found themselves promptly frozen out of further negotiations and thrown out of their branch

offices. GMB and Unite, the other two unions organising at the council, subsequently withdrew from the agreement and a campaign to win Unison's re-recognition was launched.

After a series of meetings, lunchtime rallies and other protests, including a members' meeting which voted in principle to move to industrial action if re-recognition was not secured, the council caved on Wednesday 14 September and agreed to re-recognise Unison. They also agreed to make changes to the terms of the new contracts and, following a Unison branch meeting, the agreement was signed by all three unions.

Question marks and confusion still hang over the deal itself; council bosses are claiming that the

changes pertain only to the implementation date of pay cuts, while union sources have announced that the scale of the cuts themselves had been reduced.

While the successful campaign to win re-recognition for Unison is undoubtedly a victory, council workers are now facing worse terms and conditions. GMB organiser Stuart Fegan said "this agreement will have a significant financial impact on members and we will continue to work hard with the council to mitigate that impact as far as possible."

Unison branch secretary Darren Turner commented: "We do not support cuts, and will continue to fight wherever they are planned."

By Vicki Morris

Barnet Unison held a successful strike against outsourcing on 13 September.

They balloted 313 members in the services first up for privatisation as part of the "One Barnet Programme" which will see the bulk of council services delivered by private sector companies. Most current council employees could be transferred to private sector employment.

The strike was due to last half a day from 1pm, but Tory-run Barnet council locked out the striking workers from the morning, making it a day's strike and docking a day's pay. As they turned up to work, everyone in the services due to strike — parking, planning and regulatory services, revenues and ben-

efits — was asked to commit to working the whole day. Those who wouldn't had to leave. Unison committed to pay the extra half-day's lost pay.

The council had tried other ways to intimidate staff. It wrote to all staff saying Unison had rejected management's final offer without putting it to members. In fact, the council had not told Unison that a recent offer was its final offer; Unison was waiting to hear further from management. The council has decided to impose the offer, which is, moreover, not nearly as generous as it claims.

Throughout negotiations Unison have demanded "TUPE plus". The council's offer is the standard TUPE offer of the same pay and terms, guaranteed for one year only. Barnet Unison has already experienced in

recent small-scale privatisations how little such promises protect transferred workers.

The council put posters up in the common staff areas of their offices repeating the slander against Unison. They considered seeking an injunction against the strike, but drew back from this.

In spite of the bullying, at least 200 workers did join the strike. Most of them played an active part in the day. There were picket lines in the morning. Strikers visited high streets around the borough to distribute *One Barnet*, the newspaper of the anti-cuts group. In the evening, 150 people rallied at Hendon Town Hall.

More industrial action will be needed. Barnet Unison has discussed striking again in October and November.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Organise for 30 November

By Ira Berkovic

The declaration by the Trades Union Congress that Wednesday 30 November will be the next "day of action" in the campaign against government pension cuts is enormously positive and must now be a key focus for organising.

Like the June 30 strike, action in November will demonstrate to a generation of working-class people unused to seeing their class move as a visible social force that workers have real

power to act in our own interests.

It is also positive and important that senior union officials are talking up the need for sustained action. On 20 July, Unite regional organiser Ian Woodland, whose members at Southampton city council are due to enter a fifth month of battle against Tory cuts, told *Solidarity* "we want the wider movement to observe and learn from our experience. It's very clear to us that the one day strike is no more."

It appears the pressure of experience may have told

on national unions. The GMB's Brian Stratton said: "We're not talking about a day out and a bit of a protest. We're talking about something that's long and hard and dirty as well, because this is going to require days of action running through the winter, through into next year, following the government's legislative programme right into the summer."

Trade-union activists must now step up the pressure to hold union leaders to their word. We have had such fighting talk from union leaders before. In ad-

vance of the June 2011 conference of the public service union Unison, its leader Dave Prentis was full of bombastic talk about levels of industrial action exceeding the 1984-5 miners' strike. Then he kept Unison out of the 30 June strike and, until recently, was signalling to Unison members that any ballots were unlikely before the end of the year.

Local activists and committees should start organising now for 30 November and after, not waiting for the leaders.

• More: page 2

Dale Farm: keep up the solidarity!

By Rosalind Robson

The families facing eviction at the Dale Farm travellers' site near Basildon in Essex have been granted a legal injunction (until Friday 22 September) preventing the council from entering the site to clear away caravans and the built structures — the homes of over 50 families.

This is the latest, and most critical stage, in a ten year battle between the travellers (who own the land) and the council who refused permission to the residents to develop the land.

Basildon say that without planning permission the travellers are breaking the law and therefore must go. They have set their face against the facts that they are breaking up a community and stopping children from attending school, and that the travellers have no suitable alternative place to go. "Suitable" in this case means somewhere where they can live in a commu-

nity, according to centuries old established ways of life.

Basildon say they want to "return" the land (a very small plot of land surrounded by acres and acres of fields and woods) to the green belt. But before the travellers took over the site it was a scrapyard. It was not a "green" field or a wood!

Travellers are systematically discriminated against — in planning laws, in education and health services — in the UK. The discrimination and violence they face in continental Europe is even worse.

Basildon council is guilty of racial discrimination, a fact recognised by everyone from the UN to Amnesty International to the local Labour MEP Richard Howitt (everyone, that is, apart from Ed Miliband).

As we go to press the Dale Farm residents have just a short time to resist and regroup. They need our help and solidarity.

• dalefarm.wordpress.com

Barnardo's collude in jailing migrant children

By Rebecca Galbraith

What is Pre-Departure Accommodation? It's a detention centre. The 2.5m palisade fence with electronic gates surrounding the site and the 24-hour security leaves you in no doubt that this is a prison. A prison for migrants.

Cesar's detention centre gives lie to the Government's claim that children won't be detained. It's run by G4S and Barnardos and opened this month.

Who benefits from the centre? The landowner who rents the land to the UKBA.

G4S, the security firm responsible for the death of Jimmy Mubenga, whose chief executive, Nick Buckles, is paid almost £5,000 a day. And Barnardo's, Britain's biggest children's charity.

Barnardo's have given a veneer of "respectability" to the project, by agreeing to provide "key welfare, safeguarding and support services for families". No doubt receiving a healthy sum from the government for this service.

According to Helen Crawley of the Migrant Rights Network, the Government has effectively cre-

ated spaces for up to 4,445 children to be detained every year in Cesar's Detention Centre. The Pre-departure Accommodation will not be the only place where children will be detained. The family unit at Tinsley House immigration removal centre is currently undergoing a £1 million refurbishment in order to accommodate 38 beds and up to eight families.

Activists from No Borders and No One Is Illegal thought it was important to mark this disgraceful occasion by taking a trip into deepest Sussex to protest against the "moral outrage"

(Clegg's words) and "scandal" (Cameron's words) of child detention the week the centre opened.

Child detention is inhuman. As is all detention, along with the racist immigration controls which divide humans and only profit the bosses. These controls have not existed forever and are there to enforce the power of the ruling class.

The border regime should be opposed, resisted and punched through by every working-class activist and trade unionist. Papers or no papers, we're all human.