

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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Top bosses' pay soars 11%

3.5m children live in poverty

Rich get richer, kids go hungry

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Food banks (left) are now a feature of UK life. In its new campaign "It Shouldn't Happen Here", Save The Children will target child poverty in the UK for the first time. Meanwhile, research for the BBC found that the top 100 bosses increased their pay in 2011-2 by 11% while average pay rose by just 1.1%. The new Barclays boss Antony Jenkins (right) will be paid £8.6m this year.

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, bisexual and transgender 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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New turnouts on Greece's streets

By Martin Thomas

European Central Bank Mario Draghi's "OMT" programme (6 September) has been hailed as the "bazooka" which will save the eurozone, but it is likely to sharpen the crisis in Greece.

Under the OMT the ECB will buy unlimited quantities of eurozone governments' bonds, not new-issued bonds, but bonds already trading in the global markets. The ECB has run such policies before (the SMP), but more limitedly. The claim is that ECB buying-power will keep up the prices of Spanish, Italian, Greek etc. bonds in the markets, and thus help those governments sell new bonds and so finance themselves.

Draghi stressed that the "bazooka" will be fired — the ECB will set out to buy — only for the bonds of governments which have officially requested it and agreed to submit to a programme of cuts and economic restructuring shaped by the European Union and the ECB.

Even with that proviso, German representative Jens Weidmann voted against Draghi's plan on the ECB board. The German press has denounced the plan as

a subsidy to the feckless. The German government is backing Draghi, but one result is increased pressure for harsh economic conditions on debt-troubled governments.

The Troika of the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the IMF is likely to be even more rigid with the Greek government. A collision is looming.

ATHENS

The right-wing Athens government headed by Antonis Samaras is asking for delays and concessions, and even in that framework cannot reach agreement on detailed plans.

Talks between the leaders of the parties in the government coalition on finalising cuts ended in deadlock on 9 September.

Pressure on the government from below is increasing. After lull in the summer holiday months, demonstrations are filling the streets again. State schools in Greece are due to start their new year on 12 September, but will be on strike that day.

Yet the Troika is sharpening its tone. It says that the Greek government is lagging on cuts, and must speed up, not ease off. On 4

September a letter from the "Troika" was leaked, demanding that Greece increase the legal working week to 6 days for all sectors and cut workers' minimum daily rest to 11 hours.

Economist Megan Greene, an expert on the eurozone crisis, writes: "If the Troika does not grant the Greek government any concessions on its bailout programme, it is highly likely that the two junior parties — the Democratic Left and Pasok — will drop out of government. This would precipitate fresh elections, the third for this year alone".

COALITION

Syriza, the left coalition that came close to victory in the 17 June election with a programme of reversing the cuts and nationalising the banks under workers' and social control, has gained support slightly since June.

According to the latest poll, published on 6 September, Syriza would win new elections held today.

However, the biggest poll shift since June is that the fascist Golden Dawn party has risen to 12%, outstripping Pasok and the Democratic Left. Brutal police operations in August,

rounding and deporting thousands of migrant workers, have led to a surge of the far right rather than horrified rejection. Unless the left in Greece is bold enough to seize the initiative, the far right will feed off social frustration.

According to DEA, one of the revolutionary socialist groups within Syriza, the programme of local "popular assemblies" planned by Syriza in order to build itself a mass membership base on the back of its electoral success is now underway after the summer lull.

DEA comments: "People's participation of people in the process of changing Syriza will not come by itself. It takes a great effort to make the poll percentage into combat a force... Regular meetings of the Local Committees, continued efforts for membership, and large participation in the processes, must be a continuous effort".

DEA reports that Syriza is calling a national conference, probably in early November.

The perspective is for Syriza to convert itself from a coalition into a single party with wide democratic rights for minority currents.

Left in Irish Labour

By Will Greene

A row over health cuts threatens to destabilise the Irish coalition government of Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party in the run up to the 2013 austerity budget.

On Tuesday 4 September Fine Gael health minister James Reilly announced €130 million cuts targeting home-help services, personal assistants for the disabled and the availability of certain medical products.

The announcement was met by a furious public reaction. Opposition parties Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin are planning votes of no confidence in Reilly when parliament returns later this month.

In a sign of growing grass-roots anger at the coalition, the Labour Party chairperson Colm Keaveney, who was elected against the wishes of the leadership at the last conference, attacked the proposed cuts and criticised the minister for not communicating them to the Labour Party before announcing them.

Keaveney also prompted speculation about another general election as the coalition considers a fur-

ther €3.5 billion of austerity measures next year.

A new left-wing pressure group inside the Irish Labour Party, the Campaign for Labour Policies, will be officially launched on 15 September. They have sent a letter to party members aiming to mobilise support for "an [government] alternative political programme" and for placing policy development back in the hands of the membership.

IMF

The IMF's permanent representatives have been driven to seek assurances that there was no split between the coalition partners.

The right-wing *Irish Independent* warned that "the Budget is going to require far greater discipline" on the part of the respective party leaders.

With battles over public-sector pay, social welfare cuts and income tax set to rage as parliamentary returns for a new term, the future of the government is by no means guaranteed.

● N. Ireland riots expose frailty of "peace process" — bit.ly/U6cs10

Workers march in Rome

olent stormtroopers protecting the minister.

Scores of workers were injured as they were armed only with their helmets and site uniforms. Demanding to see the prime minister Monti, the protesters stayed on the streets; at the same time as they set upon the Democratic Party's Shadow minister of Development, driving him from the protest as "a parasite", a supporter of the Government trying to leech onto the protest for his own electoral motives.

The union bureaucrats are pinning all their hopes on another owner, but the recent history of Sardinia has witnessed the same tragic episode of workers' resistance being derailed by similar promises.

All over the island there are the same fights going on to resist closures, but there has been little or no attempt to unite all of them or develop political demands and strategies, such as occupying the plants in question, and calling to nationalise them under the occupiers' control.

Meanwhile the government is determined to continue its scorched earth policies against the masses to restore the fortunes of Italy's putrid and criminal ruling classes.

South Africa: miners' strikes spread

By Martyn Hudson

The Marikana strike has now inspired a new wave of strikes in the gold mines of the West Rand. 15,000 miners have been suspended for wildcat strike action.

There is much support for the strikers across South Africa, and the Marikana massacre is widely perceived as a critical moment for the ANC and its future rule. The split between the ANC old guard and Julius Malema, the former leader of the ANC's Youth League, is rapidly widening.

Malema is leading the solidarity work for the miners and has raised continually the question of nationalisation. His rhetorical offensive against "white capital" has struck a chord in the South African working class. It points (in however illogical a way) to the reality of capital and its domination of the means of production. Not just in South Africa, but in other

places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where companies like Anglo-American Plc are implicated in genocidal politics and the vicious oppression of any nascent workers' organisation.

Malema is certainly using the Marikana dispute for his own ends and for his own factional reasons against the ANC, but it is

clear that the neo-liberal policies of the ANC and its settlement with international capital in the early 1990s have left the situation of the mass of Black South Africans unchanged since the end of Apartheid.

The leaders of the ANC-backed National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) are seen as having personally enriched themselves off the

backs of the miners, and there have been accusations that the NUM has been using the miners' union dues to invest in the very companies that employ them — making a mockery of the "official", state-sanctioned trade union. The Marikana massacre evokes the case of Andries Tatane, an activist who broke from the ANC and was beaten to death by the police in 2011. There were another 1,769 deaths in custody or as a consequence of police attacks under investigation in the year before Tatane's murder.

Tatane, like Biko and Hector Pieterse, and now the Marikana miners, suffered deaths at the hands of capital. Capital is bloodstained whether under Apartheid or under the rule of the ANC and its Communist Party lackeys.

• Info on the Marikana Support Campaign Liaison Committee: bit.ly/TNL2KH

QCH dispute enters sixth week

Why is there a community protest at the Queensland Children's Hospital site in Brisbane, Australia?

Workers are demanding a union enterprise bargaining agreement with the main contractor, Abigroup, and a clause to ensure that all workers employed by subcontractors on the site are paid the rate for the job. Almost all the workers on the site are employed by subcontractors rather than Abigroup, and rates for similar jobs with different subcontractors can vary by up to \$10 an hour.

How did the dispute start?

It started on 6 August when a gyrocking subcontractor failed, leaving the workers employed by it in the lurch. Trade unionists had been complaining on this point for months. The November 2011 *Construction Journal*, produced by the CFMEU union's construction division, reported: "Contractors are cutting each other's throats to win [work at] the Abigroup site at the Queensland Children's Hospital... They are using tricks to reduce their price... Some of these plasterboard companies are taking it one step further, using multiple subsidiary companies under their banner in order to divide up the workers' entitlements..."

How has Abigroup responded?

Abigroup is owned by the giant Lend Lease corporation, which reported \$500 million profits for the year to 30 June 2012. Its chief executive Steve McCann was paid \$7.33 million for the 2012 financial year, a 66% pay rise. It has also recently had to sideline four top executives for financial misreporting.

Abigroup says it is losing \$300,000 a day. Until 4 September Abigroup refused to talk or try to find an agreement to enable work to resume. It looks like Abigroup underestimated the workers and thought the dispute would quickly collapse. Now Abigroup has at least started talking. The workers want talks and a speedy agreement.

Why are the workers' demands important?

Winning decent pay and conditions on construction sites is difficult, because jobs come and go. The same battle has to be fought again on

every new job.

When union organisation is weak or broken in construction, then even on big sites workers are employed by lots of different subcontractors, or by labour-hire companies, with no security if the company fails. Similar work is paid different wages. Workers are taken on as "self-employed" so that the subcontractors can avoid their responsibilities for sick pay, superannuation, etc. Fly-by-night subcontractors go for quick profits and take no responsibility for the finished job.

The workers want the new hospital to be built to good standards and on time. They also want to hold the line for decent negotiated standards in the construction industry.

Aren't the workers breaking the law?

Injunctions have been served against officials of the CFMEU, the BLF, the ETU, and the Plumbers' Union to stay away from the site. The workers are therefore continuing their dispute as a community protest. Injunctions have been threatened against protest organisers. The great majority of the workers have no legal proceedings against them, and are not likely to have. The dispute will continue, whatever the legal proceedings, until Abigroup settles.

Australian law is exceptionally reluctant to recognise workers' rights to withdraw their labour. By contrast, France's constitution, for example, has the right to strike written into it as an individual right for every worker. France has, by most measures, the world's highest labour productivity.

Workers are not slaves or serfs. The right to withdraw your labour when conditions become unacceptable is a basic right.

How can we find out more, or support the workers?

The workers welcome messages of support which show other workers are with them in the long battle for a world where the working class controls economic life, and where workers enjoy the right to a secure livelihood, worthwhile work, decent conditions, and good social provision — rather than labouring for the profit of a wealthy few.

• Send messages to ishmael1819@gmail.com

The left in South Africa

Ben Fogel, a socialist activist in South Africa who writes for *Amandla* and is active in miners' solidarity work, spoke to Martyn Hudson.

Most of the historic Trotskyist tendencies in South Africa are dissolved to varying degrees.

The two most important were WOSA, which was Neville Alexander's group, which is now largely defunct, and the Unity movement which is now just a few people, but was important. Otherwise there is Keep Left, which is linked to the SWP in the UK.

Most Trotskyists are involved in other movements, rather than being in a specifically Trotskyist group. Most organise under an umbrella called the Democratic Left Front (DLF), or various civil society formations.

The DLF has difficulties understanding what it is. It's supposed to be a united front uniting all of the small left formations with some independent unions and social movements in order to form a bloc and win over the working class in Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other places. But it's not that — it's mostly a bunch of peo-

ple trying to respond to everything with press statements rather than mobilisation.

WOSA, like a lot of other movements, fell apart after 1994. A lot of people joined the Communist Party (SACP) or lost interest. A lot of people though SACP was de-Stalinizing and worth joining in order to push it in a new direction.

ANC-ALIGNED
There is an ANC-aligned "left" within the COSATU. I don't even count the SACP as left.

There is also the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). There is the independent left, and the social movement left.

The COSATU/ANC left is split between condemning the massacre and then covering the ANC's back. A lot of people are turning against President Zuma, and Julius Malema from the ANCYL has won a lot of people over by speaking left. Whether or not Malema is actually on the left is another matter.

The independent left has mostly tried to organise solidarity groups, raising money and such, and has called for an independent inquiry into the massacre. That call has been backed by the National Union of Metalworkers of South

Africa, which is the most socialist union in COSATU. A lot of people in social movements have experienced similar repression but on a lesser scale, and some have sent people to meet with the miners.

Malema's role is complex. He's really monopolised the left space in SA, because of the failings of both the independent and ANC-aligned left. He speaks a little like someone like Chavez. He's an opportunist, but he's done the most to help the miners in terms of material aid and so on.

The key here is to support the striking miners. The strike is still going on

and it looks like there are more strikes at other mines on the way, including the gold sector, so the left needs to aid the miners here with food and material support.

Hopefully we can build a working relationship with the miners and something can come out of that. Here it appears the working class is more militant than the unions, and the left is being dragged forward by this. We also need to give up on trying to convince COSATU's leadership to join an independent workers' party, or whatever.

COSATU's leadership is ANC, and is directly implicated in the murder of these workers.

Quebec student victory

By Rob Fox

The announcement of a tuition freeze by the government of Quebec on the 5 September marks a spectacular victory for the student movement.

The attempt of the Government of Quebec to increase yearly tuition fees by 75% sparked walkouts of university campuses beginning in February. Increasing civil disobedience by protesters, which included the blocking of Montreal's two main bridges and university pickets, caused a panicking administration to pass Bill 78, which suspended classes in 11 universities during the winter term and made demonstrations essentially impossible to assemble legally.

Despite this, the CLASSE movement won increasing support. Its red square symbol became iconic.

Defend the right to protest in Glasgow!



Officials of Glasgow's Labour City Council are recommending that the Scottish TUC's anti-austerity demonstration of 20 October should not be allowed to assemble in George Square in the city centre.

A "consultation exercise" currently being run by the Council also proposes that demonstrations should be replaced by "static protests" wherever possible, and that there should be a blanket ban on the use of George Square as a muster and dispersal point for demonstrations.

Such recommendations represent a drastic curtailment on the right to demonstrate:

By definition, the purpose of a demonstration is to demonstrate particular concerns to as many people as possible. Assembling in the city centre (i.e. in George Square) and marching around the city centre (i.e. from your central assembly point) is the best way to achieve that purpose.

True, the right to demonstrate is not an absolute political right. We are against SDL and BNP demonstrations, for example. But that is because of the political content of any such demonstration — not because of where they assemble and disperse!

Nor is the right to demonstrate an absolute legal right. In legal terms, the right to demonstrate has to be balanced

against other rights (such as the right not to have one's private life unduly disrupted by frequent demonstrations).

But no-one has ever claimed that their right to a private life has been disrupted by a trade union demonstration! And the paperwork issued by the Council as part of its "consultation" clearly indicates that complaints received by the council all relate to marches by Orange Lodges and other bands.

The proposals represent an attempt to depoliticise the city centre of Glasgow. In recent decades, "post-industrial" Glasgow has been subjected to a series of re-brandings, from "Glasgow's Miles Better" through "Glasgow: City of Culture", to the current version of Glasgow as the commercial capital of Scotland.

REAL-LIFE

Real-life demonstrations about real-life issues such as racism, unemployment and social inequalities cut across attempts to transform Glasgow city centre into a mecca of consumerism.

And the logic of the arguments in the consultation exercise for banning the use of George Square as a muster or dispersal point for demonstrations (e.g. the volume of traffic round the square, and other health and safety issues) equally apply to "static protests".

It is therefore not just demonstrations which are to be driven out of George Square but any form of political protest, including "static protests". (And given that the City Council Chambers are located in George Square, this would be very convenient for budget-cutting councillors.)

Thirdly, they represent an attack on the historical signifi-

cance of George Square as the scene of social protest in Glasgow.

As the scene of the January 1919 "riot", George Square occupies an iconic place in Glasgow labour movement history (although much of that "history" is legend rather than fact).

The square has also been the assembly point for Glasgow May Day demonstrations since time immemorial.

Driving political protest out of the square constitutes a political statement: In the past, when class struggle was a reality, this square was the scene of social unrest. Today, the square no longer needs to be a scene of social protest because society is — supposedly — no longer scarred by class divisions.

Class struggle is thereby not completely written out of history. Instead, it is confined to history and relocated from the streets to museums, where a sanitised version of it can be safely re-marketed as a tourist attraction.

The Scottish TUC, Glasgow Trades Union Council, The Unite Scottish Regional Political Committee and a number of Glasgow trade union branches have already challenged the officials' proposals — not just about 20 October but also the broader clampdown on the right to protest.

Trade union branches should be demanding of the councillors on the Public Processions Committee and the Public Petitions and General Purposes Committee — both of which have a Labour majority — that they reject their officials' proposals.

And the Scottish TUC should issue a statement saying that whatever the position eventually adopted by the council, the assembly point for the 20 October demonstration will be George Square.

Assange's refusal to face rape charges harms his cause



Before I wrote the article on Julian Assange ("Assange, rape, free speech", *Solidarity* 254) I had a good look at the bourgeois press.

The serious mainstream papers and magazines seemed unanimous (based on legal opinions that they had solicited or examined) that the extradition of Assange to the US from Sweden was harder than from the UK to US. Of course, if this is true, Assange's case for staying here to best avoid falling into the US state's hands collapses.

Paul Field, himself a lawyer, has a different view (*Solidarity* 255). And, here-and-there, there are others who should be listened to, that have opinions similar to Paul's. Nevertheless, the big bulk of serious opinion falls the other way. (I'm discounting much of the material written for Assange

which unfortunately comes from the self-deluded or plain weird or conspiracy nuts — or a combination of those).

But, anyway, the legal issue (Britain or Sweden: where is he safer?) doesn't exhaust the matter. Both governments are right-wing, US allies. In the long-run he's probably not very safe anywhere. His ability to stay out of a US jail will largely rest on the campaign that can be built in his defence. And that defence campaign is now tightly bound up with another question — the rape charges he faces in Sweden.

Some comrades have argued that if the US does manage to seize and jail Assange it will be a blow against the anti-imperialist left. I think that's true, and we should defend Assange against the US state.

Equally, given he is — at least in general terms — a part of our movement, we are also concerned that he uphold minimum standards of a prominent radical. And he isn't upholding them. It seems that he is running away from, and attempting to avoid, the accusations of rape.

If it is true, as he claims, that he is innocent of these charges, he should face them in Sweden, removing an issue from the fight to defend himself from the US state.

Mark Osborn, south London

Left Foot Forward 2012

On Sunday 9 September, the AWL's five-a-side football team took part in Feminist Fightback's "Left Foot Forward" tournament of left groups and campaigns — and won!

Thanks to Feminist Fightback's organisation the all-women and mixed-gender teams took part in a relaxed and friendly competition.

In future tournaments, the AWL should make efforts to get an all-women team together.

Working towards that "goal" we'd like to encourage women to get involved in Feminist Fightback's Sunday morning football training in Victoria Park every Sunday. For all levels of fitness and experience. Complete beginners welcome.

• **More details here:** bit.ly/QgVRBk



US Democrats: not perfect, but where workers are

Matthew and Ryan (*Solidarity* 255) both criticized my article on unions and the Democrats, but they did so in strikingly different ways.

In Matthew's letter, a single word reveals the weakness in his argument. He concedes that the British Labour Party has become a lot more like the Democrats but adds: "[It] is not the same yet". "Yet" is the key word. Because as critics of Labour here are quick to point out, that is exactly what's happening. The grip of unions on the party has weakened dramatically. The Labour Party no longer even pretends to be a socialist party. We don't disagree on that point, and it's a central part of my argument. What Matthew neglects to comment on is my observation that the Democrats have been changing too over the years, with unions playing a far more significant role today than they have in the past.

And it's not just about unions throwing money at the Democrats. Anyone who watched the Democratic National Convention on television this month would have seen a very large, proud union contingent with banners and signs. And those trade unionists, elected delegates to the convention, were singled out and referenced by Obama, Biden and other speakers. In fact, I'll bet you'll find that Obama and Biden are far more likely to make positive references to trade unions in their speeches than Ed Miliband does.

If the Democrats are becoming more and more like Labour, and Labour more and more like the Democrats, I

think my argument is a valid one. And I think that Matthew seems to accept at least part of that as being true.

As for Ryan, though he too rejects the idea that socialists and trade unionists have any place in the Democratic Party, he compares supporting the Democrats to supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, which is not just unfair but offensive.

Matthew concluded his letter by asking if I think that British unions were right a century ago to form the Labour Party. Of course I do. It would be a wonderful thing if American unions today did the same and formed a Labor Party. And even better if that party adopted socialist politics. And better still if those socialist politics were not tainted by Stalinism or social democratic reformism, but reflected the great tradition of independent, revolutionary socialism.

But comrades, that's a fantasy. There is not going to be a revolutionary, third-camp, Shachtmanite mass party of the workers in America any time soon or, to be honest, ever.

Serious socialists who really do want to change the world accept that our unions are not perfect unions, that our Labour Party is not the party we'd like, and in the USA, that the Democratic Party leaves a lot to be desired.

But those are where progressive are, where the workers are, and our role is to fight side by side with those workers in those institutions — and not to fantasise about a perfect world.

Eric Lee

Rich get richer, kids go hungry

3.5 million children in Britain are living in poverty. That is the headline of "It Shouldn't Happen Here", a report published by the charity Save the Children report last week.

Best known for their work with the poorest children in "third world" countries, Save the Children have launched a campaign for Britain's children living in poverty (defined by the report as coming from a family with less than 60% of the median income).

That's the rising number of children going hungry, malnourished, in need of new shoes, and warm clothes; always excluded from school trips, unable to have friends round for tea, worrying and struggling as their lives are stymied by being poor. These are the children of the poorer sections of the working class. Capitalism considers it safe to sacrifice them so the rich can be cushioned from the crisis they and their friends created.

It *shouldn't* happen here because we have the oldest labour movement in the world. Despite a fall in union membership over the decades, and despite defeats for the working class, there are still 6.4 million workers organised in trade unions. It shouldn't happen here because we have the power to stop it.

But it is happening here because the organised working class is weak, under-confident, and hindered by a trade union bureaucracy with over-paid, over-comfortable leaders. It is happening here because the working class has no political representation. No political voice that could impose real solutions to "save the children".

BANKERS

In 2008, when their big roulette game collapsed from their own vile greed, the cry from the bankers, their friends, and their political representatives was "save the banks!" Save the rich! Save capitalism! Save the system, so we can do this all again!

And so the Labour government did, using taxpayers' money and public credit to the tune of £1,100 billion. The banks were saved. Capitalism was saved. And the rich got remarkably richer — buying more Aston Martins and other flash cars, works of art, diamonds, luxury designer goods, houses and gold than ever before. The pay of the bosses' of Britain's top 100 companies rose by a staggering 43% between 2010 and 2011. The average boss of a FTSE 100 company "earns" nearly 200 times the average salary.

"We're all in this together", the bosses' government continues to insist. The welfare state is dismantled, benefits slashed, public services and jobs deleted from existence. New food-parcel distribution centres spring up every week in churches and charity centres all over the country to feed the poor. Wages are driven down and under-employment becomes the norm. An ever-growing caste of working poor is created. The bosses aren't "in it" together with us. They're doing fine.

And the union leaders' response? "For a future that works!" Maybe there will be another half million strong demonstration on 20 October. Maybe the strike threats made by Unite leader Len McCluskey and Unison leader Dave Prentis will be carried through. Maybe we will even win some of those strikes.

But the capitalist system has crisis built into it. As long as that system remains in place, our class will always pay the ultimate cost while the boss class will get richer.

We need a movement that fights. This means striking not simply to protest, but to win. The pensions debacle shows us, yet again, we cannot rely on the leaders of our own unions. We have to develop and build rank-and-file organisations within the unions, built on democracy, our own demands and direct action. Acting for ourselves, collectivising our grievances, and acting in solidarity with other workers in struggle leads to one, ultimate, necessary perspective: for a workers' government.

We need to make our class fit to govern, fit to rule. We need a government of our class (the whole of our class — whether working or not), by our class, and for our class. We need a government which will govern in our interests with the same unswerving partisan spirit with which this government, and the New Labour governments before it, have governed for the bosses.

WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

A workers' government would create jobs through building hospitals, schools, homes, and railways. It would put major industries under the control of those who work in them, with no compensation for the expropriated bosses and shareholders.

Instead of the bankers' socialism that socialised losses but kept the profits and gains in the hands of the tiny capitalist class, we need working-class socialism — democratic, social ownership by the working-class majority, working towards creating a society that can provide for everyone on the basis of need.

We should all be individually and collectively outraged that 3.5 million children in Britain — in the "first world", in the world's seventh largest economy, in a world of abundance with the means to provide lives of plenty for all — live in poverty.

We should be collectively outraged that any child anywhere in the world lives in poverty; and that many die from poverty.

There is more than enough wealth concentrated in the hands of a few to solve these problems. And there is more than enough potential power concentrated in the hands of the working class around the world to build a future that puts an end to child poverty. The starting point is collectivising our outrage, grabbing hold of the anger and using it to fuel a drive for real change.

We have to think independently about the interests of the working class and we have to act in solidarity at all times with workers all over the world.

And when we act, we have to act not only in outraged opposition to the obscene injustices we see around us but positively, in the name of a better, more rational, more sane, more humane system, where the social needs of people come before the phantom "needs" of the market and its never-ending, cannibalistic drive for profit.

The name for that system is socialism, and by fighting for it and winning it, we can hope to "save the children", and much more.

TUC backs co-ordinated strikes

The annual congress of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on 9-12 September passed policy to support "co-ordinated strike action between unions over pay and pensions".

These strikes would take place over both the public sector pay freeze and the work-longer-pay-more-get-less pensions reforms against which unions struck on 30 June and 30 November 2011.

That the TUC has passed policy supporting co-ordinated strike action is undoubtedly positive. The fight now is to progress from fighting talk from union leaders towards a real campaign based on a comprehensive industrial and political campaign around specific demands, fought to win. We don't want this promise of co-ordinated strikes to be used to fob us off for now and make us wait for what turns out to be another series of disconnected, one-day strikes.

Unison's Dave Prentis is already in the press declaring the start of the "fightback". But we've been here before. At his the 2011 Unison conference, he promised an industrial battle on the scale of the 1926 general strike to defeat the pension reforms, before manoeuvring to keep his union out of the 30 June action (and then selling a shoddy deal to his local government members, while ignoring his NHS members' mandate when they voted to reject the government's "final offer"). The pace suggested by Prentis, who sees the 20 October demonstration as "a launchpad" for strikes in the new year, is not encouraging. Action is needed now, not in six months' time.

Simply applauding militant rhetoric from union bureaucrats or even simply calling on them to deliver, will not do. The job of socialists is not to wait until the bureaucracy seems to have a good idea, and then lobby them to act on it.

Our job is to build up consciousness, independent organisation, and confidence in our own strength amongst rank-and-file workers so we can fight to impose a winning strategy in the coming battles.

Congress also passed a motion from the Prison Officers' Association, which commits the TUC to "considering" the "practicalities" of a general strike. The debate was positive, and the focus must now be on the hard work of building up the rank-and-file strength in workplaces, and local and national co-ordination, without which no such strike is possible.

Also at Congress, a motion from the RMT that advocated British withdrawal from the European Union was defeated — a positive sign for those wanting to push internationalist politics in the labour movement.

Labour's wealth tax?

On 6 September, Ed Balls announced that he would support a permanent tax on high-value properties.

The latest move by the Shadow Chancellor seems less a response to *Solidarity's* criticism of the Labour Party last week and more a tactical ploy to split the governing coalition.

Although Balls rejected Nick Clegg's proposals for a temporary one-off tax levy on the super-rich, his policy idea closely resembles Liberal Democrat business secretary Vince Cable's suggestion of a "mansion tax." According to the *Independent*, Balls "said he would be happy to discuss what he called Mr Cable's 'serious' proposal for a high-value property tax" and he has subsequently followed up this initiative with an overture to Cable to quit the government and join with Labour to implement a "Plan B" to austerity.

In 1903 Ramsay MacDonald agreed a "Lib-Lab" pact with the Liberal leader Herbert Gladstone because the nascent Labour Party had not yet been born from the Labour Representation Committee. Experience showed that it was not just a tactical ploy but formed a sequence in a pattern of class collaboration, again with the Liberals and then, in 1929, with the Conservative Party too.

Just as it did then, "Lib-Labism" now in its modern-day incarnation cuts against the growth and development of independent working-class politics.

The Labour Party must provide more than mischievous politicking and offers of a life-raft for the sinking ship Liberal Democrat.

The issues in Manchester

By Colin Foster

The outcome of this year's Labour Party conference, opening in Manchester on 30 September, will depend on how seriously the Unite union, Labour's largest affiliate, takes its own policy.

The Unite union adopted a new document at its Policy Conference on 25-28 June 2012, for a more aggressive political strategy in the Labour Party

On the agenda in Manchester is a rule change proposed by Bridgend CLP to allow Labour conference to amend National Policy Forum documents. Though the change sounds technical and fiddly, it could change conference dramatically. What was done at Labour conference before Blair through motions from Constituency Labour Parties and unions would be done through amendments to NPF documents, and better, because in the old days often a National Executive statement passed through conference as take-it-or-leave-it could be cited to neutralise awkward but successful motions from CLPs.

Bridgend's rule change has to jump three hurdles. It has to avoid getting ruled out of order. The Conference Arrangements Committee has already ruled out 28 rule-change proposals this year, on concocted grounds. Unite should back a challenge against ruling-out Bridgend.

Next hurdle: the platform can say that the issue is "under review", and ask for Bridgend's proposal to be "remitted". If Unite backs Bridgend, that manoeuvre can be defeated.

Finally, of course, the rule change has to win a majority. Again, Unite's vote will be pivotal.

No-one dares argue that Labour conference procedure is fine as it is. The arguments will be that we should "give time" to Ed Miliband, not rush things, and remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. Trouble is, time is short.

By the time of the 2014 conference we will be only months away from a general election, and big shifts of Labour's direction will be more difficult.

STILL LOW

According to the figures which the Labour Party is legally obliged to give to the Electoral Commission, Labour membership at the end of 2011 was 193,000 — 37,000 up on end-2009, but unchanged from end-2010, and still low.

Despite Unite's commitments to increase trade-union intervention in the Labour Party, Unite general secretary Len McCluskey told the *Guardian* (7 September) that "membership of the Labour Party among Unite members was probably at its lowest ever figure of around 12,000, which included 2,000 recruited this year through a campaign to attract more people into the party".

On 10 September, after the TUC made cautious moves to consider further strikes against Government policy, Ed Miliband shamefully rebuked the unions: "The public doesn't want to see strikes. Nor do your members".

Labour rule changes are essential, but valuable only if used to win and enforce new policies. Again, much depends on what the big unions, especially Unite, do.

In recent speeches Ed Miliband has tried to define his new catchphrase, "an economy that works for working people", by the term "predistribution".

Predistribution means what? Nationalisation of the banks, in line with the policy adopted by the unions at TUC congress on 10 September? Repeal of the Tory anti-union laws and introduction of positive workers' rights to organise and to strike? Big increase in the minimum wage, even? Miliband mentioned nothing specific.

Labour Party insiders guess that "predistribution" is likely to come up at Labour conference only in Ed Miliband's speech, or possibly in a motion which a right-wing union like Usdaw will have submitted after prodding from Ed Miliband's office.

Unite and other unions can and should seize the high ground.

They should submit motions insisting on "redistribution" for retired people, disabled people, and others; on the rich being taxed heavily to expand public services (run as public services, and not privatised and marketised); and on actual measures of "predistribution" like living wages, union rights, and bank nationalisation.

Hunt carries a health

By Todd Hamer

The promotion of Jeremy Hunt to the position of Health Secretary is a sign of the supreme confidence of David Cameron's administration and the contempt in which they hold the electorate. Jeremy Hunt is the personification of the glutton and venality of the capitalist class at this time of austerity.

Like the Health and Social Care Act itself, his appointment as Health Secretary only makes sense from the point of view of powerful corporate interests.

Educated in Charterhouse and Oxford University, he is one of the growing number of white, public school boys in the Cabinet. Throughout his career he has distinguished himself as a stooge of corporate interests.

Having failed as a marmalade exporter, he set up a PR company and then followed a natural progression into Tory politics.

CLASS WARRIOR

Hunt turned to politics as a bourgeois class warrior determined to use the power of government to the benefit of his class.

Since his time in office he has served them and empoised them well. While still a relatively fresh face in Parliament, Hunt managed to get involved in the MP expenses scandal and then later in a tax dodging scheme.

His real career break came after he told Chancellor George Osborne of his support for Rupert Murdoch's attempt to take over BSkyB. He was quickly promoted to oversee the BSkyB bid and did all he could to appease the world's largest media tycoon.

Hunt's conduct throughout this affair was very far from the free market principles that he prescribes for the NHS. When Murdoch's operation turned out to be full of phone-hacking sociopaths, Hunt's career looked likely to collapse.

However, like RBS, Hunt was "too big to fail". If Hunt was going to be blamed for his slavish devotion to Murdoch then Cameron's future would also be in question. So he was allowed to stay. His recent promotion is David Cameron giving

two fingers to everyone who believes in the NHS or, indeed, basic standards of human integrity.

RECORD

Hunt's record on health is alarming.

After the Murdoch fiasco, Hunt returned to his constituency to lobby on behalf of Richard Branson. NHS Surrey were deliberating as to whether or not to hand over seven hospitals and a number of community services to the Virgin Care Group.

NHS Surrey were stalling on the £650 million deal, because their risk register identified that such a massive transfer of management responsibility might put patients at risk. Hunt stepped in to speed up the deal. Under his leadership, it is likely that the whole NHS will follow Surrey's lead.

Unlike his predecessor Andrew Lansley, Hunt has been quite plain in his vision for the NHS. In 2005 he co-authored a book with the Orwellian title *Direct Democracy: Agenda for a New Model Party*, where he said: "We should fund patients, either through the tax system or by way of universal insurance, to purchase health care from the provider of their choice. The poor and unemployed would have their contributions supplemented or paid for by the state."

He is also in favour of privatised provision: "Our ambition should be to break down the barriers between private and

Social care White Paper: neglected

By Emma Burford

The long-awaited government White Paper on social care "Caring for our future" ducks the pivotal issue of funding.

Creating more confusion than clarity, the government has now officially agreed to the funding principles set out in the Dilnot Report (2011) whilst making no definite decisions. In particular, it ducked the issue of capping individual liability for care costs (Dilnot suggested a cap of £35,000 and £100,000 for those in residential care).

As early as 2015 the number of people over 60 may outnumber those under 14. Yet, alongside mental health and disability services, older adult services have always been a poor relation within the impoverished social care family. Older adults face increasing isolation and chaotic services, with under-trained workers on long shifts and low pay, leaving little opportunity for engagement. Basic care and support is rushed or delayed for long periods.

The White Paper proposes a number of superficially innovative ideas to tackle these challenges, but they are often undermined in practice or underpinned by hidden motives.

A key plan is to provide £200 million over five years, starting in 2013, to encourage providers to develop new accommodation options for older people. Leaving aside that the source of this funding is unclear, private care homes are less likely to meet minimum regulatory standards in areas such as privacy, hygiene, staff training and quality.

A testament to the disaster of privatisation was the collapse of Southern Cross, the UK's largest care home operator, in 2011, shunting tens of thousands of older adults towards disruption, confusion and increased health problems.

National standards will allow improved assessment of care — but rather than a person to help you with this, you get a

"compare the care market" website. Transition arrangements for service users moving from one local authority to another will be improved but this is underpinned by a desire to ensure proximity to family and shift the duty of care away from the state.

BIG SOCIETY

The "Big Society" crops up again in the concept of people caring for others to create a "bank of care" to draw on themselves later.

There's a welcome abolition of means testing for people on the end-of-life care register but this is often too little too late. "End-of-life" care only relates to the last 12 months of life, by which point life-long disadvantages and inequalities have taken their toll.

In February 2012 the National End of Life Care Intelligence Network reported that working-class people are more likely to die younger and with less control over where and how they die. This stems from a lack of access to resources throughout life; to lack of personal support at home; to an entire system based on undermining working-class people's sense of entitlement.

The White Paper also restates the government's commitment to personal budgets, making them a legal right by 2015.

Personal budgets can be a good way for people to have more choice and control over the services they receive. But too often they are a paper commitment, as workers are not given time or resources to plan collaboratively with service users and to ensure meaningful personalisation. Research shows that, in particular, older people are less likely than other groups to have raised expectations from personal budgeting, and are often anxious about planning and managing their own support.

If the cost of community care is greater than the cost of res-

warning

public provision, in effect denationalising the provision of health care in Britain."

In 2008 he endorsed a Tory pamphlet called *The Plan: Twelve Months to Renew Britain*, which said of the NHS: "Outcomes are poor, it costs too much and would be better broken up into an insurance based system."

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACT

Lansley's Health and Social Care Act is a dense, repetitive, obscurantist piece of legislation based on nearly a decade of study into how to privatise the NHS while pretending to be doing something else.

Cameron has now sacked the only person who can make sense of it. The job of deciphering the Act has fallen to an army of bureaucrats organised into no less than seven different layers of bureaucracy across a wide variety of new organisations. Hunt's only credential to lead this army is an ideological commitment to neoliberal dogma and the destruction of the health service.

So with nothing but his reputation for using public office to help billionaire bosses, he is set up to blunder and exacerbate the chaos that will rip through the NHS.

His first act as Health Secretary was to announce plans to sell off 912 specialist services for rare and uncommon conditions. This is, in fact, the third of three planned waves of sell-offs; the first (of community services) starts this month.

The specialist areas (due to be privatised in April 2013) are areas of exceptional brilliance where all the finest minds in the NHS work on the most complex medical problems. The loss of these services is part of Hunt's aim to create a rump service for the poor. When these services are under private control the best clinicians will also be lost to the NHS.

If the NHS risk register was flashing red on civil unrest and increased mortality rates before the Health and Social Care Act passed through Parliament, Cameron's appointment of Hunt has turned these risks into near certainties.

The labour movement must set out its own clear alternative.

ct for our future

idential care, choice goes out of the window. In just two months of 2011, 120,000 hospital days were used by older people who could have been elsewhere. Age UK and the Royal College of Nursing have warned that the new proposals could see the NHS flooded with tens of thousands of people who can't afford to pay for care at home.

Older people already contribute heavily to their care — with half total expenditure on older adult social care in 2005-7 provided by self-funding or assessed care charges. The government now plans to allow local authorities to charge, not just for the services they outsource, but also for the administrative and management fees of the outsourcing process.

"Caring for our future" is just another element in the drive to privatise social care and shift responsibility onto individuals and families. In a society that measures social value by contribution to the production of profit, older adults are disempowered and sidelined. They have limited access to advocacy and fewer clear rights as a group.

Older people's and "pensioners' action groups" have played a strong role in many local anti-cuts campaigns, but it is vital that social care workers organise alongside service users. As a result of older adults' often complex support needs, this area offers opportunities for organising in solidarity with health and NHS workers, if union members can force their bureaucratic leaders to move.

We need a coherent plan for a system based on high quality care, accessible to all on the basis of need, not ability to pay; support, training, and a living wage for care workers; and the rebuilding of public sector social services, bringing provision back "in-house", to improve accountability and the quality of care.

In contrast, "Caring for our future" is, as Jeremy Hughes of the Alzheimer's Society said, "not worth the paper it's written on".



Labour: rebuild the NHS!

LOBBY THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Sunday 30 September, 2.30pm

Manchester Central Convention Complex, Peter St, Manchester

Email: nhsliasion@yahoo.co.uk

tel: 07904 944 771 / web: labournhslobby.wordpress.com

Supporters include: Unite North West region, Unite Women's Committee, Merseyside Assoc of Trades Councils, Wirral Trades Council, Midlands RMT, Unite Manchester Community Branch, Liverpool Wavertree CLP, Wirral South CLP, Broxtowe CLP, London KONP, Newcastle KONP, Leeds KONP, Sheffield Save Our NHS, Labour Representation Committee

Transport from London: coach leaving RMT Unity House at 9.30am. To book a place (£15) email nhsliasion@yahoo.co.uk

Manchester

Save Trafford General!

The Save Trafford General Campaign has gathered more than 10,000 signatures on a petition to stop the run-down and closure of the hospital's A&E Department, the closure of Intensive Care and children's services and the ending of acute surgery.

Local people know that these cuts place the whole future of the hospital in doubt, and the campaign has attracted a lot of support. A meeting of Trafford Council in July voted unanimously to oppose the plans.

But there is still a huge pressure for the NHS to make these cuts, to "balance the books" and improve the finances of the Foundation Trust that took over the services in April this year.

NHS bosses are holding a series of "consultation meetings" over the summer and through to October: staged events with 40 minutes of being "talked at" by NHS managers saying "there's only one option".

Where the campaign can ensure a lot of people come

along and have their say the mood is very different though!

The campaign has started to link up with campaigners in other areas and hopes to share experiences and look at ways to fight back effectively.

● More details: www.savetraffordgeneral.com

Defend mental health services

In July service users affected by planned cuts in Manchester's mental health services took the Trust that runs them to court for failing to consult with them or to assess the impact the cuts would have on vulnerable people.

Rather than fight in court the Trust "agreed to reconsider its decision to carry out the community services review".

So far so good, but the Trust are still planning to cut 40 front line community post and to disband Assertive Outreach Teams who support more than 300 service users who are the hardest to engage. They plan to cut services by 20%.

Manchester Community and Mental Health Branch of Unison is campaigning against these cuts and has organised a meeting on Monday 24 September — "Manchester Mental Health Services in Crisis" — at 7pm at the Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, M1 6DD.

Why no British revolution?

By Dale Street

Why has Britain never had a “real” revolution — unlike, say, France, Italy, Mexico, Russia, China or Cuba? That’s the question asked by Frank McLynn in *The Road Not Taken: How Britain Narrowly Missed a Revolution*.

The result of his endeavours is a highly readable book. But not one which really gets to grips with the question he asks. In fact, on more than one occasion, it all becomes very confusing.

The English Revolution of the 1640s replaced feudal-absolutist rule by bourgeois rule, even if feudal elements such as the monarchy and the House of Lords later returned. In doing so, it achieved “monumental change,” to use McLynn’s expression, and should therefore surely count as a “true revolution”. For McLynn, however, it is another failed revolution, because the most radical elements — the Levellers and the Diggers — were defeated.

McLynn covers “seven clear revolutionary situations which did not, in the end, lead to revolution.” (In McLynn’s usage, “a revolution need not necessarily be in a leftward direction, provided it satisfies the criteria for monumental change.”)

In addition to the 1640s, the seven might-have-been-revolutions range from the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 and the rural uprising led by Jack Cade in 1450 through to the 1745 Jacobite uprising, the Chartists of the 1830s/40s, and the General Strike of 1926.

Those, indeed, did fail. Why?

It is certainly not because the potential for such a revolution has been sapped by a record of altruism, benevolence and paternalism on the part of the British ruling classes.

On the contrary — and this is what makes the book so readable — the ruling classes and their representatives are consistently shown up as duplicitous scoundrels, never happier than when grinding the faces of the poor and maintaining their grip on power through brute force and terror.

HENRY VIII

Richard II, monarch at the time of the Peasants’ Revolt, was “a devotee of cruel and unusual punishment” who “wallowed in the reign of terror he unleashed,” while Henry VIII, on the throne at the time of the Pilgrimage of Grace, was a “ruthless, single-minded, vengeful and terrifying tyrant” with a “maniacal thirst for blood”.

In more recent times, after the emergence of the modern working class as a social force, the ruling classes have continued their ancestors’ traditions. Between mid-1839 and early 1840 some 550 Chartist activists were imprisoned, some for a few weeks, and others for several years. Three of its leaders were handed down death sentences (which in 1840 still meant being hanged, drawn and quartered), albeit subsequently commuted to transportation for life.

During the General Strike Churchill boasted that the military had assembled enough artillery in London to kill every living soul in every street in the capital, and that troops had carte blanche to open fire. The specially recruited Civil Con-

stabulary Reserve was also told that any deaths which they might be responsible for would be treated as justifiable homicide.

In the course of the strike’s nine days there were around 4,000 arrests, more than 600 of them without a warrant. In Birmingham the entire strike committee was arrested, in Glasgow sentences of up to three months in prison were imposed for “impeding traffic”, and in Aberavon three strikers were each jailed for two months for being in possession of communist literature.

McLynn assumes that there are factors peculiar to Britain which explain why there has never been a “true revolution” in this country. He therefore ends up as a prisoner of his own question. He has to search for supposedly specific British reasons for defeat.

But three of the might-have-been-revolutions covered in the book occurred before Britain even existed.

If one dates Britain from the Treaty of Union of 1707, rather than the Union of the Crowns of 1603, one could add a fourth as well: the English Civil War. It is called the English Civil War, not the British Civil War, for a good reason.

Nor was there anything particularly British (or English) about the failure of the peasant uprisings covered by McLynn. Medieval and late-medieval peasant uprisings failed in all countries — most notably, and bloodily, in Germany — because the peasantry as a class was incapable of stamping its own authority on society.

As Engels, whom McLynn himself quotes, put it, the medieval peasantry was capable only of “communism nourished by fantasy”: they could point to the future, but not reach it. English peasants failed to carry out a “true revolution” because they were peasants, not because they were English (or incipiently British).

ENGLISH REVOLUTION

There was nothing peculiarly English/British about the defeat of the radicals in the 1640s. The most radical elements in later bourgeois revolutions (such as the French Revolution, or the European revolutions of 1848) likewise went down to defeat. But that was in the nature of those revolutions.

They were bourgeois revolutions which turned against the more radical plebeian elements once the latter had helped bring the bourgeoisie to power. And those radical elements were necessarily too weak to defeat the bourgeois counter-revolution to which they fell victim.

As Marx wrote of the Levellers: “Only if those revolutionary soldiers could have linked with a great mass movement of the people would it have been possible to set up a genuinely democratic republic. ... (But) the proletariat had not yet appeared on the historical scene. Since none of these necessary economic conditions yet existed, a Levellers’ government could have done little to change the march of events.”

In fact, if the English Revolution was not a “real” revolution because the most radical elements failed to take power, then, the French Revolution was not a “real” revolution either.

In relation to later might-have-been-revolutions — the

Chartists and the 1926 General Strike — McLynn does put forward credible reasons for their failure which are rooted in the particular history of Britain.

Capitalism developed earlier and over a longer period of time in England than in other countries. Unlike elsewhere, it was not the product of sudden social changes which, in turn, triggered violent social conflict. As McLynn puts it: “Britain developed earlier and faster than the continental countries; it had its civil war and ‘revolution’ earlier; it industrialised earlier; it embraced capitalism earlier; it solved its peasant problem earlier.”

This did not apply without qualification to Scotland. As Trotsky commented, in explaining why “the most radical elements” in the British labour movement were often natives of Scotland: “Scotland entered on the capitalist path later than England. A sharper turn in the life of the masses gave rise to a sharper political reaction.”

PREMATURE

The fact that England, and then post-1707 Britain, was the first country to strike out on the road of capitalist development was “bad news” for its proletariat, writes McLynn.

It meant that the working class came into conflict with the bourgeoisie before it had developed its own class ideology. Or, as Trotsky put it, writing of the failure of the Chartist movement: “The era of Chartism is immortal in that over the course of a decade it gives us in condensed and diagrammatic form the whole gamut of proletarian struggle — from petitions to parliament to armed insurrection. ... Chartism did not win a victory not because its methods were incorrect but because it appeared too soon. It was only an historical anticipation.”

The emergence of a labour movement in Britain before the development and spread of a set of ideas which would have enabled it to understand its position and role in society (i.e. Marxism) meant that that labour movement was ideologically shaped by hostile forces.

Its perspective, and in particular the perspective of its leaders, was not one of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the seizure of power by the working class. On the contrary, the unions — and, in later years, the Labour Party — were committed to bargaining within the system for a better deal. Armed (or, rather, disarmed) with such a perspective, it was only to be expected that the leaders of the 1926 General Strike would call it off at the first opportunity.

But even these insights into why there has not been a successful socialist revolution in Britain — the early development of British capitalism, and the early, pre-Marxism, emergence of a British working class — cannot save the book from itself.

LAST

McLynn writes: “1919 was probably the last date at which revolution could realistically have been attempted in Britain.”

The reason for this is: “After 1919 the dominance of the Labour Party on the left-centre of British politics gave the *coup de grace* to any lingering hope of revolution still entertained on the left.”

Even if one ignores the almost magical powers attributed by McLynn to the Labour Party as an obstacle to successful revolution, this is a particularly strange argument. The central thesis in his book is that a “real” revolution was never really on the cards at any point in time in Britain (or England) anyway. So why suddenly introduce a “cut-off date” of 1919, and blame the Labour Party for putting an end to any “lingering hope” of a revolution?

In any case, given his own hostility to revolutions in general, McLynn should surely congratulate the Labour Party for being “counter-revolutionary” and putting revolution, in his words, “beyond the pale”.

Revolutions, he writes, are bad things: “Everyone who has studied revolutions must surely be depressed by the disappointing outcomes.” It is a “serious error” to “romanticise revolution”, especially given their propensity to “kill millions of recalcitrants who refuse to adapt.”

And a revolution in Britain today, according to McLynn, is neither possible nor necessary: “No-one could seriously claim that today’s citizens face the spectre of starvation and therefore have no choice but to pick up the cudgels or raise the barricades.”

In the introduction to his book McLynn writes: “I am not a Marxist, nor even a socialist, but I do have an instinctive sympathy for the underdog, and this has informed my work; the villains tend to be members of the elite or their minions.”

His words are also a fair summation of the book itself. Not Marxist. Not socialist. But a good read if you want to be reminded of the vileness of the English and British ruling classes over the ages.

The real reason?

The Left

By James O’Leary



On 31 August sitting Socialist Party (SP) TD (Irish MP) Clare Daly resigned from the organisation. She will keep her seat as a member of the United Left Alliance (ULA).

In a statement posted on its website, the SP is adamant that Daly’s public support for tax-cheat TD Mick Wallace was at the centre of their differences. Daly, on the other hand, cited political differences with the SP, announcing that “the potential of the ULA has not been fully realised and it is now time that the component organisations prioritised the building of the ULA”.

Daly’s criticism that there has been a lack of emphasis on building the ULA is reasonable. Despite the profile of the Household Tax Campaign, the ULA has so far failed to take an identity that transcends the largest of its component groups, the SP and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

However, it is not impossible that Clare Daly has manu-

factured these differences after the event. SP leader Joe Higgins declares on his website that “the many discussions that took place between Clare Daly and leading party members in June and July were all focused on the question of her political support for Mick Wallace. Clare Daly simply did not raise any points relating to a greater emphasis on the ULA in recent months”.

Wallace, a property developer, was forced to come to a €2.1m settlement after he admitted that his company had under-declared VAT to the tune of €1.4m. Daly has not only refused to break with him but has continued sitting with him in parliament, even after the “Technical Group” of independent TDs to which Wallace belonged asked him to resign from the group. A failure to condemn Wallace’s behaviour is inappropriate for anyone publicly representing a socialist organisation.

James P Cannon used to say that in politics there were often two reasons: a good reason and the real reason. The contemporary applicability of this insight and the fact that we do not have information beyond the contradictory public statements of the SP and Clare Daly reflects badly on honest accounting in the socialist movement. More than this, it has allowed the right-wing press to distract from the real issues at the expense of the Irish left.

We do not know for certain whether the political differences cited by Daly are more apparent than real, or what went on within the internal organisational structures of the SP.

What we do know is that Daly continued to go out of her way to support a tax evading capitalist. Along with the SP, we believe this to be wrong.

A discussion among Marxists

Workers' Liberty has recently begun discussions with a Marxist group active in Turkey, Marksist Tutum [Marxist Attitude]. We made contact with Marksist Tutum thanks to the help of the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency. Martin Thomas reviews their political literature.

The Marksist Tutum website was started in 2002; the journal has been published since 2005. Since 2006 its supporters have been active in developing a wider workers' association in Turkey called UID-DER (the Association of International Workers' Solidarity).

The "pre-history" of Marksist Tutum is longer. It goes back to the studies and activities of a small group of comrades who had first become politically active in the Turkish Workers' Party, a legal front organisation promoted by the Turkish Communist Party, and who gradually developed their own Marxist ideas in critique of Stalinist ideologies.

Some of the basic documents of Marksist Tutum date back to the early 1990s. Many of them are available in English on the Marksist Tutum website, <http://en.marksist.net/>. A longer version of this discussion of those documents is at bit.ly/m-tutum.

Marksist Tutum define the basic traditions they draw on as we do:

"Marx and Engels' efforts to organise the Communist League, and those links that form the revolutionary chain ever since the First International; the Bolshevik Party in Lenin's time, the Third International in the period of first four congresses, the Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) led by Trotsky who waged a struggle against Stalinism after Lenin's death, and subsequently the International Left Opposition (International Communist League) and the general ideological-political legacy of the Fourth International..."

They reaffirm the centrality of building a revolutionary Marxist organisation which strives unequivocally for political clarity. Discussions with them indicate that they orient to workplaces, to working-class milieus, and to working-class organisations.

For most of the twentieth century, the framework for left-wing politics was set by a world confrontation between the big capitalist powers and despotic states calling themselves socialist or communist. As Marksist Tutum put it: "Almost all left-wing activists aligned themselves with the Stalinist states, though sometimes adding harsh criticism. While putting an end to the power of the working class, Stalinism entirely distorted the worldview of the working class, i.e. Marxism. And the order of the bureaucracy has been theorised as 'socialism' for long years".

Their conclusion on states like the old USSR or Mao's China is the same as ours.

DESPOTIC

"Such regimes are not a new mode of production surpassing capitalism in the process of historical evolution of human societies [...] they cannot be characterised as 'post-capitalist societies' in this sense.

"The despotic-bureaucratic regime is a genuine monstrosity if it is considered from the standpoint of the historical epoch and conditions in which it exists. A despotic-bureaucratic regime surrounded by the world capitalism in the age of modern industry is a socio-economic phenomenon which has no future with its peculiar (sui generis) characteristic".

"There is an exploitation of surplus-labour and these regimes belong to the set of exploitative societies".

"There is no rational point in appraising such a labour regime [relative job security in some Stalinist states] as a 'historical gain', in which the working class is deprived of all rights of union, strike etc. in the face of an alienated state".

Like us, Marksist Tutum argue that the trajectory of Trotsky's repeatedly-reworked analyses of the Stalinist USSR was towards recognising that the bureaucracy had become much more than a bureaucracy — in fact, an exploitative ruling class — and that the most logical continuation of Trotsky's approach in the light of the facts in the years after his death was to recognise that.

From the earliest years of our own tendency, when we concerned ourselves with trying to define a working-class politics for Ireland emancipated from the nationalist conventional wisdoms, but more and more in recent decades, we have found it important to understand that a division of the world into "imperialist states" and "colonies" (or "semi-colonies", or "neo-colonies") no longer has even the relative validity it had in the era of the great colonial empires.

Marksist Tutum registers the same shift. "Relations of inequality in the capitalist world are still being presented as a kind of 'neo-colonialism'", i.e. as a product of political overlordship, whereas in fact the inequalities stem from capitalist market relations. "Countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Turkey [are described] as semi-colonies or neo-

"Sub-imperialist" Turkey deploys troops on border with Syria

colonies" when in fact they are "sub-imperialist", "conduct[ing] directly expansionist relations in [their] own regions" (spheres of influence, investments, unequal trade relations, etc.).

"It is... a caricature of Marxism not to take the demand of the right of nations to self-determination in a clearest way as [the right to] 'political independence, the right to establish a separate state' and think that economic independence can also be achieved by a national liberation struggle".

"Today the wars provoked by the countries which strive to become imperialist (for example, Turkey, Greece, Iran or Iraq) with the aim of creating their sphere of influence are also unjust wars. The correct attitude towards such wars cannot be to support one's 'own' bourgeoisie against the other's and to wage a 'national' war in the same front with it".

Another result of the ideological operation of translating the democratic right of nations to self-determination into a struggle for "economic independence" is that the democratic demand itself is blurred over. Marksist Tutum entitle one of their documents: "Underestimation of Democratic Demands: An erroneous political tendency within Marxist movement still encountered". Indeed! But, as Lenin declared: "A proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution..."

EUROPEAN UNION

Marksist Tutum's position on the debate about Turkey joining or not joining the EU is the same as the position which our tendency took on the debate about Britain joining the EU.

Marksist Tutum declares that Marxists cannot be like "the nationalist bourgeois or petty-bourgeois left-wingers, working to turn back the wheel of history". But we do not say "yes" to endorse the projects of the bourgeoisie. "The debate on EU accession [is] essentially a domestic issue of the bourgeoisie. In this discussion, in 'yes' or 'no' format, we do not have to take sides". Our answer is to fight for working-class unity across the borders whatever the details of the negotiations between the bourgeoisies.

We note with interest Marksist Tutum's analysis of the development of Turkish capitalism, on which we are not qualified to offer an independent opinion.

"The fundamental weakness of the great majority of the left in Turkey is a conception of anti-imperialism without an anti-capitalist content. That is why the left in Turkey considered Kemal's movement as really anti-imperialist for years, and even today there is sympathy for Kemalism among the left..."

"Problems such as the liquidation of the military tutelage regime and democratisation of Turkish political landscape have become items on the agenda of big capital in connection with its drive for going international and economic ex-

igencies... The first and second terms of AKP governments seem to constitute a new period in which these problems have started to be solved...

"AKP is not the representative or protector of the working masses but a bourgeois party proper. And a genuine party of big capital voicing the interests of nascent groups of capital thrived on the basis of a wild exploitation of the working class..."

"AKP and its milieu are now proud of the process of Turkey's transformation into a sub-imperialist power ceasing to be a peripheral country. As a matter of fact this process has actually begun in the Özal period..."

Marksist Tutum describes the Islamic regime in Iran as "fascist", and writes of the "sometimes even fascist reactionary character" of Islamist movements; but reckons the AKP, by contrast, to be "a bourgeois party proper". It argues that much "bourgeois secularist" agitation in Turkey about the supposed danger of Turkey becoming "another Iran" is manufactured to serve the interests tied to the old Kemalist-military structures.

ISRAEL

The Marksist Tutum document, "The Marxist Approach to the Issue of Palestine", has not been translated into English, and an approximate translation using web services does not make its conclusions clear.

From discussions with Marksist Tutum, however, it seems we have broad agreement in demanding the right to establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel: democratic self-determination for both nations in conflict.

From the documents, and from conversations, it seems that two issues to which we come from different angles, and where more discussion is needed, are tradition and organisation.

What Marksist Tutum writes seems to us to underestimate the degree to which one generation learns from another.

For example, Marksist Tutum writes that the Second International had "no continuity" with the first. We think that untrue. Whole organisations, like the German socialist movement, and leading individuals (Engels, Bebel, Liebknecht, Lafargue, Guesde...) created continuity.

Most of the parties of the Second International collapsed politically by voting for war credits in 1914. But not all did. And in all the major parties that did vote for war credits, there were oppositions which did not fall from the sky but had been shaped and formed by the best elements of the work of the Second International.

"The Third International is not a continuation of the Second International"? Again, hardly true. It is true that "the Third International rested upon the critique of the Second International's experience", but it was a critique carried out by activists trained and educated by the Second International.

We agree with Marxist Tutum that the “orthodox” successors of Trotsky started to make grievous and systematic errors within a very short time of his death. But we believe we have significant things to learn even from them; and certainly from the “heterodox” Trotskyists, Shachtman, Draper, and others, who regarded themselves as part of the Fourth International movement until 1948 at least.

Marxist Tutum declares:

“Compared to Lenin, there are many weak points of Trotsky in the field of organisation. As a matter of fact, Trotsky could not completely free himself from the Menshevik conception of organisation...”

Specifically, Marxist Tutum raise doubts about Trotsky’s advocacy of a labour party based on the unions in the United States in the later 1930s.

They refer to projects for a “mass workers’ party” in Turkey, argue that these “blur the conception of the working class party and inherently contain a tendency towards building a bourgeois workers’ party” and advocate “a principled and distanced attitude”.

We are not qualified to judge on the specific case in Turkey. It is certainly true that Trotsky’s argument on the call for a labour party based on the unions in the USA in the later 1930s can be used, harmfully, as a “frozen template”.

But, for example, we believe that the Greek Trotskyists who in Syriza today combine their polemics with striving to build Syriza into a mass party are on the right lines.

Many would-be Trotskyist groups today have, in our view, wrong ideas of what a revolutionary organisation should be, and how to build it. Trotsky is not to blame for that.

The International Marxist Tendency, centred around Socialist Appeal, proclaims it as a universal iron law that “when [workers] move into action they inevitably express themselves through the traditional mass organizations. Ted Grant developed and always stressed this law which has been confirmed by historical experience”.

It deduces, for example, in Britain, that all Marxist activity is mere preparation for an inevitable left-wing mass surge into the Labour Party. Almost everywhere in the world it positions its activists as “entrists” groups in whatever approximation it can find to the “traditional mass organisation of the working class” (even if the approximation is hardly an approximation at all, as with the PPP in Pakistan).

The main ideologues of the network centred on the NPA in France (Fourth International) propose, almost as a law, that the next step everywhere is to build “broad left parties to the left of social democracy”. This scheme has led them into a role in parties like the Workers’ Party in Brazil, and Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, more like advisers than revolutionary polemicists.

Trotsky himself, after coming over to Bolshevism in 1917, produced the best and richest explanations of what Bolshevism in party-building really is.

Isaac Deutscher, in *The Prophet Armed*, expounds the difference between the newspaper *Pravda* which Trotsky edited from Vienna from 1908 to 1913 and the Bolshevik press in a way which sums up Trotsky’s pre-Bolshevik errors on party-building.

“On the whole, *Pravda* was not one of Trotsky’s great journalistic ventures. He intended to address himself to ‘plain workers’ rather than to politically-minded party men, and to ‘serve not to lead’ his readers. *Pravda*’s plain language and

the fact that it preached the unity of the party secured to it a certain popularity but no lasting political influence.

“Those who state the case for a faction or group usually involve themselves in more or less complicated argument and address the upper and medium layers of their movement rather than the rank and file. Those who say, on the other hand, that, regardless of any differences, the party ought to close its ranks have, as Trotsky had, a simple case, easy to explain and sure of appeal.

“But more often than not this appeal is superficial. Their opponents who win the cadres of a party for their more involved arguments are likely eventually to obtain the hearing of the rank and file as well; the cadres carry their argument, in simplified form, deeper down.

“Trotsky’s calls for the solidarity of all socialists were for the moment applauded by many — even the Bolsheviks in Petersburg reprinted his *Pravda*. But the same people who now applauded the call were eventually to disregard it, to follow the one or the other faction, and to leave the preacher of unity isolated.

“Apart from this, there was in Trotsky’s popular posture, in his emphasis on plain talk and his promise to ‘serve not to lead’, more than a touch of demagoguery, for the politician, especially the revolutionary, best serves those who listen to him by leading them”.

Deutscher puts it well. His source for those ideas which he puts so well will have been articles by Trotsky from the 1930s, notably *What Is A Mass Paper?*

Trotsky’s documents and speeches collected in *The First Five Years of the Communist International; The New Course; Lessons of October; Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch*; and in many writings of the 1930s about building revolutionary organisations from small nuclei, in hostile conditions and amid political tumult, are the richest resource for us to learn about party-building.

TROTSKY

Trotsky’s argument in the late 1930s for agitating for a mass workers’ party based on the trade unions in the USA seems to us sound.

Where the mass unions (the CIO) were growing and radicalising, Trotsky explained:

“We cannot yet advocate in the unions support for the SWP [the Trotskyist organisation]. Why? Because we are too weak. And we can’t say to the workers: Wait till we become more authoritative, more powerful. We must intervene in the movement as it is...”

“I will not say that the labor party is a revolutionary party, but that we will do everything to make it possible. At every meeting I will say: I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying now to create a big workers’ party. I will help you but I propose that you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions. I begin with this...”

We believe, with Plekhanov, that “the sole purpose and the direct and sacred duty of the Socialists is the promotion of the growth of the class consciousness of the proletariat”, and therefore political clarity is paramount. We aim, in Trotsky’s words, “to base our program on the logic of the class struggle”.

Since the logic of the class struggle can be investigated

only by activity and discussion, democracy is a political necessity for a revolutionary organisation.

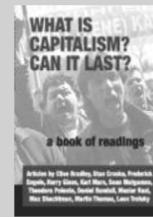
It is democracy regulated by a practical purpose: deciding on and carrying through clear-cut politics, and learning from experience. Unlike with discussion circles, debates are organised to reach a clear decision and mobilise the organisation to carry it through collectively and in a disciplined way. The time for debate before a decision is made should vary according to the issue. Some issues are and should be dealt with by an immediate decision by an elected leading committee; others may require long and wide discussion before a decision.

After the decision, a minority which disagrees should go slow for a while on the debate. It should wait for experience to provide new data on which to re-raise the debate. But it should not be obliged to disband, or to cease organising. It can and should continue to discuss its distinctive ideas so long as it does that in a way which does not damage the collective mobilisation to carry through the majority decision.

Democracy includes the right of opposition groups inside the revolutionary organisation to organise at all times, and not just in prescribed pre-conference periods. It includes the right and in fact the duty of individual activists always to be honest about their ideas. They should cooperate with the majority line in public activity, but they should not pretend to agree with it where they don’t. They should not hide their true views. As a general rule debates should be carried in our public press as well as internally

We believe our ideas are in line with the arguments and the practice of Lenin and Trotsky.

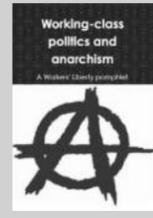
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Key ally of Trotsky in Spain

Our Movement

By Micheál MacEoin



Grandizo Munis (1912-1989) was one of the earliest Spanish Trotskyists.

Born Manuel Fernandez Grandizo in Larena, Estremadura, Munis joined Izquierda Comunista (ICE), the Spanish section of Trotsky’s International Left Opposition at its conference in Liege in Belgium in February 1930.

The majority in ICE, led by Andrés Nin, soon came into conflict with Trotsky over the section’s semi-detached relationship with the rest of the International Left Opposition (ILO) and its positive attitude towards the “Right Oppositionist” Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (BOC).

These differences erupted into a full-scale split when, in 1934, Nin and the ICE majority opposed the ILO’s tactic of entry into the mass social-democratic parties, known as the “French Turn” because it was modelled on the entry of the French Trotskyists into the French Socialist Party (SFIO) after fascist riots brought down the Daladier government on 7 February.

Munis sided with Trotsky and the ILO against Nin, and joined the youth section of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) in 1935. He opposed the subsequent liquidation of

the ICE into the Partido Obrero Unificacion de Marxista (POUM), a centrist organisation formed by the merger of Nin’s group and the BOC.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, Munis became the leader of the Spanish Trotskyist organisation, the Bolshevik-Leninists. The group opposed the Popular Front and sought to influence the rank-and-file of the POUM, despite attempts by the POUM’s leadership to exclude the Trotskyists. It also took part in the “May Days” in 1937 along with the anarchist Friends of Durruti organisation, and published a newspaper called *La Voz Leninista*, proposing a revolutionary programme against the Stalinists and bourgeois republicans.

The Bolshevik-Leninist group, however, was infiltrated by a GPU spy, Leon Narvitch, and after Narvitch was killed by a POUM squad avenging the murder of Andrés Nin by the Stalinists, Munis and his group were arrested. They were accused of the murder, and of plots to murder leading Republican politicians. After torture and Munis’s simulated execution, a trial date was set for 29 January 1939 in Barcelona.

Three days before the trial was due to begin, Franco’s troops entered the Catalan capital and Munis escaped amidst the chaos of the evacuation. Fleeing to Mexico via France, he reconstituted the Spanish section in exile and met Trotsky in the spring of 1940. Munis attended the Emergency Congress of the Fourth International in New York in April of that year, and returned to Mexico to speak at Trotsky’s funeral in August.

Munis collaborated closely with Trotsky’s wife Natalia Sedova in denouncing the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) for their de facto support for the Red Army’s occupation of eastern Europe in 1944-5.

In a 1945 article called “Defence of the Soviet Union and Revolutionary Tactics”, Munis wrote that the Fourth International’s original position of “unconditional defence of the Soviet Union” must be abandoned: “The only criterion must be the revolutionary advance of the proletariat and the peasants in the territories coveted by the bureaucracy... The slogan ‘an end to the Nazi occupation’ must be complemented with another one: ‘an end to the Stalinist occupation.’”

At the Second Congress of the Fourth International in 1948, Munis sided with Max Shachtman’s Workers’ Party and with Natalia Sedova against the “orthodox Trotskyists”.

In 1951 Munis returned to Spain to attempt to organise in the underground following the Barcelona tramway strike. He was arrested the following year and imprisoned until 1957. Basing himself in Paris, Munis began to drift away from Trotskyism, and by the 1970s organised his followers in several countries into a small left-communist international called the Revolutionary Workers’ Ferment.

Munis was a brave and talented militant who raised the banner of international socialism high in the most adverse of circumstances.

A witness to and participant in one of the 20th century’s most important revolutionary struggles, Munis is a true hero of our movement.

Teachers' unions launch joint fight

By Patrick Murphy,
NUT Executive (pc)

On Friday 7 September, the National Union of Teachers announced the result of its ballot on industrial action over a whole range of attacks on including excessive workload, pay, and cuts.

There was a 93% vote for action short of strike action and a 83.4% vote for strikes. The aim is to force the government to end its pay freeze, abandon regional pay, and agree an acceptable contract which reduces teacher workload. On Monday 10 September, the union announced that the action short of strike action will start on 26 September. The campaign is being conducted jointly with the NASUWT, the other large teachers' union in England and Wales.

The overwhelming support for both forms of action is impressive given the confusion and demoralisation sown by the failure to build on last year's huge pension strikes. Also positive is the action instructions issued by the

NUT to all members this week. They empower members to refuse a whole set of demands from managers covering all the key workload pressures such as observations, meetings, cover and the submission of planning.

Also they point to an element of workers' control of the job by instructing members to "refuse to implement any existing or new management-led policies and working practices which have not been workload-assessed and agreed by the NUT".

ACTIVISTS

Activists in schools and in NUT branches should work to implement this action on the widest possible scale.

The first step should be a meeting in each school, ideally called by the NUT and NASUWT reps, to discuss which of the list of 25 instructions most apply and how they intend to implement them. Similar meetings should be held for reps across divisions and associations (branches). We should try to win agreements from

school managements and local authorities to working practices and conditions acceptable to members in schools.

Where there is any victimisation of members for taking any of the action it is crucial that we argue for a move to strike action as soon as possible. In fact, where an employer persists in trying to frustrate the action both unions have indicated they would support escalation to strike action in any school without the need for a further ballot.

The possibility of escalating to national strike action will depend to a significant extent on the level of engagement in this action. The NUT action instructions are headed "Phase 1". "Phase 2" is the move to national strike action which is planned if there is no indication from government that they will meet the unions' demands.

This, after all, is a dispute with the Secretary of State, who has the power to impose an improved contract on all schools including academies and to lift the pay freeze and

abandon regional pay. The government needs to feel the action, not simply hear of it from disgruntled headteachers.

It would have helped that strategy if the two unions had announced a date for strike action as part of the launch this campaign. It is not a particularly hopeful sign that it proved impossible to do that.

WORRYING

More worrying, though sadly not surprising, is the absence of any reference to a return to strikes to oppose the pension proposals.

The position of the two main teacher unions is now quite complicated.

The NUT did not need to include pensions in this latest strike ballot as the ballot which delivered support for strike action in June and November 2011 remains valid.

The NASUWT already had a ballot to sanction strike and non-strike action on pensions and the other conditions of service issues. This latest NUT ballot means that both

unions are in the same place in terms of the ability to take various forms of action to resist a wide range of attacks. The danger contained in this is that the specific issue of pensions gets lost in the plethora of other issues.

It is still more than possible for these two unions to defeat the proposals to make teachers work until 68 and pay more for a worse pension. Together they represent over 85% of all teachers in England and Wales and they now have a legal mandate for discontinuous strike action.

All the evidence shows that members of each union are much more confident about taking action when the other is called out too. It isn't the law, the willingness of teachers, or the lack of industrial muscle that prevent us defeating the appalling pension changes. It is now down to the union leaderships to call and co-ordinate renewed strike action on pensions.

They should do it now on the basis of their own campaign slogan that "68 is too late".



More rail cleaners join pay fights

By Ira Berkovic

Cleaning workers on East Coast and London Midland rail routes became the latest cleaners to launch strikes for higher pay when they walked out on Monday 10 September.

The cleaners work for contractor ISS, and are paid marginally above the minimum wage (between 42p and £1.42 more). Cleaners at depots in Northampton, Bletchley, and King's Heath (which are all operated by London Midland) have already struck for 24 hours. The workers have not received a pay increase for three years, and are demanding a living wage.

Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT), said:

"Our members at ISS on the London Midland contract have already staged a rock-solid stoppage at three depots, and they will be joined on September 10 by workers on the East Coast contract where the feeling is running so high that only one vote was cast against taking action.

"ISS should take note of the clear anger of its staff and cough up a decent pay offer, and East Coast and London Midland should get their heads out of the sand and recognise their own responsibility to make sure it happens – or better still bring the contracts back in-house."

RMT Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley was arrested on an East Coast cleaners' picket line at Kings Cross station in London after he intervened to question the unexplained harassment and detention of pickets by the police.

He was held for five hours, but not charged.

Yorkshire health workers vote to strike

By a health worker

Admin and Clerical staff at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, which covers Wakefield (Pinderfields), Pontefract, and Dewsbury hospitals, have voted by 95% to strike and by 98% for industrial action short of a strike against the redundancies and pay cuts.

Alongside most other hospitals, the Trust is carrying out a workforce review including proposals for extensive downbanding (workers being de-

moted to a lower pay grade). In this case between 30 and 40 staff are facing compulsory redundancy and up to 200 staff face downbanding. This means pay cuts of £1,600 to £2,800.

The Unison branch, which is led by left-wingers and has a good record of fighting cuts and redundancies, has held members' meetings across all sites, mobilised members for a day of protest in August and is building its membership in the sections significantly.

The overwhelming vote for action shows the strength of feeling about these attacks amongst a predominantly low-paid female workforce.

Combatting the blacklist

By Clarke Benitez

Trade unions are stepping up their legal action over the employers' blacklist in the construction industry.

Construction union UCATT is taking a case to the European Court of Human Rights which will argue that the government's failure to outlaw blacklisting breached Articles 11 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantee the freedom of association and protection from discrimination.

The GMB union is demanding that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) immediately informs blacklisted workers of their

status, claiming that so far, only 194 of more than 3,000 workers whose names appear on the list have been notified.

The blacklist was first discovered in 2009. 44 construction companies were involved. It has since come to light that the information it contained could only have been obtained through the collusion of state bodies, suggesting government complicity in the blacklisting practises.

The GMB is also arguing for blacklisting companies to have public sector contracts cancelled, and for no new contracts to be awarded. Currently, blacklisting companies hold public sector contracts totalling £15 billion.

Government u-turn on compensation cuts

The government has backed down from plans to restrict eligibility to criminal injury compensation.

Their cuts would have made those claiming compensation related to the consequences of railways trespass (for example, drivers traumatised by suicide attempts) ineligible.

A motion to the TUC Disabled Workers' Conference from rail union RMT highlighted the issue, and trade union lawyers have been involved in the lobbying that forced the climb-down.

Strike threat at Birmingham airport

By Darren Bedford

Unite says it is "making preparations" for an industrial action ballot of its members at Birmingham Airport after they rejected their bosses' latest contract offer.

The offer included a 2.5 per cent pay increase, and a one-off non-consolidated payment of £150. Prior to the offer, workers' pay has been frozen since 2009, since when the retail price index (RPI) has leapt 13%.

Workers have also faced attacks on terms and conditions and their pension schemes. Bosses are now also proposing changes to shift patterns.

New routes at the airport have meant an increase in passengers, so the attacks come against the backdrop

of an increased workload for staff. Unite's most recent consultative ballot on the offer returned a 76.5% vote against.

Regional Officer Peter Coulson said: "Birmingham airport is taking off but management have grounded their workers' pay. Staff have endured years of pay freezes and to make matters worse their pensions and conditions have been slashed. Unite has even proposed third party intervention from Acas to assist in reaching an agreement in the negotiations but even this has been decisively refused by the airport. Our members' patience is running out.

"The airport is forcing a dispute and we have no option but to prepare for an industrial action ballot."

Cleaners at the Société Générale bank demonstrated on Thursday 6 September to protest management plans to cut their hours in half, leading to a drastic pay cut. Union pressure has forced management to agree a substantial wage increase to the London Living Wage of £8.30 an hour, but the increase will be almost meaningless if bosses force through their cuts.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Stop deportations at London Metropolitan

By Bob Sutton

Late on the evening of Wednesday 29 August, the UK Border Agency (UKBA) announced that London Metropolitan University was losing its "highly trusted sponsor" status.

This means that in the eyes of UKBA, being a London Met student no longer makes you eligible to stay in Britain on a student visa.

The right of the 2,600 non-EU students at London Met to remain in country has been stripped away with the stroke of a pen — the single biggest expulsion since Edward I's "Edict of Expulsion" which kicked out the Jews in 1290.

The basic drive behind this unprecedented assault on international students in higher education is the government's racist immigration policy. For the past two years the UKBA have

been conducting a drive to "clean up" the numerous private language colleges which are seen as the "weak link" in Britain's border regime. Hundreds of people have been deported or forced underground. This is the first time that such methods have been applied to a public university on this scale.

ATTACK

This attack goes hand in hand with the removal of Tier 1, the Post Study Work Visa, and the increasingly inhumane treatment that people who come here face at the hands of the Border Agency.

It is also no accident that all this has taken place at London Met. Over the past 10 years the university has been used as a testing ground for cuts and privatisation in higher education.

Fight for Sites

Thursday 20 September, 7.30pm, Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial Street, London E1

Traveller Solidarity Network launch of a campaign to challenge local and national Government, bailiff companies and the media, who together construct a cycle of homelessness, evictions and racism for travellers.

Plus preparation for a mass action on 19 October, the first anniversary of the Dale Farm eviction.

travellersolidarity.org

The administrative mess which the UKBA have used as a premise to revoke the licence is a result of a botched merger in 2002.

When the new funding arrangements for Home/EU students were introduced in 2010, LMU announced its course provision would be cut by 70%.

This is a University which the government was already prepared to see go to the wall and many fear the £30 million lost in inter-

national fees will be used to justify further cuts.

WORKING-CLASS

The "British" student intake is dominated by working-class people from London, with more Black and Minority Ethnicity students than the whole of the Russell Group of "top" universities combined.

The response of the university management has been to wash their hands of the international students. They are refusing to enrol or grant library cards for the new term. The UCU and Unison branches and defying this and continue to help the students. As it stands, students still have the right to be in the UK. This is going to expire after a statutory 60-period after notice is given. It currently looks like this will be on 1 December.

Unfortunately international students are being positively distinguished by many in the press, politicians, university management and even the NUS as "good" migrants who serve as cash-cows for the British economy, as opposed to "bad" migrants.

We need a campaign which is clear about opposing the Coalition's whole project for smashing up public education and repressing immigrant communities.

TUC Congress says: take over the banks!

By Darren Bedford

TUC Congress passed a resolution calling for the public ownership of the banking system — the first sign of politics at the otherwise consensual gathering.

The resolution, proposed by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), argued that the chaos created by the major banks and financial institutions "should be ended through full public ownership of the sector and the creation of a publicly owned banking service, democratically and accountably managed".

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary told Congress: "The failure of the banks is not simply about regulation, or lack of regulation. The problem is with ownership. Not just shareholder ownership, but private ownership of the banks. And we think the answer is for public ownership and democratic control of the banks. That's the argument our movement needs to make in the period ahead."

The resolution was supported by the big unions including Unite, which organises the most bank workers. It was opposed by some unions led by right wingers such as Prospect, and a handful of others (although only Accord, a small finance union spoke in the debate against the resolution).

The TUC general council recommended voting for the resolution, although their significant reservations suggested they had only recommended acceptance for fear of not being able to carry the vote against. Outgoing TUC general secretary Brendan Barber

spent most of his speech criticising the call for public ownership, firstly on the grounds that it would upset banks close to the unions like the Unity Bank and the Cooperative, and second because of the cost. A statement from the general council talked about the need for "diversity" in banking — TUC code for more competition and a profitable, capitalist, banking system.

Wrack also argued that more regulation or a break-up of the banks would not make them operate in the interests of the wider economy, as their main objective would still be to make profits for their shareholders and bonuses for their top executives. He said the answer is public ownership and democratic control.

The labour movement has a big opportunity to raise the level of debate on the reasons for the crisis and what to do about it, putting basic socialist arguments for collectivism and democracy against neoliberal plans from both the Con-Dems and New Labourites.

The debate is clearly not finished within the labour movement, and the passing of one resolution at TUC congress is a largely symbolic first step. But it could create an opening with the unions and the Labour Party to raise the idea of public ownership not just for banking, but for wider areas such as energy, transport, and communications.

It is a debate socialists should join with relish.

• For more from TUC Congress, see page 5

Save the Women's Library!

By Esther Townsend

The fight save the Women's Library (based at London Met) is stepping up.

The fate of the collection will be decided at a meeting on 13 September. Institutions have been asked to bid for the collection. That decision will be ratified by the London Met Board of Governors on 27 September.

The campaign demands:

1. Keep this unique collection in its historic and purpose built home in East London
2. The collection stays intact and accessible to all
3. The library must retain its expert workers.

The Women's Library is not just an archive. It also does a huge amount of excellent community outreach, acting as a hub for local people, school students and anyone interested in issues facing women today.

The London School of Economics (LSE) is now the only bidder. Dr Laura Schwartz, Assistant Professor of Modern British History at the University of Warwick — a previous bidder which planned to keep the collection in its current building funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund — said:

"One of the contributing factors (not the only one) as to why [Warwick] pulled out of the bidding

process as the only bidder willing to keep the building open, was because London Met suddenly stopped talking about 'transfer' of the building and started asking for 'rent'. The goal posts appear to have changed during the bidding process."

The details of the bid are "confidential", but recent developments at LSE indicate they would move the library (there is no obligation to maintain its current location).

The Save the Women's Library Campaign is calling for the bidding process to be re-opened.

A rally has been called for 22 September.

• savethewomenslibrary.blogspot.co.uk

Chicago teachers strike

Teachers in Chicago, Illinois, have launched their first strike for 25 years as they take on city mayor Rahm Emanuel over a raft of issues including potential job losses, changes to healthcare benefits, pay, and classroom conditions.

The first day of the strike, on Monday 10 September, saw 434 of the city's 578 schools shut completely, with the re-

maining 144 only opening for part of the day.

The teachers' union, the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU), is led by the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), a radical rank-and-file body which has fought for union democracy and militant industrial strategy.

For more on the dispute, see the live blog from US revolutionary socialist group Solidarity at tinyurl.com/ctustrike