

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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NHS cuts fight**
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China today
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Unite workers across the borders

EUROPE IN REVOLT



Greek unions staged a 48-hour general strike on 6-7 November against the government's latest austerity package

Four countries strike on 14 November see page 5

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!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

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Labour MPs back Bob Carnegie

By Darren Bedford

The Labour Representation Committee, the largest socialist grouping inside the Labour Party, unanimously voted to support the Bob Carnegie Defence Campaign at its 2012 AGM on Saturday 10 November.

Since the vote, LRC-supporting MPs John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn have expressed their personal support for the campaign.

The East Ham branch of the transport union RMT, and the Glasgow Commu-

nity, Youth Work, and Not-for-Profit branch of the Unite union have also passed motions supporting Bob. The National Shop Stewards Network promoted the campaign in its November bulletin.

Support is growing in Australia, too; the State Council of the Queensland Teachers Union has also declared its support. They add their support to that of the Sydney branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), the Victorian Public Sector Unionists Rank-and-File Network, and National Tertiary Edu-

cation Union (NTEU) branches in the University of Queensland, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the University of Sydney, and the University of New South Wales.

On Wednesday 7 November, Bob received court papers for another prosecution, this one under the Fair Work Australia law and the tort of nuisance. The CFMEU, ETU, and CEPU (plumbers') unions are also involved. The case is due to be heard in July 2013. The initiation of a second prosecution shows the bosses' determination to make an

example of Bob.

Bob's supporters in London are seeking to make links with the construction workers' rank-and-file committee currently fighting against blacklisting and union-busting on construction sites.

They are also seek links with activists involved in campaigns for justice for the Shrewsbury 24, construction worker activists jailed in 1973 for their role in a strike.

● bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com

Marikana Support Campaign

The Marikana Support Campaign was launched in the wake of the massacre of 34 striking mineworkers on 16 August at Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine in South Africa.

It is working to support the struggle for justice by the families of slain mineworkers, as well as supporting ongoing miners' struggles.

It appeals for donations to:

Account name: HRMT1 for Marikana Support Campaign

Bank: Nedbank. Branch: Constantia

Branch code: 101109. Account no: 1011202366

Reference: Marikana Support Campaign

SWIFT code: NEDSZAJJ

The Marikana Support Campaign is supported by Amnesty International SA, many other NGOs, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, and the National Council of Trade Unions.

Anti-racists fight "special schools" for Roma

Roma children

By Rob Fox

Roma, Traveller, and socialist activists demonstrated outside the Czech and Slovakian embassies in Kensington on Tuesday 13 November against the policy of "special schools" for Roma children in these countries.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has called the schools "Educational Apartheid".

The schools, which are invariably inferior and chronically underfunded, have continued to exist in defiance of a ECHR ruling, and illustrate the rising tide of anti-Roma persecution across the former Eastern Bloc.

One activist told *Solidarity*: "I've been involved in Roma solidarity for over fifty years, and the level of persecution is greater now than it was in the 1960s". Another said that, in attempting to secure visas for gypsies in Slovakia she had been told by embassy staff that "there are too many of them in our country already."

Combined with long standing prejudice against

Roma people, a growth in the politics of cultural nationalism in response to globalisation has led to the identification of the Roma as an alien element within the population. This has been especially marked in Hungary, with the rise of the nationalist right, and Bulgaria, to which the Roma journalist Toma Nikolaev Mladenov faces extradition from the UK for alleged "disorderly conduct" in a police station (in which he was banned from speaking to his wife in his own language). A European arrest warrant was issued after he took part in a demonstration to mark Roma Nation Day.

Another activist said: "There are good organised anti-fascists across Eastern Europe, but in concentrating on the uniformed far-right, they have turned something of a blind eye to the more common prejudice against the Roma."

The Traveller Solidarity Network and the 8 April Movement aim to further the links between activists across the continent and build Europe-wide Roma solidarity.

Kurdish hunger strikes

By Ira Berkovic

Istanbul branches of the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party, the main Kurdish nationalist party in Turkey) held sit-ins, and other direct actions on 10 November, in solidarity with Kurdish political prisoners who have been on hunger strike since 12 September.

More than 700 prisoners in 60 prisons have been participating in the strike. On 9 November, leading figures in the BDP — including four MPs — joined the strike in solidarity. Large demonstrations and other direct actions have taken place in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey, includ-

ing a student strike and "boycott" (i.e. shops not opening for the day) on 30 October. These actions have been met with severe repression from the Turkish police.

The Turkish socialist group Marksist Tutum ("Marxist Attitude") writes: "It has to be clearly underlined: the hunger strike stems ultimately from the deadlock in the Kurdish question. This action is a new outcry of the Kurdish people for freedom, this time rising from dungeons.

"In a most demonstrative way, the hunger strikers advance simple and clear demands that can open the way for a solution to the deadlock in Kurdish question."

New on the AWL website

● **Overtake in NSW Public Service Association elections — bit.ly/TXPHdk**

● **Populist movement gains in Sicily — bit.ly/SZ8WTd**

Fighting back in South London

By a Lewisham hospital worker

Earlier this year South London Healthcare Trust became the first NHS Trust to be taken into administration with debts of over £150 million, the result of commitments to expensive PFI contracts.

A Trust Special Administrator (TSA) was appointed and has just reported. The report will be "consulted" on locally until 13 December. He is recommending the breaking up of the Trust, with hospitals and services hived off to other local Trusts. Cuts are very much part of this process.

At Lewisham Hospital cuts include shutting the A&E department (recently refurbished), maternity services, and complex and emergency surgery. This would lead to many of the supportive services, such as acute medical admissions and ITU being shut, and many of the other hospital services being shut down too.

At a public campaign meeting on 8 November, overflow venues had to be used as maybe a thousand people from Lewisham and around south London wanted to attend.

The huge numbers may indicate, along with the big NHS cuts campaign in Ealing and Hammersmith, a chance to develop a stronger fight against the government.

At the meeting Labour MP Heidi Alexander and Labour mayor Steve Bullock both firmly con-

demned the proposals but both laid the blame on South London Health Trust (with the implied idea that people elsewhere in south London should bear the brunt of the cuts).

Neither made any comment on the fact that it is the PFI schemes that have led to the "overspends" or that PFI was promoted by the Labour government.

The local Unison branch secretary spoke though Unison was not officially supporting the meeting and advocated a cautious approach to campaigning.

Most other speakers emphasised the need to work with other campaigns around the NHS.

The current A&E at Lewisham was recently refurbished, and only opened six months ago. If the administrator were somehow persuaded to close a different A&E, it would still result in a worse service for the people of Lewisham, as there would be additional pressure on services. It would also be another victory for a government hell bent on destroying the NHS, service by service and Trust by Trust.

This campaign must be led by community activists, and rank-and-file union members.

A demonstration against the cuts in Lewisham Hospital will be held on the 24 November. The demonstration start at Loampit Vale roundabout (next to Lewisham DLR/railway station) at 2pm and reach Lewisham hospital at 3pm, followed by linking hands around the building.

• lewishamkonp.org

By a Lewisham hospital nurse

The South London Trust Special Administrator report takes some wading through but it turns up some scary facts.

Lewisham hospital is set to become a centre that deals only with some elective procedures, and minor injuries such as fractures.

The Administrator says that if Lewisham hospital provides planned non-complex surgery, such as joint replacements, and does not have to deal with emergency cases, uncertainty about the timing of surgery would be reduced.

Planned surgery is sometimes delayed because of emergency cases. But even routine elective surgery can be unpredictable, and emergencies are not the only reason for delays, e.g. surgery can turn out to be more complicated than expected,

SURGERY

Having elective (planned) surgery won't solve the whole problem. It would also de-skill staff, by not exposing them to the more complex cases, and is not as good a use of the facilities and expertise that currently exist.

The idea is that specialist centres are safer. In such centres staff have dealt with a larger number of similar cases (and become more practised). But more variety in the workload

means that individuals have a greater range of skills. And in a world where patients are getting older and have numerous comorbidities (different health conditions) this can be an advantage.

However if something goes wrong at Lewisham under the plan, and there's no ITU, and no emergency staff to deal with it onsite, the patient would have to be transferred to another hospital.

This is one of the reasons why patients receiving treatments privately often end up coming to the NHS. They have complications which private hospitals are not equipped to deal with.

The document quotes a study that says that patients are more likely to die if they're treated out of hours. This may be because there are fewer senior doctors on site.

It therefore proposes that consultant services are only provided on four sites rather than five, and not Lewisham.

But a lack of junior doctors, pharmacy facilities, and general diagnostic and practical equipment is also a significant out-of-hours risk factor. I have run from ward to ward (because there's been only two porters on site out-of-hours), abandoning my patients, pursuing a doctor with drug chart in hand, as the only way to get the prescriptions my patients need.

4,400 babies are born every year at Lewisham hospital.

The service is over capacity, and there is no spare capacity in the surrounding area. Midwives say they sometimes have to send women in labour as far away as Hammersmith in

West London to get a bed. This situation would become much worse if Lewisham's maternity services were shut or reduced.

There is an option of having a "stand alone" obstetric service at Lewisham. By "stand alone" it means this would be without the ITU or A&E departments. Is it safe? A maternity unit that does not have the facility to provide caesarian sections would mean women in labour, where there are unforeseen complications, would have to be transferred by ambulance to another Trust.

Without A&E or emergency surgery many of the medical wards at Lewisham would shut.

The full consultation document is 87 pages. It is not available in libraries or GP surgeries, and has not been mailed to people.

Workers' activist group established

A Trust workers' activist group has been set up to work alongside the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign.

The group plans to build for support among staff using a bulletin and petition and email list.

Lewisham Trust Unison branch is now supporting the demonstration on 24 November.

Paying for PFI

The South London NHS Trust "overspent" by £65 million in the last financial year (2011/2012).

However, the Trust currently spends £69 million each year to maintain its PFI contracts at Princess Royal University Hospital (£35 million) and Queen Elizabeth Hospital (£34 million). The report recommends the Department of Health provides an annual payment of £25.1 million towards the cost of the PFIs.

So even if the recommendations are accepted, the Trust would have to continue paying £44 million per year just to use its own buildings!

ANTONIO GRAMSCI: WORKING-CLASS REVOLUTIONARY

Antonio Gramsci was a leader of the Italian Communist Party in its revolutionary days, and spent all of his last years bar a few weeks in Mussolini's fascist jails. *The Prison Notebooks* he wrote in jail have been quarried to justify many varieties of reformist or liberal politics.

This booklet discusses a major recent study on the *Notebooks* — Peter Thomas's *The Gramscian Moment* — and argues that the *Notebooks* were in fact a powerful contribution to the working-out of revolutionary working-class strategy in developed capitalist societies.

£4 from AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG. Order online at www.workersliberty.org/gramscibook

Day school on Gramsci's ideas — Saturday 15 December, London

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Books from Workers' Liberty

What is capitalism? Can it last?

With articles from Leon Trotsky, Max Shachtman, Maziar Razi and many more. Edited by Cathy Nugent. £5 — buy online from tinyurl.com/wiccil

Working-class politics and anarchism

Debates between members of Workers' Liberty and comrades from various anarchist traditions. £5 — tinyurl.com/wcpanarchism

Treason of the Intellectuals

Political verse by Sean Matgamna. £9.99 — tinyurl.com/treasonofintellectuals

Plan B in Greece

Letters

John Grahl (*Solidarity* 263) establishes, I think, two things. Firstly, that Greece switching back to the drachma would be costly to Greek workers and has no advantages over a Greek government from within the eurozone cancelling the Memorandum and refusing to service its debt.

Second, that the argument from some on the left for a switch back to the drachma rests on a sleight-of-hand.

The book which Grahl reviews, *Crisis in the Eurozone*, admits that a "conservative" Greek exit from the drachma is equally possible. But it persistently slides into assuming that a stance where the left's headline demand is "quit the euro" will ensure that Greek euro-exit semi-automatically slides Greece to the left, rather than making the left a galley-slave for the ship of the nationalist right. Why?

Grahl leaves a question unanswered. What if the eurozone leaders respond by expelling Greece from the eurozone?

It would be counterproductive for the left to hail that expulsion as a liberation, or to advocate that the Greek government do the European Central Bank's [ECB's] dirty work for it by voluntarily quitting the euro. And it's true that expelling Greece from the eurozone would be costly and risky for the eurozone leaders.

But, as Grahl acknowledges, "some of the most hard-line reactionary forces in the EU take the view that it is necessary to kick a country out of the eurozone to encourage the others" [to stick to cuts].

Those hard-liners might prevail. The most likely variant is that the ECB would cut Greek banks out of the Europe-wide payments system (workersliberty.org/expel). Then euro deposits in Greek banks would no longer be valid as "euros" outside Greece (though euro notes and coins in Greece would be).

The Greek left has to have a plan B for that event. If the Greek left has a plan B, then its chances of stopping expulsion by the ECB are increased. If it has no plan B, then the ECB knows it has only to threaten expulsion, credibly, and it can blackmail a left government in Greece into backing down on everything.

Under Plan B, I think the Greek left government should use "geuros" (the new sort of euro that will then exist, valid within the Greek banking system but not outside) to finance itself while demanding that the ECB lift the expulsion (i.e. reconvert geuros into euros).

Plan B would involve elements of "war communism" or a "committee of public safety" regime: sweeping expropriations, and state controls over euro holdings in Greece.

Since geuros would not be able to buy imports, plan B would probably have to include rationing of basic goods.

Basing itself on widespread workers' control, Plan B would be not North Korea (the caricature "reactionary-bureaucratic" version of public controls) but a revolutionary-democratic programme.

It would bring troubles but not catastrophe. The mildly bourgeois-democratic version of rationing and controls in wartime Britain improved, rather than worsened, nutritional standards, because it reduced inequality.

This Plan B could only be temporary. But it would inspire workers across Europe — especially southern Europe — to fight for workers' control in their own countries. It would be a bridgehead for a socialist united states of Europe.

Colin Foster, north London

The genetics of the ANC

In her criticism of my article on South Africa ("ANC and the working class", *Solidarity* 263) Jayne Edwards notes that I think the ANC had no choice but to govern in the name of capital because the movement was not yet ripe, and points to the misuse of an Engels quote from 1850.

I do broadly agree with her analysis, but perhaps there are nuances here.

In the original version of the article, I point to the fact that it was Neville Alexander who originally used Engels quote to understand what was happening in South Africa from 1994.

I accept that Jayne is absolutely correct that the key question is the fact that the advocates of independent working class politics weren't strong enough to develop the political organisations needed — a mass workers' party.

But I would still contend that there was no real possibility of either a mass workers' party or any kind of transition to socialism in 1994.

The complete ideological elimination of "African socialism" in Congo, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere as a consequence of putschism, tribalism, and Stalinist imperialist intervention meant the discrediting of an indigenous, Africanist road to socialism. Any movement towards that would have been profoundly resisted by the armed ranks of the apartheid state backed by international capital. Anything even smacking of independent workers' power would have been smashed.

However the collapse of the East European regimes made possible a space in which the vague "social democratisation" of the ANC could perpetuate and make more effective the rule of capital in South Africa.

CHOICE

In 1994 the masses weren't faced with a choice between independent working-class politics on the one hand and the SACP/ANC on the other.

Neither was the question of a socialist or capitalist road raised within the SACP/ANC itself.

Formally the question of working-class power was central to what would become the government of the tripartite alliance — in its congresses and constitutions — but the genetics of the component parts precluded it ever becoming a reality.

We haven't underestimated the impact of Stalinism on the SACP/ANC, and Baruch Hirson did great work uncovering the kleptocracy and murder of working-class militants at the hands of the ANC in exile with which the leadership was complicit. What we do underestimate is the fact that the joint Stalinisation/social democratisation of the ANC for decades had eliminated any real chance of workers' struggles in South Africa culminating in working-class representation.

The independent left was totally marginalised in 1994 and lost its bearings completely afterwards. It had little impact on the South African working class and has little impact now. There was no embryonic workers' party in South Africa — although there are now more calls for this post-Marikana.

The collapse of the prestige if not the full political power of the ANC might now signify a new period of ripeness for working class politics that wasn't present in 1994, we'll have to see. But we have to recognise the sheer catastrophe of twentieth century Stalinism and its impact on eliminating the whole possibility of workers' power in South Africa in the late 80s and early 90s.

The question then becomes how the "extreme party" itself creates, through long preparation, the conditions for the advancement of an alien class rather than one emerging too early on the stage of history.

Martyn Hudson, Teesside

Editor's note

Several readers thought our article about a possible link between a top-ranking Tory and abuse in North Wales children's homes ("A system where the rich get away with child abuse", *Solidarity* 263) was too simplistic.

That article was not meant to be a thorough examination of the North Wales scandal or the links between child abuse and inequality. We do not have the expertise to write anything that thorough at short notice. It was a quick comment on the news.

We would like to publish something more thoughtful on this issue at a future date.

We welcome thoughts and suggestions from readers.

The first European general strike in history

Wednesday 14 November, the day this paper goes to press, will see the first Europe-wide general strike in history.

There will be strikes in Spain, Portugal, Greece (for three hours) and Italy (by CGIL, for four hours). The common demand proclaimed by the European TUC is "For jobs and solidarity in Europe: no to austerity".

In many other countries unions will organise demonstrations: France, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Belgium. In Lithuania, unions are organising a transport strike in Vilnius.

Outside the borders of the European Union, the Turkish union DISK is organising a solidarity strike in the transport sector, and demonstrations in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.

The ETUC estimates that about 40 trade union organisations from 23 countries are organising action.

Britain lags behind. Construction electricians, in dispute over sackings at the Crossrail site at Westbourne Park, have

called a mass picket for 14 November (7am at the Crossrail site on Oxford St). The Coalition of Resistance has called a protest at the European Commission office at 32 Smith Square, London SW1, for 5pm.

Sheffield Trades Council is organising a demonstration. Some civil service offices will have 15 minute stoppages. But the top union leaders are organising no action.

The crisis and the cuts are Europe-wide. The cuts are coordinated politically at a European level, and serve the interests of giant corporations and banks which operate far beyond national boundaries.

To fight back only country by country is as foolish as waging a trade-union dispute in a workplace only by uncoordinated battles in different workshops or offices.

In Greece, the solid support of the coalition government is down from 180 MPs after the June 2012 elections to 151 MPs, the smallest possible majority in the 300-seat parliament. Strikes and demonstrations are escalating again after the lull of the summer

SYRIZA

Within months or weeks the coalition government could fall. A new election would probably create the possibility of a left coalition government led by Syriza, which is pledged to cancel the cuts Memoranda, stop payment on Greece's debt, and nationalise the banks.

What happens then depends on Europe. Either concerted pressure from European capital will crush the Greek left. Or the example of the Greek left will spur on big working-class mobilisations in Spain, Italy, and Portugal, destabilising the conservative governments there, and workers in the rest of Europe will rise up to oppose and block the EU leaders' action against the Greek workers.

The mobilisation on 14 November is a dress rehearsal for that turning point.

The general conservatism of Britain's union leaders has reduced our participation on 14 November, but there is another factor too. Blinkered nationalism, and foolish ideas that a simple political decision to separate the country from the rest of Europe would insulate it from the laws and trends of global capitalism, are stronger in the British labour movement than in any other labour movement in Europe. Often they are stronger in what reckons itself to be the left of the British labour movement than they are on the right. The RMT rail union, for example, one of Britain's more combative unions, supports the People's Pledge, an anti-EU political campaign designed by right-wing Tories.

Those nationalist ideas have always been toxic. With the capitalist crisis, the poison is becoming deadly.

Workers' Liberty members will be joining protests where they exist on 14 November, and working to explain the importance of workers' unity across the borders wherever we are active.

Tax the rich!

The Guardian (13 November) sums up the evidence given by Starbucks, Amazon, and Google on why they pay almost no tax in Britain.

"The man from Starbucks... said Starbucks paid almost no tax in the UK because... with one exception, they had made a loss for 15 years. Year after year, the business failed. Yet somehow it survived, and the UK boss was even promoted!...

"The man from Amazon... denied that amazon.co.uk was, in any sense, a UK firm. But he didn't know what kind of firm it was, because he didn't know who owned it..."

"Matt Brittin of Google... at least admitted that the company shipped profits to Bermuda to avoid tax. [This is what the other multinationals do: they manipulate prices for international transactions within the corporation so that the profits emerge in the lowest-tax jurisdictions].

"He didn't dissemble: the gist was: 'we do it because we can'."

Researcher Sol Picciotto has proposed an answer: "Unitary Taxation".

This "treats a transnational corporation engaged in a unified business as a single entity, requiring it to submit a single set of worldwide combined or consolidated accounts in each country where it has a business presence, and apportioning the overall profit according to a weighted formula reflecting the proportion of its actual presence in each country".

• bit.ly/picciot

Help us raise £15,000

The Apprentice, Dragon's Den, classes on "enterprise" in schools... the British establishment is doing its best to push a UK version of the American dream.

If you work hard enough, or have a bright enough idea, you can "make it" (i.e. get rich). In the context of the cuts, the idea is to create the illusion of the equality of opportunity at the same time as slashing and burning the educational and social opportunities available to (particularly young) people in working-class communities.

It teaches young people to have a reverential relationship to money. To believe that the rich must have it because they "worked hard" to "earn it", and that putting in hard graft in some shit minimum wage (or even unpaid) job is a necessity we should undertake without complaining, because it's all part of climbing the ladder.

Young entrepreneur Jamal Edwards grins alongside arch-profiteer Richard Branson at promotional events for Virgin and hobnobs with Cameron and Miliband. All you need is a camera, a YouTube channel and a dream...

The reality is different. A combination of hard work and immense good luck might see a few working-class people rise out of their class, but the class as a whole is tied by shackles that no amount of innovation, graft, or enterprising behaviour can break. Those shackles can only be overthrown in collective, mass struggle.

Workers' Liberty exists to help build that struggle and provide it with the ideas it needs to win. Don't waste your cash chasing rags-to-riches illusions; donate it to us, and help us eliminate the "rags" category altogether.

Help us raise £15,000 by May Day 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.

- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

- Organising a fundraising event.

- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

**Total raised so far:
£5,041**

We raised £105 this week.
Thanks to Jacky and Dan.

£5,041

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

..... (its address)

.....

Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ to be paid on the day of (month) 20

(year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

The Trotskyists in Syriza

By Theodora Polenta

DEA (Internationalist Workers' Left) is one of the two Trotskyist groups active within Greece's left coalition Syriza.

Like all the political components of Syriza, DEA agrees that Syriza should transform itself from a coalition into a "single political body". Like the majority of Syriza, DEA supports dual membership, so that people will be able simultaneously to be members of DEA (or another political component) and of Syriza.

The right wing of Syriza (ex Pasok members) are asking for the dissolution of all Syriza's components and disciplinary measures against political deviations from Syriza's central line by the more radical or revolutionary components.

In fact, the problem is that the right wing of Synaspismos and ex-Pasok members have wide access to the media for statements contrary to what has been agreed in Syriza's central organs.

According to DEA, Syriza should transform itself to a combative and democratic organisation of the radical left, which should safeguard the rights, the obligations and, especially, the opportunity for political initiatives, of its rank and file.

Emphasis should be put on the establishment of local organisations, which should be able to effectively intervene at the central level. These local organisations should be directly linked to the neighbourhood community movements.

Syriza should unleash a massive campaign of recruitment in every neighbourhood and every workplace.

The outcome of the current re-invigoration of Syriza and expansion of its rank and file will determine whether or not it can be transformed into a movement able to fulfil the promises and expectations of a government of the left, as a starting point for working-class self-emancipation.

BREAK

DEA rejects the view of the Syriza right wing that Syriza, as a "government in waiting", should make its programme more "realistic", more "costed", and more "rounded", and get rid of its spikes (no sacrifice for the euro, non-payment of the debt, unilateral abolition of the memorandum).

There is no "realistic" governmental program of "resolving" the crisis that will reconcile working-class interests and social needs with the needs of the Greek ruling class and the bondholders.

On the contrary, says DEA, Syriza must renew and emphasise its determination to break with the memorandum, the Troika, and the neoliberal framework. The message should be clear to government and Troika: off with your heads!

DEA believes that Syriza should clearly and unequivocally prioritise the struggles in the streets. Those struggles should be linked with a clear and consistent call for the overthrow of the three-party coalition government.

The escalation of struggle in the European South and the re-emergence of the Europe-wide anti-austerity movement in Spain, Portugal, Italy internationalises the issues. It is time for the working class, the neighbourhood movements, the youth, and the left to raise the level of struggle and form a united front which can overthrow the government. Every city, every village, every neighbourhood, every hospital, every council should become a centre of struggle against the memorandum barbarism.

DEA advocates rolling continuous general strikes and demonstrations and occupations of central buildings (town halls, ministries, etc.)

DEA believes that Syriza should clearly state that a left government would not fit within the confines of the parliamentary democracy but would expand this democracy by building and nurturing more direct forms of workers' management and control. The aim of Syriza should be the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society.

As a starting point, a government of the left should commit itself to a program of transitional demands: the unilateral abolition of the Memoranda; the restoration of salaries and pensions; the re-establishment and expansion of labour legislation and trade union rights; the safeguarding of nationalised hospitals and schools.

According to DEA, Syriza's stance on the debt is of paramount importance. There are tendencies within Syriza that do not call for the cancellation of the debt but instead place their hopes on negotiations at a eurozone level.

Today's EU and eurozone leaders, whether they are "tough" neoliberals like the Germans or "pale" neo-Keynesians like the French, are in total agreement on tough austerity packages. They want to transform the whole EU into a memorandum!

ILLUSIONS

Syriza should have no illusions about it: all the EU leaders would unleash a relentless class war in order to defeat at its infancy a government of the left.

The abandonment by Syriza's leadership of the slogan "No sacrifice for the Euro", is a warning of the battles that need to be fought within Syriza and the illusions of Syriza's leadership about the benevolence of the EU.

DEA criticises those sections of the left that prioritise the call for Greece to quit the EU and the eurozone and return to a national currency.

Independent of whether a government of the left would end up using drachmas or stay in the eurozone, the priority is to develop international solidarity, cooperation, joint action with the left and the working class across all European countries.

The major issue for the left is not exit from the EU or the adoption of another currency within the framework of a capitalist society, but socialism.

Austerity measures and attacks on the working class will be produced by capitalism in crisis, in or out of the eurozone. In Serbia, the debt is only 50% of GDP and there is no euro, but still the finance minister has announced a barrage of austerity measures.

Even in the heart of European capitalism, in Germany, 1.3 million workers need social benefits and state subsidies in order to live just above the poverty line, and a big proportion of the new working class are living on 400 euros per month.

Under the pressure of the ex-Pasok members of Syriza, there is also talk of abandoning Syriza's stance of legalisation of all immigrants in favour of "rationalisation of immigration via quotas". DEA says that would be a tremendous class betrayal in the context of the growth of Golden Dawn.

DEA believes that Syriza needs to overcome the illusions of dealing with the fascist and criminal gangs of Golden Dawn through parliamentary legalism. The main field to defeat the Golden Dawn is in the streets, via the formation of united-front defence squads and workers' militias and networks of social solidarity and self-defence in every neighbourhood.

According to DEA, the anti-fascist united fronts should have a distinct anti-memorandum character: "Down with the memoranda — Down with the Nazis".

• www.dea.org.gr/

Greece: t

By Theodora Polenta

Despite persistent rain, pre-demo arrests, blockage of roads, and the threat of police truncheons and gas, the protest outside parliament at Syntagma Square on the 7 November, the second day of a 48-hour general strike, was one of Greece's biggest ever demonstrations.

Tuesday 6th started with the whole of Greece being brought to a halt. Taxis, buses, trams, and underground railways were stationary. The ships were tied up at the ports. At airports dozens of flights were cancelled and delayed.

On Wednesday 7th, hundreds of thousands of protesters besieged parliament.

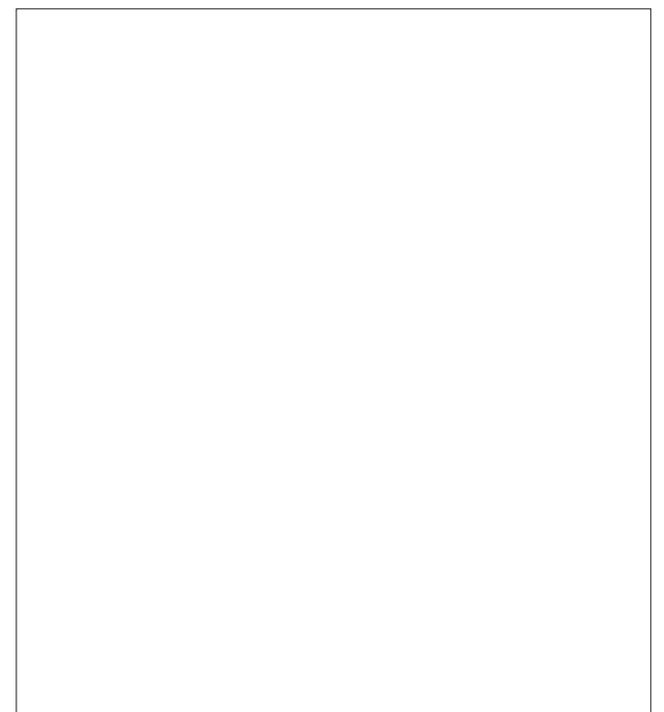
By early afternoon, long before the official call of the unions at 5 pm, workers' unions, student associations, leftist organisations, neighbourhood assemblies and other collectives were assembling in Syntagma square.

Loud cheers and salutes greeted the doctors and hospital workers who are on continuous strike; the council workers who have been occupying town halls and government buildings against redundancies, and who on Wednesday morning symbolically occupied the Interior Ministry; the power workers who have started a rolling programme of 48 hour strikes; and the transport and media workers.

For hours, despite the heavy rain, the protesters besieged parliament. The riot police began attacks with tear gas. The workers' bloc stuck it out on Syntagma Square until late at night.

The demonstration did not prevent the voting-through of the "third memorandum", which is an even worse attack on the working class, but it escalated the crisis of the government, which is a coalition led by New Democracy (Tories) and including Pasok (similar to Labour) and the Democratic Left (soft left).

Pasok's strength has dwindled from three million voters in 2009 to 750,000 in June 2012 and, according to polls, fewer than 500,000 today, so the zealous support for the third memorandum and the 2013 budget by Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos resembles the bee that stings and then dies.



Protesting against the new round of cuts

The coalition is crumbling

Greek workers will strike again on 14 November

Democratic Left leader Photis Kouvelis, vaguely remembering his old left-wing reflexes, backed all the measures of the "third memorandum" and the 2013 budget with the exception of the legislation on working conditions.

Kouvelis asked for the labour-law changes to be taken separately from the rest of the austerity package. The government insisted on including the labour-law changes in the "third memorandum", and so the Democratic Left decided to abstain on the new package and to vote for the 2013 budget.

NEW ELECTIONS, STRIKES

For the first time since June 2012, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras asked for the overthrow of the three party coalition government and fresh elections, and connected the call, at least timidly, with the strike movement.

On Wednesday 7th, as the bills were being discussed in parliament, the Syriza MPs came out of the parliament to join the protests with a banner that called on the people to overthrow the coalition government.

The KKE, moving even more firmly towards sectarianism and isolationism, spend most of their speeches attacking not the government, but Syriza. Their paper *Rizospastis* calls on the working class not to be fooled by the threat of the "new reformism". In one crescendo of anti-Syriza hostility KKE general secretary Aleka Papariga accused Syriza of supporting these sections of the Greek capitalism that will profit outside the eurozone, and claimed Syriza was the party of the drachma lobby.

The "third memorandum" was voted through parliament on Wednesday 7th with 153 "Yes", 128 "Nos" and 18 abstentions.

Six Pasok MPs who voted against the memorandum were expelled by Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos. Another Pasok MP, Mimis Androulakis, voted for the memorandum, but voted against the 2013 budget, and has left Pasok to become an independent MP.

Senior Pasok MPs are calling for the resignation of Venizelos and a reshaping of Pasok's profile.

14 of the Democratic Left MPs abstained on the memorandum, and two voted against.

On Sunday the 2013 budget was voted through with 167 votes. So the coalition government comes out weakened and

unstable. Within five months the government's base has been cut from 180 MPs to 167 MPs.

ND and Pasok combined had 162 MPs, but five months on are down to 151 MPs, the smallest possible majority in the 300-seat parliament.

This is today's Greece, as has been transformed by both the external Troika (EU-ECB-IMF) and the internal Troika (Pasok, ND, and first Laos, now Democratic Left).

According to Unicef 500,000 children are hungry. 68% of Greeks live below the poverty line. They are hungry. 25% of Greeks are unemployed and well above 50% of under 25s are unemployed. They are hungry.

Every day 2800 people are being sacked. They will become hungry.

This is the Greece of people queuing to buy expired food from the supermarkets. Of kids fainting at school from hunger. Of shops shut down and more pawnshops open.

Of pensioners whose pension cannot even cover their food, electricity and medication. Of tens of thousands of homeless people. Of tens of thousands of marginalised and destitute people who form long queues for charity handouts and soup kitchens.

And with the new memorandum comes an escalation of the class war against the working class.

Wages, pensions, allowances, welfare provisions, benefits will be cut at least 7.5 billion euros. Health, education and other public services and welfare provision will be cut by at least another 4 billion.

Transport costs will increase 25%. Universities and hospitals will be merged or closed down. Fees will be imposed on postgraduate students and free textbooks abolished for undergraduate students. School teacher recruitment will be frozen.

Taxes on the majority will be raised. But the Samaras government is reducing the top rate of income tax from 45% to 35%, and corporation tax from 42.5% to 35%.

This tax cut for big business and the rich show everyone what is the real issue with the cuts and the "third memorandum": improving capital's position and weakening the position of workers.

Public assets will be sold off for pennies, and the plan is to sack at least 25,000 public sector workers by the end of 2013. Collective bargaining agreements will be abolished and the

minimum wage reduced.

The warning time for dismissals will be cut from six months to at most four months, Redundancy pay will be cut. The maximum legal work week will be increased to six days and 13 hours a day.

Greece's debt is due to reach 179% of GDP in 2013. In 2008 the debt stood at 109% of GDP.

However, assessed from a class perspective the memoranda have been very successful for the Greek capitalist class. Their aim is not "to let a crisis be wasted". Their aim is to grab as much as they can, via the privatisation spree, and to "recreate from scratch a business-friendly habitat".

"Capitalist development" in the sense of positive rates of growth of the economy will return at some time. But it will be a development of capitalist numbers and profits, with the workers' wages squeezed at a few hundred euros a month.

The carrot accompanying this stick is the Troika's 31.5 billion bailout fund. But of those 31.5 billion euros, 25 billion will go to bankers in the so-called "recapitalisation" of the banks; five billion will go to interest repayments and expired bonds, with the lion's share, about four billion, to return to the ECB; and only approximately one billion will be used to cover Greek government spending.

THE LEFT

The left needs to have confidence in the Greek working class movement which, despite the shock and awe of the memoranda, the stress of survival and the devaluation of everything, have organised 23 general strikes and have toppled two governments.

The fight to defeat the three party coalition government via the industrial and social struggles of the working class and neighbourhood movements should be linked with the call of a government of the left.

It is the responsibility of the forces of the radical and revolutionary left, whether they are inside or outside Syriza, to determine whether Syriza will be transformed into a party of the Radical Left and will fulfil the promises and expectation of a government of the Left as a starting point for workers' control and self-emancipation.

We need a workers' government, which would be based on workers' democracy, workers' and social control, and workers' militias. The main axis of struggle should be the following:

1. Fight for the development and escalation of industrial and social struggles against the attacks of the government and Troika, with rolling strikes, occupations, stoppages, demonstrations, and reinvigoration of the neighbourhood non-payment movements

2. Fight for the overthrow of the coalition government

3. Anti-fascist struggle, with the formation of committees in every square, neighbourhood, and workplace.

4. Fight for a united front and cooperation of the left in the industrial and in the political sphere

5. Fight for a government of the left and a workers' government

6. Fight to alert and prepare the working class for the prospect and the consequences of exit or expulsion from the eurozone or EU.

7. Fight for a program of transitional demands based upon workers' self management and control and the social planning of the economy to meet the needs of the people, not the profits of a handful of capitalist parasites.

8. **Fight alongside the European working class, and particularly the working class of southern Europe unevenly affected by the capitalist crisis as expressed in the debt crisis, for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe.**

Nationalise pharmaceuticals!

Science

By Les Hearn

After the success of *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre (doctor and debunker*) has now taken on the pharmaceuticals industry ("big pharma") in his latest book *Bad Pharma*.

While admitting that "without medicines, there is no medicine", he shows that the science behind new drugs is consistently distorted to further the interests of the industry.

The main way this is done is to routinely hide much of the data relevant to judging the efficacy and safety of new drugs. Over a quarter of the 365 pages of text is devoted to this missing data.

The gold standard behind any effective medicine is the randomised controlled trial (RCT) in a population of patients with the condition in question**. This follows a long process of preclinical work, testing the drug's in-vitro activity, testing its activity and safety in animals, and then testing it on healthy human "volunteers".

Ideally, the RCT would take a large number of patients with the condition and randomly assign them to receive either the proposed new drug or an indistinguishable placebo. Or, in a "head-to-head" RCT, the new drug would be compared with the existing treatment. The desired outcome is that the new drug is significantly better and no less safe than nothing or than the old drug.

It should be noted here that the "desired" outcome has a lot riding on it. If the old drug is about to go out of patent protection, its price will fall drastically. Or if the old drug is produced by a rival, this will be a way to cut into that market. It is very much desired that a replacement be found. The new drug may be only trivially different from the existing one (a "me-again" or "me-too" drug). As long as it can get a patent, it will do.

RCTs often do not give the desired results. But it's not necessarily back to the lab to synthesise a new drug. What happens is that some of the data goes missing: guess which!

Goldacre gives an example from his own experience of prescribing the antidepressant Reboxetine. He had read the published trial data and found it to be positive. It had been approved by the UK's drug regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).***

However, in 2010, a group of researchers were able to assemble all Reboxetine trial data, published and unpublished. They carried out a systematic review and performed a meta-analysis (see box). Only one trial, the published one, showed Reboxetine to be better than a sugar pill; six more with nearly 10 times as many patients did not. Studies comparing it to other antidepressants were split: the published ones said it

was as good as the others; studies on three times as many patients showed it to be worse. There was a similar bias when it came to reporting adverse side effects. This has resulted in a colossal waste of money and disappointment for patients.

There are many more attested examples of publication bias for which the causes are various. Many journals have a bias against research with negative results; some researchers self-censor and do not submit negative results; where research is funded by industry, there are often "gagging clauses" so that researchers are not free to publish their results without the permission of the company. Sometimes, negative results are re-interpreted with positive conclusions!

Attempts to identify unpublished trials rely on there being an accurate register of trials undertaken and punishment for non-publication. Neither of these has worked.

The drug regulators, who should be protecting patients, are ineffective or worse. Companies withhold data from them as well but, even when they don't, regulators refuse to share unpublished data with bona fide researchers on spurious grounds of commercial secrecy and patient confidentiality.

In a notorious case, Cochrane reviewers (see below) wanted to see data on trials of diet drugs. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) refused to do this for three and a half years, despite being ordered to do so by the European Ombudsman. In the mean time, one of the drugs had been withdrawn on safety grounds (increased risk of serious psychiatric problems and suicide) by its manufacturer.

TRIALS

Well-run trials are very expensive, but bad ones are not, and there are plenty of examples of these.

One trick is to decide the focus of the trial after you've done it. By the laws of chance, the more outcomes you measure, the more likely it is that one will appear positive. You can then say that this is what you were investigating (like seeing where the ball went and putting the goalposts there!).

Choice of healthy volunteers for first-in-human trials is problematic. These are often poor people in the US (formerly prisoners) or, increasingly, in the Third World, for whom taking experimental drugs is an important source of income. Whether healthy or not, they are unlikely to be representative of the patient population who will take the drugs. There is also less ethical scrutiny of such trials, and consent is unlikely to be fully informed.

Developing new types of drugs is a lot more trouble than modifying existing ones and, despite their claims, drug companies concentrate on simple modifications of existing drugs. They actually spend much more on marketing their existing drugs than they do on R&D. Goldacre uses over a quarter of the book to show just how insidious companies are in getting to family doctors, consultants, professors, hospital managers and so on, subverting them with gifts, "education", fees for

"authoring" ghost-written articles in journals, not to mention funding patient groups, some of which then campaign for the health services to prescribe the latest cure.

One example of the latter was the breast cancer drug Herceptin. A vocal campaign took place in the press for it to be prescribed, making no mention of its effects on the heart which more or less balanced out its modest effect on breast cancer survival.

Goldacre is rightly indignant, pointing out that patients are suffering and health services are being ripped off. He makes a lot of useful suggestions for individual healthcare workers or members of the public to take action to expose this scandal. But he doesn't mention the alternative of a nationalised drugs industry with a different set of priorities entirely. It's not easy to see how to get from here to there but it's certainly possible and desirable to confront big pharma and its allies and put forward the arguments for a different system.

Read this book!

* <http://www.badsience.net/>

** The earliest recorded of a controlled (though not randomised) trial is in the bible (Daniel 1: 1-15).

*** The latest (Aug 2012) NICE guidance still states that it is similar in efficacy to other antidepressants. It costs about 20% more than the best in the NICE guidelines but, remember, it's actually a placebo with adverse effects!

SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS AND META-ANALYSES

Reviewers first search systematically for all RCTs in a particular area, published or unpublished. This may involve contacting individual researchers or drug companies, as well as trying to track down articles in an enormous number of journals world wide.

Then they combine the results of all valid RCTs (meta-analysis) to get an overall picture of efficacy and adverse effects.

Systematic reviews, if updated regularly, can spot beneficial treatments as well. Studies on giving steroids to women having premature births, starting in 1972, were inconclusive but meta-analysis of all studies showed a significant advantage in preventing death. Since this knowledge only became available in 1989, it is certain that many preventable deaths occurred.

Many systematic reviews are carried out by the Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org/>), a non-profit organisation dedicated to evidence-based medicine (I myself have taken part in a systematic review for Cochrane; see <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD009318.pub2/abstract>).

Return for GYBE!

By Michéal MacEoin

After re-forming in 2010 for a series of live shows, Godspeed You Black Emperor! (GYBE!) returned to the recorded music scene after a decade of silence, slipping their latest album "Allelujah! Don't Bend! Ascend!" on to the merchandise table at a gig in Boston on 1 October.

This gesture, a refusal to play the commercial game, is symptomatic of the band's approach to the music industry and capitalism in general, balancing somewhere between sullen indifference and outright contempt.

The band, formed in 1994 in Montreal, operates as a democratic unit, working on its instrumental music without a leader or front-person, and issuing no press releases, photos or interviews. They recently broke this last habit, assenting to an email interview with the *Guardian*, in which they explained, "We were proud and shy motherfuckers, and we engaged with the world thusly... We played sitting down and projected movies on top of us. No rock poses."

GYBE! insist, believably, that they are not self-consciously carving a niche for themselves as creators of "political music" ("All music is political, right? You either make music that pleases the king and his court, or you make music for the serfs outside the walls"). Their modus operandi has remained consistent since the mid-1990s, making a virtue out of opposition to the existing order of things rather than responding directly or mechanically to the rising tide of political discontent.

Dismissive of the post-Berlin Wall, pre-9/11 triumphalism of the Clinton era, the "bands that reacted to that by making moaning 'heavy' music that rang false" and also the "self-conscious good vibes [of bands who] react to the current heaviness by privileging the party times," GYBE!'s music is free from any obvious didacticism.

GYBE! specialise in long instrumental tracks which not only burst the shell of traditional rock music forms but also go beyond conventional combinations of instrumentation. Their music is at once apocalyptic and transcendent, reflecting the philosophy that "every tune started with the blues but pointed to heaven near the end, because how could you find heaven without acknowledging the current blues?"

Hints of political themes sometimes glimmer from the murk but nothing is ever stated. Consequently, the inclusion

on the album artwork of the slogans "Fuck le plan nord", Quebec's five-year environmentally destructive economic development plan, and "Fuck la loi 78", referring to the bill banning student protest, is uncharacteristically straightforward, though it does not necessarily feel forced.

The first track on the new album, "Mladic", named after the Serbian war criminal, is a re-working of a piece that has been performed live since 2003. It is GYBE! at its heaviest and most menacing. At times it approaches the realm of black metal without ever settling into any pre-existing musical categories.

At the other extreme, "We Drift Like Worried Fire" borders on joyous, developing a minimalist guitar figure, augmented by tuned percussion and strings, to a beautiful crescendo of e-bowed guitars and drumming. Such an idea would not sound out of place on an album by Mogwai, Mono, or Explosions in the Sky, but here it is developed far beyond the scope of anything attempted by other so-called "post-rock" artists.

Such music, both doom-laden and cathartic, reflects the tension in a world gripped by a crisis which seeks resolution one way or another. We can be glad at least that GYBE! have returned to provide a soundtrack to the current interregnum.

What is happening in China?

By Camila Bassi

One in five of the world's populace will soon have new leaders for a decade's term.

This will be delivered via the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), an assembly of the bureaucracy so regulated that all that China's people and the rest of the world will be presented with is a well-orchestrated display of unified power.

At the time of writing this article, who the new leaders are has yet to be formally announced, but behind the scene faction fights and scraps between the powerful elite in the Party have already been settled for the sake of unity for survival.

The current Vice-President Xi Jinping is set to succeed Hu Jintao as the leader of the CCP (a candidate acceptable to all of the Party's factions) and Vice-Premier Li Keqiang (Hu Jintao's favourite contender) is likely to succeed Wen Jiabao as Premier. The ageing Politburo Standing Committee will also be recomposed, with seven of its nine members expected to step down. Now it seems is an apt moment to pose the question, what defines the present political moment in and of China? I'll provide a response through seven key observations.

1. THE PRINCELINGS, THE POPULISTS, AND THE BO XILAI AFFAIR

Two defining factions at the top of the CCP are the "princelings" and the "populists".

The princelings tend to have familial roots in the Party and geographical origins in the economically prosperous coastal areas of the country. They are seen to represent business interests.

The populists tend to have climbed the ranks of the Party and to have come from more inland (poorer) Chinese provinces. They are perceived to speak more for the vulnerable social interest groups.

Bo Xilai, while head of Chongqing, had ambitions for the Politburo Standing Committee. Bo (a princeling) represented — through the since-coined Chongqing Model — one avenue for more general political reform in China. In this major city he drove through a combination of high state control, which included a high-profile (but selective) clampdown on organised crime, the promotion of Maoist "red culture", and the courting of foreign investment alongside large-scale public provision.

Bo's downfall came from the death of a British businessman and his related corrupt business dealings, but also from factional fighting and his challenge to Party convention. The significance? The reaction of many of the populace, which questioned the deep-seated corrupt nature of the Party itself and how Bo had risen to such prominence.

His downfall was the biggest event in China since the 1989 revolutionary uprisings centred on Tiananmen Square. With approximately 500 million Chinese netizens, the Party cannot control everyday life as it once could.

2. TROUBLED TIMES FOR THE CHINESE ECONOMY
China's economic growth has been slowing down for seven consecutive quarters and this year it will have the slowest economic growth rate since 1999.

The huge spending package launched in 2008 has, it is estimated, led to the building of half of all of the country's physical assets within the last six years.

The "inevitable side effects of that stimulus — non-performing loans and potentially deflationary overcapacity — have not yet taken hold" (Pilling, 2012). Take housing as an example. About 30% of the country's housing stock is currently lying empty. If we add to this that the economy has still to be rebalanced by the CCP from investment to consumption, and the economy's dependence on exports to a recession-hit Europe, troubled days surely lie ahead.

3. WORKING CLASS PROTEST AND MILITANCY
As surveyed in my article in *Solidarity* 258, both the quan-

Xi Jinping

tity of working class protests in China has significantly increased this century and the qualitative nature has changed, with these protests becoming more militant.

As previously noted: "Whilst worker protests in the early 2000s predominantly involved laid-off workers from state-owned enterprises and rural migrants employed in the private sector, by the end of the decade a new group, or a 'new generation', emerged. Those born in the 1980s and 1990s have altered the nature of the migrant worker to one younger, better educated, more connected, and with higher expectations and more willingness to take on proactive demands."

4. THE RISE OF "MIDDLE CLASS" DISCONTENT
This is less militant. So-called "middle class" protest in China is more about better government than the overthrow of the existing one. But the rise in discontent amongst middle-income Chinese includes currents desiring some form of bourgeois democracy.

Intense political discontents on housing, health, education, and the environment, are all fundamentally driven by a concern that the CCP pursuit of economic growth is at the expense of ordinary people.

The recent NIMBY protest in Ningbo against a petrochemical plant led to a concession by the local government to stop the plant's expansion. This decision can be explained both by the fact that it occurred in the run up to the 18th Congress, during which the Party seeks an especially compliant population, and by the Party's more general strategy (unlike the more violent one towards militant working class demands) of keeping the peace by piecemeal allowances.

5. ANXIOUS MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL STABILITY

Based on observations 1, 2, 3 and 4, an increasingly more assertive Chinese population — able and willing to take on its government — might well indicate that China is on the verge of a revolution.

One further factor needs to be brought into play for such an assessment, which is the ability of the CCP to (in its own words) "maintain internal stability".

The Ministry of Public Security records the number of

"mass incidents" rising from 8,700 in 1993, 32,000 in 1999, 50,000 in 2002, and at present 100,000 annually. More to the point, the Party is increasingly serious (paranoid even) about keeping control; currently spending as much if not more on the maintenance of internal stability than its defence force.

So, while my article in *Solidarity* 231 assesses the potential of an inspiring struggle against land seizures and for local democracy in Wukan village, any suggestion of meaningful political reform is tempered by the introduction of militias in Wukan since August of this year. This reflects, more generally across China, "the newest incarnation of a venerable approach to population control and social management" (Wagner, 2012).

6. THE SINO-JAPANESE ISLANDS DISPUTE AND CHINESE NATIONALISM

The CCP is creating new facts on the water in its long-running maritime disputes with the Philippines and Japan.

Could this situation escalate further and draw China, Japan and the United States into a war? It cannot be ruled out.

Not unrelated is the nature and volatility of Chinese nationalism, which has deeply embedded within it a popular anti-Japanese racism, as seen in the recent wave of anti-Japanese demonstrations across the country. Herein lies a means for the CCP to unify the populace and distract them from the problems within by the problems without.

7. CHINA IN AFRICA

Pepe Escobar of the *Asia Times* (21 October) states: "The big picture remains the Pentagon's AFRICOM spreading its militarized tentacles against the lure of Chinese soft power in Africa, which goes something like this: in exchange for oil and minerals, we build anything you want, and we don't try to sell you 'democracy for dummies'."

A widespread view on the left, based on observations like this, is that US imperialism is the big bad evil, while China remains a palatable alternative. A serious assessment of Chinese imperialism is avoided.

China is now Africa's largest trading partner and lends the continent more money than the World Bank. Chinese companies have entered profitable oil markets in, for instance, Angola, Nigeria, Algeria and Sudan, made big mining deals in countries like Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and are constructing what is claimed to be the world's biggest iron mine in Gabon; additionally, land is being sought for large-scale agribusinesses, and physical infrastructure — to swiftly move capital and labour — is rapidly developing (French, 2012).

In terms of global geopolitics and imperialism, we need to take stock of what this means.

It is not so much the implications of any one of these observations but rather the consequences of them all climaxing and cumulating which makes China's present moment so critical. Watch this space.

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Debating Gramsci's legacy

Toby Abse reviews Martin Thomas (ed.) *Antonio Gramsci: Working-Class Revolutionary: Essays and Interviews*, Workers' Liberty, 2012, pp. 76.

This booklet performs an extremely valuable role in both reasserting Antonio Gramsci's historic significance as a revolutionary anti-Stalinist Marxist and arguing that his ideas have a continuing relevance for activists in the contemporary labour movement.

The very fact that both of these propositions actually need to be argued for in the first place is an indication of the huge extent to which Gramsci's legacy has been hijacked for decades by forces for whom he would have had absolutely no time at all.

The grotesque process of distortion started with Stalin's loyal servant Palmiro Togliatti, Gramsci's successor as leader of the Italian Communist Party (1926-64). In his youth Togliatti had been very closely associated with Gramsci's weekly paper *L'Ordine Nuovo* — which had acted as the voice of the factory councils during the *biennio rosso* (two red years) of 1919-20 in Turin.

He could therefore make a very plausible claim to be an accurate interpreter of the ideas of his one time friend and comrade; but there is a fair amount of evidence that suggests that Togliatti, who had already refused to pass on Gramsci's critical *Letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU* as early as 1926, had been eager to distance himself from the increasingly heretical prisoner in the 1930s.

Togliatti organised the publication of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in Italy in 1948-51, a project that probably had no particular urgency as far as Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were concerned. But he did so in order to make use, for his own ends, of these rather fragmentary and cryptic incomplete texts, composed in an Italian fascist gaol between 1929 and 1935 by a man in increasingly poor health.

Togliatti was eager to recruit to the PCI Italian intellectuals who had usually been influenced by Croce or other Hegelians, figures with whom Gramsci had engaged in a critical dialogue, as well as to back up his own "national popular" strategy, which owed very little to Gramsci, seizing upon key phrases such as "hegemony" or "war of position" and giving them an increasingly gradualist, implicitly reformist, connotation.

As time passed, particularly after Stalin's death in 1953 and

Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956, Gramsci was increasingly used by the PCI to justify what was eventually to come to be branded as "The Italian Road to Socialism". The first translations of Gramsci's work into English were published by Lawrence and Wishart, at that stage the publishing house of the Communist Party of Great Britain. A short book of extracts (*The Modern Prince and Other Writings*) appeared in 1957. The much more substantial *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* came out in 1971.

The subsequent publication by the same firm of two volumes of Gramsci's earlier writings in 1977-78 clearly revealed the younger Gramsci to have been a committed revolutionary. But that was not where the CPGB's emphasis was placed. Some kind of epistemological break was inferred.

Gramsci was associated in a general way with what by the mid 1970s became known as Eurocommunism — the Western European Communist Parties' distancing of themselves from Moscow in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The self-description "Gramscian" was very frequently deployed by the faction associated with the magazine *Marxism Today* to justify their attacks on any form of class politics in their long internal battle with the more pro-Soviet *Morning Star* supporters, obstinately linked to sections of the trade union bureaucracy, who eventually became the Communist Party of Britain.

CHALLENGE

There were intermittent attempts by various British Trotskyist groups to challenge the dominant and utterly erroneous interpretation of Gramsci as a reformist peaceful-roader predominantly concerned with cultural questions rather than class-based political activism.

Perry Anderson's major article "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci" — whose key theses are rightly defended against Peter Thomas by Martin Thomas in "Anderson's Antinomies" — mounted a sustained counterattack in *New Left Review* in 1976. But the CPGB's assessment of the great Italian Marxist thinker was enthusiastically endorsed by the bulk of British academics. A number of those who claimed some degree of expertise in his thought, such as Roger Simon and Anne Showstack Sassoon, were themselves either in or close to the Eurocommunist wing of the CPGB.

As a result Gramsci became adopted by mainstream Cultural Studies and Media Studies Departments as a kind of cuddly culturalist Marxist. Over the last couple of decades all sorts of strange "post-Marxist" and post-modernist misinterpretations of Gramsci have become rife. Some of them are discussed by Martin Thomas in his essay "The other shore of Gramsci's bridge: Gramsci and post-Marxism". He may be too kind in focusing primarily on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe who, in their own minds at least, have some vestigial attachment to the left, despite their early retreat from class.

Whilst Martin Thomas's own interest in Gramsci is a very longstanding one, I think it is fair to say that the Alliance for Workers' Liberty has not been widely perceived on the left as being particularly influenced by Gramsci (certainly not to an extent remotely comparable to their engagement with Max Shachtman, for example).

The immediate trigger for the publication of the booklet came from outside, from the discussion provoked by the recent publication of a major study of Gramsci by Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Brill, 2009). This is probably the only attempt to reclaim the mature Gramsci for revolutionary Marxism since Perry Anderson's article in *New Left Review* that has made any impact on the academic milieu, which cheerfully ignored the more polemical pamphlets of Chris Harman or Chris Bamberg.

Peter Thomas is an Australian who studied at the University of Queensland between 1992 and 2000 and currently holds a post at Brunel University in London. Martin Thomas describes Peter as "by the time he left Brisbane, a Trotskyist of some sort" (p. 45). This is, as far as I can tell, an accurate reflection of Peter's position; I have heard him speak in London at events organised by the SWP and Counterfire as well as the AWL and have been informed by Socialist Resistance

comrades that when he was living in Amsterdam he had some contact with the Fourth International.

Peter sees Gramsci as an uncompromising revolutionary Marxist to the end of his life, a fierce opponent of Stalin's Third Period line (a line fully accepted by the Italian party's leadership, who expelled Tresso, Leonetti and Ravazzoli for opposing it, even if Togliatti may have been privately less enthusiastic about it than Longo or Secchia), and deeply influenced by many ideas originating with Lenin and Trotsky.

But he ascribes to the imprisoned Gramsci, and seems himself to subscribe to, a conception of the revolutionary party that seems to downgrade its role within "a whole series of hegemonic apparatuses" (p.23) — a position that diverges from that of the AWL and indeed all other groups subscribing to some variant of the Trotskyist tradition that I have ever come across.

This seemed the principal point of disagreement between Peter and Martin in the interview conducted by Martin and transcribed in this booklet ("The Gramscian moment: an interview with Peter Thomas"), in Martin's review of Peter's book ("The revolutionary socialist as democratic philosopher") and in the discussion at last month's Workers' Liberty London Forum on Gramsci.

As regards my personal views on the contemporary relevance of what is popularly known as the Leninist theory of the party, I sometimes feel that the young Trotsky of *Our Political Tasks* may have been right.

As an historian, I would be inclined to considerable scepticism about the claim that Gramsci eventually adopted the quite pluralist and libertarian view that Peter ascribes to him. Whatever his initial reluctance, he had ultimately been willing to impose the Comintern's views on the United Front and other matters on a party with a Bordigist majority in a somewhat top down fashion in 1924-26.

Given Peter's prolonged and rigorous study of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, I would concede that he may be able to prove "that in the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci engaged in a very intense self-critique of his own political role and of the different conceptions of a political party that he had affirmed in his years as an activist" (p.25).

UNITED FRONT

Peter convincingly argues that Gramsci's period in the Soviet Union in 1922-23 had a far greater impact on him than is generally accepted by those who seek to present Gramsci as some sort of "Western Marxist".

He stresses the way Trotsky converted Gramsci to a lasting belief in the importance of the United Front tactic, the tactic which Bordiga (and Gramsci under Bordiga's influence) had so vigorously rejected in 1921-22 and the influence of what Peter calls "The Last Lenin" of the period after the Russian Civil War — and not just the earlier Lenin of the pre-1917 debates more generally acknowledged by writers on Gramsci — on Gramsci's conception of hegemony.

Many previous commentators on Gramsci have written a great deal about his views on the role of various types of intellectuals (especially the difference between traditional and organic intellectuals). Peter puts a particular emphasis on the concept of the "democratic philosopher" — ascribing especial importance to a passage from the *Notebooks* in which Gramsci writes of "a new type of philosopher, whom we could call 'a democratic philosopher' in the sense that he is a philosopher convinced that his personality is not limited to himself as a physical individual but is an active social relationship of modification of the cultural environment." (p. 39).

Gramsci's belief in the importance of education and dialogue in the building of a revolutionary party is in fact emphasised by both contributors to this booklet.

Martin quotes Gramsci's opinion that "It is necessary to engage battle with the most eminent of one's adversaries if the end proposed is one of raising the tone and intellectual level of one's followers and not just ... of creating a desert around oneself by all means possible" (p.74) — a lesson which unfortunately many on the contemporary British left have yet to learn.

AWL dayschool: Antonio Gramsci and revolutionary Marxism today

Saturday 15 December, 2-7pm, Central London (venue tbc)

The ideas of Italian communist revolutionary Antonio Gramsci, and what they can bring to revolutionary Marxist politics and working-class struggle today, based on our new booklet on Gramsci's ideas, *Antonio Gramsci: Working-Class Revolutionary*, £4, order: <http://www.workersliberty.org/gramscibook>

Includes film "New York and the Mystery of Naples: A Journey through Gramsci's World", featuring Dario Fo, Giuseppe Fiori, Cornel West and Edward Said.

Plus workshops on:

- Gramsci on "East and West"
- Gramsci's idea of a socialist newspaper
- Education and revolution
- The Gramscian revolutionary party

More information: 020 7394 8923

New battle for John Lewis cleaners

By the Industrial Workers of the World

On Monday 12 November, the Industrial Workers of the World union (IWW) launched a fresh pay dispute on behalf of outsourced cleaners at John Lewis.

This follows an IWW cleaners' strike at John Lewis in Oxford Street earlier in the year — the first strike in John Lewis history.

In the run up to Christmas and January sales, John Lewis can expect to see profits spike, bringing in millions of pounds. Meanwhile, cleaners working in their buildings are earning minimum wage of just £6.19 an hour.

Budget cuts have seen their workload increase, leading to stress, sickness, and depression. But with

no sick pay, they have to carry on regardless. Meanwhile, poverty pay means home life is a daily struggle.

The cleaners, working at four John Lewis sites in South London including

the Peter Jones store in Sloane Square and the company HQ in Victoria, are not part of John Lewis' "partnership". Instead, they are employed by a contractor, Integrated Cleaning Management Ltd.

(ICM), part of the giant Compass Group Ltd.

But now these second-class workers have had enough.

Following extensive attempts by the workers to improve their situation,

their union entered a new pay claim with ICM on 26 October. The pay claim aims at an immediate and backdated increase to £6.72/h for cleaners, £8/h for supervisors, plus a timetable of discussions aimed at securing full London Living Wage of £8.55 an hour and full sick pay.

ICM have not responded within the agreed 14 day period and therefore IWW has lodged this fresh trade dispute.

If no resolution is forthcoming, IWW and our members are ready and willing to pursue any lawful action available, up to and including lawful industrial action, in the run up to Christmas and January sales.

• More: iww.org.uk/node/814

Teachers step up action

By Ollie Moore

Teachers at South Shields Community School in Tyne and Wear struck on 7, 8, and 13 November, as part of a planned series of strikes which will also see action on 14 and 15 November.

Members of teaching unions NUT and NASUWT at the school escalated the unions' joint national campaign of industrial action short of strikes and voted to walk out after the school management refused the unions' demand of a three-

per-year limit on classroom observation.

The NUT/NASUWT campaign involves teachers refusing to carry out non-contractual duties in an attempt to push back the increasingly overbearing observation culture in many schools, and rebalance and reduce teachers' workload.

Where school managements have refused to negotiate reasonably, teachers have escalated the non-strike campaign to strike action. At Stratford Academy, teachers struck on 25

October after the head responded to the campaign by imposing a 15% pay cut on all those participating.

In Bishop Challoner School in East London, the headteacher was forced to back down on plans to hold a mock Ofsted inspection after union members threatened strike action.

As this example shows, teachers can use the framework provided by the national NUT/NASUWT campaign to take on their local management over particular issues, and win.

Thousands march against Ford closure

By Darren Bedford

20,000 workers marched to protest job losses at a Ford plant in Genk, Belgium, on Sunday 11 November.

4,300 workers face losing their jobs, and workers at the plant had previously responded to the announcement by blockading the factory gates. Sunday's demonstration saw the campaign turn out to the wider community, as well as mobilising Ford workers from plants in Germany. A delegation from Belgium had visited

Ford's European headquarters in Cologne, where they held a demonstration of around 100 workers.

Although the demands of the union leaderships behind Sunday's demonstration are timid, a mass demonstration at least provides a focus for organised, visible dissent and opposition. In Britain, where Ford plants in Southampton and Dagenham are threatened with closure, something similar is needed, and fast.

As well as demonstrations, militant stewards in the plants should hold workplace meetings to gal-

vanise and convince less confident workers about the tactics necessary to win — strikes, go-slows, and occupations. Unite and GMB should provide strike pay for their members to support them in taking sustained action in the run-up to Christmas.

Unions should also conduct a political campaign to demand that the factories are taken into public ownership — and repurposed if necessary, and workers retrained — if Ford cannot be forced to keep them open.

Fire service cuts fight

By Darren Bedford

Hundreds of firefighters lobbied Parliament on 7 November to protest against huge cuts threatened to fire services across the UK.

Around 1,500 firefighter jobs have been cut over the last year and with central government grants getting slashed, local fire authorities are planning around 6,000 job cuts by 2015.

Leaked London Fire Brigade documents indicate that 600 jobs and 117 fire stations are under threat of closure in the cap-

ital alone, as the brigade seeks to make cuts of £65 million over two years. FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "The government is acting as if it has nothing to do with it".

"It's all down to the local fire service, but it's the government that's slashing budgets so fire authorities haven't got what they need to provide the service the public deserve.

"That means stations will close, fire engines will be axed and firefighters' jobs will go if planned cuts go ahead unchallenged."

Union busting at Virgin

By Clarke Benitez

The media arm of Richard Branson's Virgin Group empire announced on 7 November that it plans to derecognise unions organising at the company, including the Communication Workers Union (CWU).

Virgin is offering an internal "Voice Forum" as an alternative staff representative, and will ballot employees on whether they

wish to be represented this body or by an independent union.

A CWU statement said: "It's self-evident that a company's own 'employee forum' cannot possibly be as independent as a democratically accountable trade union".

The move sends a worrying signal to other industrial sectors — particularly health — where Virgin is taking over contracts.

Industrial news in brief

Civil service walkouts

Rank-and-file civil servants are taking part in walkouts and protests on 14 November. This is not only to coincide with the general strikes across Europe, but to draw attention to government attacks on terms and conditions.

The day of action follows a wildcat walkout at HMRC in Coventry, in response to a visit by Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude.

Already the development has forced movement from the union leadership, who have called a follow up day of action on 30 November.

Activists have said they will call a further day of action in December, and are calling for more sporadic actions at various government offices in the meantime.

NHS attacks

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust is threatening to sack 5,400 staff in March 2013 and re-engage them on worse terms and conditions.

The new contracts which workers will be expected to sign on 1 April 2013 include attacks on sick pay and unsociable hours payments.

Bosses at the neighbouring South Tees Trust said they couldn't rule out similar measures, and Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, which runs mental health services across Teesside, has announced plans to freeze pay increments for staff who fail to complete a certain amount of training or who do not receive an appraisal within a 12-month period.

This coordinated attack on NHS workers' terms and conditions mirrors the plans by NHS Trusts in South West to withdraw from nationally-bargained agreements.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Housing crises worsen. Labour councils equivocate

Fight for decent housing for all!

By Pete Gilman

Imagine you are a council tenant, and you have lived in your current house or flat for years.

You always pay the rent two weeks in advance and adhere religiously to every aspect of your tenancy agreement. You are then told you and your family are to be evicted in order to make way for someone "in greater housing need."

This is the reality of Tory proposals to end security of tenure and impose "rotation". Tenants removed from council housing will not be rehoused in other council housing and will be expected to move into private sector accommodation, in most cases paying double or treble the rent.

Britain is facing a massive housing crisis. There is an acute and growing shortage of housing for all those on incomes under £30,000. Homelessness is increasing. Private sector rents are soaring.

Thousands of people have been forced to move to cheaper parts of Britain because the cap on housing benefit means they can no longer afford to live in Lon-

don and the South East.

High rents are forcing thousands of people, especially young people, into dependency. Repossessions have risen to nearly 30,000. Estate agents are ruthlessly ripping off their clients. The slum landlord has returned with a vengeance.

The response to all this from Labour's front bench has been, in the words of one South London Labour Council leader, "a little inadequate."

MARKET

The Tories say the market will solve the housing crises, but the market only serves the rich, and only produces what is most profitable for big business.

The Tories plan to impose 80% of market rents on all social housing, this means rent increases of £200-400 a week, a catastrophe for huge numbers of people.

So far only one council, Islington, has refused to implement it. If all Labour councils were to follow Islington's lead this Tory policy would be dead.

Labour should make a manifesto commitment that

when they return to office they will immediately introduce a two-year moratorium on social rent increases, after which rent increases will never go above the rate of inflation, and the full restoration of all housing benefit.

Housing is a basic necessity for life, but to the Tories it is a commodity to be used for maximum profit. Thatcher virtually abolished the building of council housing in the 1980s, creating huge shortages for future generations and driving vast numbers into the private sector.

Thatcher also introduced "right to buy", ostensibly to enable council tenants to become property owners by buying their council home but in reality as a means of depleting council housing stock.

The "right to buy", compounded by the virtual end of council house building, was a crucial component of Thatcher's ideological offensive against council housing.

Our number one priority must be to fight for a massive increase in the building of new social housing, the majority council housing.

During the period of the Blair government, both the National Housing Federation and housing charity Shelter called for the building of 100,000 new social housing homes every year.

With modern technology and the political will, this is an entirely achievable target. Indeed, it may be too modest.

PRIVATE SECTOR

In the private sector there is a desperate need for imposing a cap on all rents and strict regulation of what is a complete jungle.

We need to unite Labour activists, trade unions, tenants associations, anti-cuts campaigns, students and claimants, to fight the Tories' inhuman housing policies.

We need to build a mass movement not only to stop the Tories but to mobilise in support of the policies to solve the housing crises once and for all.

We must commit a future Labour government to implement a programme based on meeting housing need, not serving the interests of the market.

Right-wing threat to anti-war meeting

Student news

Young Tory louts have put out a call online to disrupt a Workers' Liberty student forum on Thursday 15 November about the meaning of the First World War.

Workers' Liberty member Daniel Cooper was invited to lay a poppy wreath at an official Remembrance service, in his capacity as Acting President of the University of London Union (ULU).

Daniel declined, on principled grounds — that the official remembrance service is a pageant of nationalism, monarchism, and militarism which celebrates the institutions which organised the First World War.

Daniel wrote in a personal statement: "Mourning the butchery of thousands of ordinary people through an act of remembrance side-by-side with the inheritors of an economic system which created the war is not something I wish to take part in. It is an insult to those sent to die, victims of the self interested advancement of the British Empire ...

"I mourn and remember the dead. But my mourning is mixed with bitter anger against the rulers and the system that create such bloodshed."

In response to Daniel's stand, Tory students and assorted right-wingers, jingoists and militarists have crawled out of the woodwork to raise an outcry against him. Petitions have been started calling for his resignation, and articles written arguing that even to suggest a debate on the politics of remembrance is beyond the pale.

The meeting takes place in at 7pm Room 3C at ULU on Malet St, London.

March on 21 Nov

In an interview with the Mancunion student newspaper (5 Nov), National Union of Students President Liam Burns says of the 2010 siege of Millbank Tower that "occupying a locus of power is not a disproportionate response to the trebling of fees".

This is a welcome progression from the outright condemnation of his predecessor, Aaron Porter. But Burns also says that he has planned the 21 November NUS demonstration to bypass Millbank and avoid anything similar. He is worried about "the danger of violence".

During the November 2010 demonstration against £9k tuition fees and the scrapping of EMA, some 2,000 students stormed the Conservative Party headquarters.

It is often the role of more thought-out activists to advise restraint or discipline in the face of police provocation, to shield people from unnecessary arrest, or on occasion to stop them doing something stupid and counter productive.

However, Millbank was not that. Mr Burns should probably concern himself more with building a coherent fight against the ruling-class decimation of public education and less about sending his full-time staff out on a moral crusade against "vandalism".

The NUS demonstration will assemble at 11am in Temple Place and will march to Kennington Park. For more info, see anticuts.com

ULU win

Michael Chessum has won the University of London Union (ULU) presidential election.

Michael is a co-founder and leading activist of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC). He won 770 votes to his nearest rival Will Hall's 513.

Hall is a Tory councillor in Henley.