



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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www.workersliberty.org

TORIES TRASH NHS FOR PRIVATE PROFIT

See page 5

**Reverse NHS cuts
to stop A&E crisis**

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

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Solidarity with Iranian workers

By Amin Kazemi,
Iranian Revolutionary
Marxists' Tendency

Most of the information that has come out of the meetings in Geneva on 7-8 November (to discuss Iran's nuclear programme) point to the French side taking a much tougher stand than the other imperialist countries.

Some even blame them for the failure. They are all going to meet again on 20 November; meanwhile the Iranian regime has agreed to more inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The reason the Iranian regime is at the negotiating table is the collapsing economy. The ever-increasing and tightening sanctions, coming on top of decades of incompetence and corruption, have meant that all the economic and social ills that have existed in society have become exacerbated.

We should also not forget that 10 years ago, when Khatami — another "smiling" cleric — was the regime's "president", the Islamic Republic suspended uranium enrichment for two years. It got absolutely nothing in return and this was the main reason for the "reformists" becoming weaker and Ahmadinejad and his cabal re-

placing them. So this time the regime is insisting on getting something at each step of the process.

On international sanctions, we have to just look at a few statistics to know how bad things are (and we should bear in mind that all official figures are massively watered down).

During the eight Ahmadinejad years the proportion of the population living under the poverty line went from 22% to 40%. Now, because of the \$28bn budget deficit, up to 22 million people face losing their cash subsidies.

INFLATION

This is happening in a society where inflation is 42% and for foodstuffs is 60% (including a whopping 162% for potatoes).

As for unemployment, it is 12.2% (17.7% for women) and reaches 28.3% for youth. Even 40% of university graduates are unemployed!

These are not just dry statistics. They have real consequences for workers and their families. So when we say that the GDP shrank by 5.4% last year we can see that it led to many industries either collapsing or being brought to their knees. For example, Kerman Motor and Modiran, two of the smaller vehicle manufacturers, have ceased

months, and after execution their families had problems getting hold of their bodies! Right now there are 80 political prisoners on hunger strike against the lack of proper medical care in prisons.

Second, the regime continues to imprison dozens of labour activists.

Shahrokh Zamani, who tried to set up a painters' and decorators' union, and Reza Shahabi, one of the leaders of the Vahed bus drivers, are among the better known ones. Their conditions are appalling and every basic need of the prisoner is used as a lever to put more pressure on him (e.g., receiving medication after its "best before" date).

Despite the massive repression, however, there are still many sporadic and short-lived protests and strikes. E.g., on October 20, striking workers at Bandar Imam's Fajr Petrochemical Company brought production to a halt. That is why it is the duty of all trade unionists, labour activists and socialists everywhere to step up their solidarity work in support of Iranian workers.

This will help them to withstand the blows of reaction better and prepare themselves for the big battles of when the repressive apparatus becomes weaker.

Iranian president Rouhani

production altogether. Even Iran Khodro, the biggest in the Middle East, has had a 44% drop in production.

These all point to a massive social explosion sooner or later. So the regime, fully mindful of what happened to the Shah in 1978-79, is trying to save its own skin. It is going to New York and Geneva to have at least some of the sanctions lifted or eased as quickly as possible.

So there is a clear trend towards resolving the nuclear issue because the regime knows that it will not be long before there are mass protests and strikes against the deteriorating situation.

There is no "new regime" in Iran. In one month alone the regime has hanged 54 and imprisoned 69 oppositionists. In the past few days it has executed two Kurdish activists: Shirkooh Moarefi and Habibollah Golparipoor. Before they were executed they were held in solitary confinement for

French Marxists warn of NF danger

By Martin Thomas

"There is a real danger that the National Front might seize control at the local level (city councils for example) and perhaps even join the government".

This is the view of the French revolutionary socialist group L'Étincelle in the perspectives document for its congress on 9-10 November.

The danger, so the comrades argued, cannot be countered by seeking a catch-all left unity with the Socialist Party, now in government.

The electoral rise of the National Front comes from people's discontent at the unrelievedly pro-capitalist policies of the Socialist Party government and the chauvinist agitation - most recently against Roma people - pushed by the SP it-

self, perhaps in an effort to outbid the NF.

Most workers are convinced — and maybe it is even true — that the NF has changed itself into a far-right and racist, but not really fascist, party.

L'Étincelle plans to build on mobilisations like the recent strikes and demonstrations by high school students in protest at the

deportation of two students of immigrant background.

The group seeks to take its message into factories through its 42 regular workplace bulletins.

But the congress stressed that, to gain the political means to do such work, "it will be critical (at least in the near future) to prioritise recruiting young mili-

tants", mainly in university campuses and high schools.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which publishes Solidarity, sent a delegate to L'Étincelle's congress, as L'Étincelle sent one to our AWL conference on 26-27 October.

• bit.ly/letinc

Remembering Azad Ahmed

By Omar Raii

On Saturday 2 November a memorial service was held in London by the Worker-Communist Party of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan in memory of their fallen comrade Azad Ahmed.

Azad was kidnapped and killed a week previ-

ously in Kirkuk, Iraq by unknown assailants. Members of the Worker-Communist Party of Iraq, Kurdistan and Iran were all present to pay tribute to Ahmed, a longstanding member of the Iraqi party's Central Committee, who had long been a prominent advocate of secularism, pluralism and

workers' rights in Iraq.

Workers' Liberty also sent a solidarity message of condolence and support, remarking on our pride in the links we have with comrades in Iraq, Kurdistan and Iran and pledging to continue working together with them in the fight for a better world.

Instead of Wonga, living wage for all!

By Joan Trevor

High-cost credit/payday loan companies, whose turnover is estimated to be £2.2 billion per year, are coming under pressure both for their lending practices and for the way they advertise.

In June Wonga raised its typical APR from 4,214% to 5,853%. Companies have been criticised for using cute advertising characters – such as Wonga’s “straight-talking” elderly characters the Wongies – and taking out slots during children’s TV.

Representatives of three of the biggest companies, Wonga, QuickQuid and Mr Lender, appeared before Parliament’s Business Select Committee on 5 November to answer questions. They insisted that they carry out rigorous checks on who they lend to and only lend when they are certain people can repay loans. They defended their exorbitant interest rates by saying that people only take out small loans

for a short time.

Yet a report by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) earlier this year showed that a third of loans taken out in 2011/12 had been “rolled over” (extended beyond the original term agreed, often incurring extra fees) at least once, and that rolled over debts accounted for almost half of lenders’ revenues. Nearly 20% of firms’ revenue came from the 5% of loans rolled over four times or more.

Alarming, the big companies such as Wonga represent the more “ethical” end of the market. There are more than 200 regulated payday loan companies in the UK, that is, companies operating with a credit licence. Below such companies exist innumerable unregulated loan sharks and fly-by-night operations taking advantage of the inability of poor people or people in crisis to access other credit.

The OFT report addressed the 50 leading payday lenders that account for 90% of the UK market with its concerns; several

Wonga: weird ads, bad news

left the market at once and three had their licences revoked.

The regulated sector as a whole has gone from £900m in 2008/9 to £2.2bn today.

Wonga’s fortunes have soared during the recession, from £14.1m in 2010 to £59.2m in 2011 and £84.5m in 2012. Wonga now has an advertising budget of £16m per year and recently released a half-hour film, *12 Portraits*, by a BAFTA-award winning director in which satisfied customers share their stories.

Companies such as Wonga say they have a high customer satisfaction

rating. But for those payday loan customers who cannot pay back their loan misery looms, and their numbers are rising.

Citizens Advice Bureaux report a 10-fold increase in the use of payday loans between 2009-10 and 2013.

Unlike in many countries, in the UK the interest rates that companies charge is not capped.

The Money Advice Service in their annual Christmas spending review found that one third of UK adults will pay for Christmas this year using credit cards and 1.2m people plan to take out payday loans. Almost one in 10 adults is still paying for Christmas

2012. The Public Accounts Committee recently estimated that about two million people in the UK use payday loans.

The increased scrutiny of the sector by public bodies – including the Advertising Standards Authority, OFT, Financial Conduct Authority and Competition Commission – is good though overdue and still far too lenient. More to the point, it does not begin to or even aim to address the core problem that allows the loan sharks to thrive: too many people in the UK have too little money and, increasingly, are forced to borrow in order to make ends meet.

Labour leader Ed Miliband recently criticised what he called “the hidden Wonga economy”.

Speeches and hand-wringing are not enough.

The Labour Party and trade unions should put forward a political programme to guarantee jobs for all at a living wage, and adequate benefits for those unable to work.

Media whips up anti-migrant racism

By Charlotte Zeleus

That we have come to expect this kind of gutter racism from the *Daily Express* does not make its “crusade to stop new EU migrants” any less disgusting.

Last week, the paper added that “95% support the Crusade”. Another headline proclaimed that “98%” were “demanding” a ban on new migrants.

95% of whom, exactly? Later in the article it is revealed that this was an estimate of callers to one radio show. The Express’s cover-

age is littered with unsubstantiated claims. They consistently and definitively talk of “70,000 new migrants”, despite the actual estimate being between 30,000 and 70,000, with government officials stating that migration is almost impossible to predict.

Their pages are spread with images that are presumably supposed to show the horrors of migration from Bulgaria and Romania. In reality this looks more like a game of “lets find some ‘non-English’ looking people and take photos of them for the

paper”. The articles in the *Daily Express* talk vaguely of the “damage” immigrants cause to the country, often citing strain on the NHS and use of the benefits system.

In fact discriminatory, and harsh rules restrict immigrants’ access to jobs and benefits. According to a wide-ranging study based on data from the Office for National Statistics’ Labour Force Survey, immigrants are 45 percent less likely to claim from the state than “native”, British-born citizens.

Even if migrant workers



were statistically more likely to claim state benefits, we would still oppose the racism being whipped up by the likes of the *Daily Express* and support freedom of movement.

But many workers at the

sharp end of austerity latch onto the media’s scapegoating of migrants for “answers” to their legitimate grievances about homes, jobs, and services. The labour movement needs to provide other, anti-racist, answers, that highlight the common class interests of British-born and migrant workers.

Joining up the dots between the conditions of mainly migrant low paid workers in the NHS and other areas with the cuts happening to those services serves to expose who is really to blame.

Nazis confronted

By Carl Dobbs

On Saturday 9 November, various fascists and neo-Nazis (including the newly-formed “New British Union”) called a demonstration at the Greek Embassy in London, in solidarity with the jailed leadership of Greek fascist party Golden Dawn.

Although many of those behind the demo are marginal cranks whose risible pretensions rather outweigh their social significance (the NBU’s handful of members enjoying dressing up in uniforms and pretending it’s 1936), such openly Nazi groups could grow in conditions of ongoing austerity and mainstream media and state racism by attracting disaffected activists on the EDL’s right-wards fringe.

Fortunately, the fascists didn’t get to have their fun unimpeded. Supporters of the Anti-Fascist Network mobilised against them, and were able to engage a contingent of Nazis in what a statement describes as a “frank discussion” at their pre-demo meet up. Some of the younger fascists were physically escorted onto trains home, never arriving at the demonstration. Fascists were later seen bleating on social media about being set upon by a “band” of “reds”.

Golden Dawn flags seized from the Nazis were the spoils of the day. AFN supporters have vowed to continue to mobilise to subvert and disrupt fascist organisation wherever it occurs.

• More: ldn-afn.org

Decent homes for all! Fight to scrap the Bedroom Tax!

A report on the bedroom tax by Leeds Hands Off Our Homes shows the stress, poverty, and intimidation is being piled on the disabled and vulnerable.

Housing officers and social landlords often force tenants to prioritise rent above food and heating. The right to family life, equality for the disabled,

and food and shelter are all assaulted by the bedroom tax.

Hands Off Our Homes is one of the most inspiring campaigns that has been seen in West Yorkshire for many years. It has helped prevent the eviction of two tenants, and is running a political campaign against the policy and Leeds city council’s implementation of it.

The campaign up and down the country has forced Ed Miliband and the shadow cabinet to commit to scrapping the bedroom tax.

As *Solidarity* went to press, Labour had forced a vote in Parliament on the issue, forcing Lib Dem MPs to choose between coalition policy and Lib-

Dem conference’s opposition to the bedroom tax. If the vote falls due to Lib Dem betrayal of promises made, Labour councils and the Labour-controlled Welsh government should refuse to implement the policy any more. Some councils have already been pressured into a no-evictions policy, and the reclassification of

bedrooms under other headings. This needs to be an across-the-board policy of defiance as part of the wider campaign for abolition.

Some Housing Associations have over 50% of their affected tenants in arrears. Housing Associations in the Wirral and in the North East of England are threatening to knock

down three-bedroom homes because there is no demand due to the bedroom tax.

This shows the irrationality of this policy and the housing sector in general. **The only rational response is the abolition of landlordism and the public provision of a decent home for all.**

Mystics and mental illness

Letters



Martin Thomas is right that some mental illness “hurts” the sufferer (“Facebook, CPA, and socialism”, *Solidarity* 302, 6 November 2013). The person who is depressed knows they are depressed and does not like it.

But a person experiencing psychosis — delusions and hallucinations — may not know they are psychotic and does not necessarily experience subjective suffering. Most of the suffering that such people experience is due to the specific content of their psychosis and the way they are treated by the society they live in. The social context has a large bearing on the content. In our society, stigma of mental illness and the general atomisation of society probably leads to more paranoid-type psychosis.

Some prophets and mystics, such as Ezekiel or Teresa of Avila, were probably psychotic. However, these people were honoured by the societies they lived in. They were regarded as having a direct line to God. Far from being hurt by their illness, they must have been extremely happy, ecstatic even.

But generally these people were not founders of religions. The great religious founders, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Swami Vivekananda, gained fame because of their ethical, political and social leadership.

They may have engaged in mystical practices or taken drugs to induce temporary psychotic states. But their psychological makeup was more akin to a modern charismatic political leader. If we want to assign a modern psychiatric label then these people would probably now be diagnosed as psychopaths. Psychopaths usually have a very good grasp of reality — all the better to manipulate those around them.

The Tibetan Buddhist pantheon unwittingly makes this distinction between psychosis and psychopathy quite well. The political leaders are the lamas who run the monasteries. They are believed to be bodhisattvas, beings who have achieved Buddhahood and who come back lifetime after lifetime to run the monasteries and the (old) Tibetan state.

After they die, a search ensues to find a baby who is then proclaimed the next incarnation — they are whisked into the monastery and prepared for power. Like the British private school system, the separation from home creates an attachment disorder which is then cultivated into psychopathic personality traits, which will be useful when the child joins the ranks of the ruling elite.

Pre-colonised Tibet’s criminal justice system shows that these monks were not kind-hearted wise men on the lines that the Dalai Lama now presents to the world.

For Tibetans with psychosis there is another path. Psychotic illness, of the schizophrenic type, usually starts in late teenage years. In the Tibetan system, when teenagers start to develop the symptoms of psychosis they are feted as “oracles” and moved to the monasteries where they are taught meditation techniques.

These techniques allow the oracle some control over when they have a psychotic episode. The community then arranges a ritual where the oracle is severely restrained by ritual cos-

tume (including a hat that can weigh as much as a small child). As the ritual begins, the oracle enters into an extremely explosive psychotic state where they rant and rave. Lay people attend these ceremonies to get their fortunes told. But in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon oracles have a very lowly place compared to bodhisattvas, and their pronouncements have the same authority as horoscopes.

The usefulness of modern psychiatric diagnostic criteria is questionable. The “psychopath” label is particularly vague and problematic. Psychiatrists researching this field are keen to stress that some psychopaths may benefit society, and have played a huge role in shaping human history.

What are the links between mystical religious experience, like that of Teresa of Avila (above) and psychosis?

Even if the founders of the world’s religions would now be diagnosed with a psychiatric illness, their endeavours were nevertheless impressive and, for their time, progressive. They are not progressive any more. Once we saw through a glass darkly, now we have modern science and a much better grip on reality.

It is a strange twist in human development that at the time when we have discovered the Higgs Boson, so many of us still rely on psychopathic ancients like Saint Paul as our guide to reality.

It is a strange twist in human development that at the time when we have discovered the Higgs Boson, so many of us still rely on psychopathic ancients like Saint Paul as our guide to reality.

Todd Hamer, South London

Facebook gives us access

Martin Thomas’ article on Facebook (“Facebook, CPA, and socialism”, *Solidarity* 302, 6 November 2013) makes some valid points about the ways in which people interact online, and the benefits of face-to-face interaction.

However, I don’t think it should be forgotten that for some people online interaction is the only or main kind they can have.

This may especially be the case for some people with disabilities. My health has been poor of late, and this has largely prevented me from attending meetings, but I value the online interaction I get via Facebook and email, even when I only read and don’t post.

The internet allows me to continue to access discussions and debates from which I might otherwise be completely excluded.

Hannah Wood, East London

Continuing debate

Workers’ Liberty is continuing debate — on our website, in Discussion Bulletins, and in branch and public meetings — on the issues of religion, Islamism, and Islamophobia raised in the controversy about the 2006 introduction to *Workers’ Liberty* 3/1.

Future editions of *Solidarity* will carry contributions to the debate.

Polemic was wrong on Lewisham

I am writing this letter in personal capacity since the consensus of Lewisham People Before Profit was against us replying to your attack on us as a group in *Solidarity* 301 (“Lewisham: Our plans to go on winning”, 29 October), largely since many of those present at our monthly meetings do not read your paper and believe that very few Lewisham voters do.

However, your defamatory political attack has proved to be the preliminary to your involvement in an authoritarian bureaucratic manoeuvre of the kind one would associate with Stalinists or Cliffites. Namely, the moving of a new set of standing orders for open meetings of the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, which, by demanding that resolutions for the open meeting be tabled one week before the organising committee meetings, mean that if the present schedule of the two bodies is adhered to, we would have to give three weeks’ notice of any resolution.

This is plainly designed to make it more or less impossible to alter or criticise the line of the organising committee, dominated by the Labour Party and its close allies, such as yourselves.

The article wreaks of McCarthyism in its attempt to link People Before Profit with “the Communist Party or similar”. Nobody in the organisation is currently in any Communist Party as far as I am aware.

The fact that a couple of leading members may have been members of the old CPGB before 1991 is hardly relevant to the political situation in Lewisham in 2013, and the fact that another member was once in his youth, even longer ago, a member of a Maoist organisation with “Communist” in the title even less so.

The vast majority of our members have never been in the Communist Party; we have more people in our ranks who at some stage in their lives were Labour Party members, and many more ex-Labour voters, and as far as I am aware most of our members were never in any political party prior to their involvement in PBP via community campaigning

against cuts and privatisation.

Nor have we made some abrupt left turn in relation to the Labour Party. We stood against the Labour Party in every single ward in Lewisham (bar one where the Socialist Party were standing) in 2010 and we have stood in a number of council by-elections and a GLA election over the last three years.

We have always said that, at a local level, Lewisham Labour Party was committed to a programme of cuts, outsourcing, privatisation and PFI, most recently the PFI scheme for lampposts. Equally, we have always held Blair and Brown to blame for PFI at the national level.

Workers’ Liberty has made a right turn since 2010 when Jill Mountford stood for Parliament in Peckham against Harriet Harman, and the occasion some years earlier when she stood against Labour in a Lewisham council by-election in which I went round the doors campaigning for her.

Your frantic desire to hold on to (or regain) Labour Party membership cards does you no credit at all. The reason the Labour Party has gone into overdrive against PBP since the 10,000-strong November hospital march and the 40,000-strong January hospital march is a fear of a popular electoral revolt along the lines of what happened in Kidderminster/Wyre Forest, which impacted at the parliamentary and not just local council level.

They know that, as the most consistent fighters against cuts, privatisation, and PFI in the borough, we would be the electoral beneficiaries of such justified popular revulsion against the destruction of the NHS by creeping privatisation and PFI and therefore seek to destroy and smear us by any means possible.

You must be well aware of the way the PFI debt will eventually strangle either Lewisham Hospital or the Greenwich Queen Elizabeth hospital or both. The detailed figures are available on the PBP web site.

Toby Abse, Lewisham People Before Profit (pc)

Marxism At Work: Marxists, Trade Unions, and the Workplace

Saturday 7 December, 11am-5pm, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

Workshops and discussions will include:

- Marxists in unions and workplaces
- Producing and distributing socialist workplace bulletins
- What is “the rank and file”? What is “the bureaucracy”?
- Our Fantasy Union

The event will involve various learning formats. For more, see bit.ly/7dec-maw

Reverse NHS cuts to stop A&E crisis

In September this year there were 43% more patients waiting more than four hours in A&E than two years ago.

There were 89% more 4-12 hour "trolley waits" - patients who have been processed through A&E only to be dumped in a corridor somewhere waiting for a bed in another part of the hospital.

Cliff Mann, of the College for Emergency Medicine, told the *Guardian* "This winter will probably be the worse than last year, which was the worst year we have ever had".

The figures reflect both A&E cuts and cuts elsewhere.

Wards have been shut down. Community services have been cut. The number of overnight hospital beds in the NHS has gone down 6% since 2010. Bed occupancy is averaging above 85%, the maximum for safe patient care.

CLOGGED UP

Once patients are in A&E there are no beds to refer them on to. The system is clogged up right to the front door.

Patients on waiting lists wait so long that they get worse and end up in A&E. Patients who have been treated are being discharged too early and without adequate community support, and come back into hospital via A&E.

GP walk-in centres were easing the pressure on A&Es. But one in four walk-in centres has closed since the general election due to "financial pressures". A survey out this week shows that 20% of those who would have used a walk-in centre will now go straight to A&E.

Dr Bruce Keogh, medical director of the NHS Commissioning Board, has announced his answer — to shut down more A&E departments and make it more difficult to get an ambulance to take you to hospital.

None of this is necessary even in the general cuts regime. Last year, NHS bosses delivered the service £2.2 billion under a budget which already factored in the government's £20 billion cuts.

Instead of using this money to expand community care, the Chancellor, George Osborne, squirrelled the money away

into "deficit reduction".

The people in control have made decisions to cut the NHS — and to make extra savings on top. They are doing this because they want to turn healthcare into a viable money-making business, and hand over NHS cash to the bankers and private sector parasites.

Keogh is expected to argue for a vision where a few super A&Es deal with major traumas and remaining A&Es are downgraded to Urgent Care Centres. The only beneficiaries of this scheme would be private corporations, who are looking to run the Urgent Care Centres for profit.

Some that think the future of the NHS will be decided at the next general election. They are deluded. The future of the NHS will be decided in the streets and by industrial action in our hospitals.

Labour Party policy will shift towards reversing — rather than just remodelling — NHS privatisation and marketisation, and towards reversing NHS cuts, as and when we mobilise.

Mobilising now will also save lives this winter. And our Lewisham Hospital victory shows that mobilisation can win.

Targets or trade unions?

lesser evil, and that anyone who objects must be made to keep quiet.

The market system that NHS hospitals are currently forced to operate encourages fraud. If NHS organisations were free to admit failings without fear, then it would be easier to make improvements.

It is widely recognised that if nurses are afraid to admit errors, then patients are put at more risk, and neither the nurses nor the system learn from the error.

If a nurse realises that she or he has given a patient the wrong medication, then often no-one would know unless the nurse admits it. If the nurse fears a punishment, then she or he is unlikely to admit the error.

PROMPTLY

But it is better both for the patient and for the hospital if the error is admitted promptly. Then remedial action can be taken for the patient; the nurse can be retrained or supervised if necessary; and factors such as having two different drugs stored side by side which look the same can be eliminated.

Yet the NHS operates more and more with a "blame" culture, and that culture is fed down from managers to other staff. In Colchester, managers put pressure on staff to falsify the records, and bullied junior staff to prevent an exposure.

Another idea in nursing is the "hierarchy of needs": it is not possible to provide care and compassion for others when your own basic physical and emotional needs have not been met.

If nurses are unable to take lunchbreaks on 12 hour shifts, then it will be harder for them to care for patients, however strict the "targets".

The RCN reported on 12 November that there are nearly 20,000 nursing vacancies currently unfilled in England.

The number of nursing student places commissioned has

been cut 15% since 2010-11, so the RCN forecasts a shortage of 47,000 registered nurses by 2016.

As a result nurses are doing an estimated one million hours of unpaid overtime per week.

The "four to one" campaign, www.4to1.org.uk, demands a mandatory minimum of one nurse for four patients. The NHS medical average in 2009 was 14:1, which means a 20% higher mortality rate.

Identifying and tackling problems depends on resources and culture in a workplace. There are organisations which, in the Colchester case, helped provide support to staff, and allowed them to whistleblow, and expose the problems in the waiting times for cancer patients. Organisations which can help staff trust each other, and feel strong enough to try to change things. Organisations which can fight for better resources.

Those organisations are trade unions.

A union can provide a safe place for members to voice their concerns and discuss how to improve things. Trade unions can be experts in health and safety.

Yet many trade union workplace organisations are too weak to do what they could do. That is a large part of the problem afflicting the NHS at the moment.

The media will use the Colchester scandal to try to paint the NHS as a failing institution, and add weight to calls for "reforms" that mean destruction. But the real answer is to ensure that all NHS services have the resources they need.

And a chief way to do that is to build strong unions in NHS workplaces.



On 5 November, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) reported that at Colchester General Hospital cancer waiting times had been misrecorded so that the hospital avoided financial penalties for not meeting targets. When staff tried to object, they were bullied by management.

Alarm is a sound response to cancer waiting times being too long. Some cancers can metastasise (have the cancer spread from one organ to another) quite fast, and delay can make the difference between the cancer being curable or not.

But if a hospital does not have the resources to meet the targets, what should it do? If it stops providing cancer treatment, it will receive even less money. It is easy to see how managers can come to think that falsifying records is the

Black Americans' struggle for freedom

The US Army which won World War Two, and prided itself on its victory over the Nazi racists, was itself segregated.

African Americans were hived off into separate units, often working as cargo handlers or cooks, and commanded by white officers.

Not until 1948 did the US government decide to desegregate its armed forces. Not until after the end of the Korean war, in 1954, was desegregation carried through.

Since the defeat of radical reconstruction in the Southern states after the US civil war of 1861-5 which abolished slavery, the now-formally-free African Americans in the South had faced an explicit code of laws, called Jim Crow, segregating public and private facilities.

In the North racism was less formal, but real. And when the federal government had to choose — as in the army — it chose segregation.

World War Two saw vast movement of African Americans from rural areas in the South to work in factories in the North, a movement which continued through the 1950s and 60s.

As African Americans moved into the armed forces, the factories, and the cities, increasingly they demanded equality, and became more able to win the support of at least some white workers for the demand.

The article we print here is an abridgement of extracts, published in *Labor Action* of 9 June 1947, from a pamphlet on civil rights by Ernest Rice McKinney.

McKinney, an African American himself, was then secretary of the Workers' Party, the "Third Camp" Trotskyist organisation in which Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, and others were also active.

The Cold War and the lurch to the right in US politics in the witch-hunting McCarthy period stalled the struggle for equality. The socialist left in the US lost ground. McKinney had joined the Communist Party in Pittsburgh in 1920, at the age of 24, and A J Muste's Conference for Progressive Labor Action in 1929. With the CPLA, he joined the US Trotskyists in 1933. He had sided with Shachtman and Draper when they divided from the "orthodox" Trotskyists in 1939-40 over attitudes to the USSR's invasions of Poland and Finland. In 1950, like others around that time, and while remaining socialist-minded, he drifted away from organised politics.

The great movement for equality which McKinney called for would explode only in the late 1950s and early 60s.

It won formal equality for African-Americans, and the removal of Jim Crow laws from the lawbooks, in the mid-1960s.

Yet African Americans are 2.1 times as likely to be unemployed as white Americans, and have a median household income only 59% of white Americans'. That economic gap is as big as it was before the civil rights laws of the mid-1960s.

The social revolution which McKinney wanted, which will level up US workers both black and white to full social equality, is still to be won.

The word "Negro", used by McKinney, was then considered the most respectful term to denote African Americans. It fell out of usage in the late 1960s and was replaced by the term "African American" in the late 1980s. We have also not updated his use of "he" to mean "she or he", etc.

We want to be free

By Ernest Rice McKinney (1947)

We are not treated as human beings; North, South, East or West. If we go for a job we get the hard and dirty labour. If we want to rent a house, we are directed to the cabins in the field, the shanties across the tracks and the slum areas of the great cities.

If we are hungry we are told: "we do not serve coloured people," or "we will serve you in the kitchen."

When we go to the theatre, if we are admitted at all, we are told that Negroes must sit in the gallery. In the hospitals the policy is, "white people first." The education of our children is postponed until after the cotton is picked or until a new "white" school is built. Then the Negro children get the old ramshackle building.

"Justice" in the courts, for us, is likely to be determined by the colour of the person who accuses us or who is accused by us. If a white man accuses us or we accuse a white man, justice is not blind, but on the side of the white man. If only Negroes are involved, then "justice" can be determined by the flip of a coin.

This is enough. I could go on, and so could you, with this recital of humiliation, degradation, intimidation, pious hypocrisy, terror and Jim Crow.

You know exactly what I am talking about. You and I have been through these things. We did not have to read it in the daily papers. We have been unwilling actors in this miserable and inhuman drama.

We didn't need to wait for the belated and weak utterances of the "inter-racial" committees. There is nothing much that you and I can learn from the sermons preached during "Brotherhood Week." We heard these sermons even during the days of slavery from the stall provided for us in the church balcony.

Yes, this is enough for you and for me. If this article were for white people primarily, I would have to say a great deal more. More explanation and detail would be necessary.

But we are not addressing ourselves to them right now. This booklet is directed to Negroes primarily; to all Negroes.

There is one thing we have to admit right at the beginning. There is a Negro problem in the United States.

I have heard both white people and Negroes say that there is no Negro problem. "It is really a white problem," they say. While I can understand what these people are attempting to support, you and I certainly cannot agree with this analysis.

What the people mean, who hold this point of view, is that if the white people would let Negroes alone, or treat them just like other people are treated, there would be no Negro problem. But this is exactly what the problem is: how can white people be persuaded to stop discriminating against Negroes, to stop segregating us and to stop lynching us? How can this government and this country be persuaded to accord us the full democratic rights accorded to every other group except the Negro?

The real and genuinely important question therefore, is, what must be done? What are we, as Negroes, going to do?

We are an oppressed race or an oppressed people. The East Indians, the Chinese and the black Africans are oppressed by foreign imperialist overlords who have invaded their countries. But these countries should belong to the Indians, the Chinese and the black Africans. It would be correct for these people to run the invaders out, win their national independence and establish their own national government.

Our country is the United States. We love this country as well as the next man. Why shouldn't we love this country? It is a vast, fertile, beautiful land abounding in natural resources. There is everything: here to supply the wants of the people, to produce abundance and happiness for the people. We have made great contributions to the building of this country. As much as the next man. We have contributed to this country. The strength of this country rests on our backs. Our sweat and toil built this country. We are natives of the country. We really know nothing of any other country.

Some white people talk about being descendants of the Mayflower. We were here before the Mayflower. We are part and parcel of the soil of this country. All of our political, economic and social roots are in the United States. All of our life is bound up in the whole life of this country.

We say again that this is our country and we want it to be our country. Just as it is the country of the white man. This is no more his country than it is our country. We will not let any white man tell us that this is his country but not our country.

We want to stay here. But not as slaves. We refuse to be slaves any longer. Two hundred and fifty years as chattel and 82 years of oppression under freedom are long enough and too long. If we don't see this and submit further to the insult which has been heaped upon us, then we have no right to be free.

STRIKE THE FIRST BLOW

Frederick Douglass understood this decades ago when he said: "They who would be free must themselves first strike the blow."

The Chinese want to run China as Chinese. The Indians want to run India as Indians. The black Africans want to run Africa as Africans. That is proper and correct for them. That is as it should be.

But we do not want to run the United States as Negroes. We want to run the country as full citizens of a Democratic Republic. We want to be equal to everybody else. Nothing more and nothing less. We want political equality, social equality and economic equality. We want this all over the US without distinction of place or section. We demand this equality in the South, too.

We do not ask for more than other people have, only for what they have. We want all the rights, for instance, which a white worker has. The equal right to a job, and to any job for which we are qualified. We demand equal opportunity to prepare for any and all jobs which are or may be available to the white worker.

We demand the right of equal educational opportunity, the right to travel like other people, the right to seek entertainment unmolested and unrestricted. We will insist on the right to eat in all public places and to be accommodated in all public places just like other people.

While all of this should be clear to everybody, unfortunately this is not the case. There are people in this country who do not understand these things. There are many people who do understand but who pretend they don't.

There are Negroes who do not take a forthright stand on this question of social, political and economic equality for Negroes. There are Negroes who say; "I don't care about social equality, what I want is economic and political equality." There are Negroes who say: "I don't want to go any place that I am not wanted."

But what are some of the places where Negroes are not wanted? The so-called "white neighbourhoods," restaurants, colleges, theatres, department stores, playgrounds, libraries, parks, swimming pools, the sales force of corporations, clerical jobs, engineering staffs, churches, dining cars and many trades unions. That is, there are privately owned institutions and enterprises which do not want Negroes, there are tax-

e in a free country

supported public places which do not want Negroes and there are federal, state and municipal Institutions which do not want Negroes.

If we decide to stay away from all the places where we are not wanted there will be very few places we will go and very few things we will do.

In a certain city once where some white hooligans were driving Negroes from a swimming pool supported by public taxation, a Negro editor took the position that he would not carry on a campaign against this outrage because: "these white people are not going to have Negro men in that pool with their women." That is, according to this editor, the white people were not going to tolerate "social equality."

In New York City a petty judge decided that the state equal rights law did not apply in a situation where a Negro man and a white woman went into a restaurant together to eat. The refusal of the proprietor to serve them was upheld by this judge.

OBJECTED

A steel company hired a Negro man to work in its filing department. A white girl employee of that department objected to working with a Negro and was upheld by the superintendent of the department.

It was the custom of a YWCA in a city to hold periodic staff meetings to which all executives from the various branches in the city were instructed to attend. There were four Negro executives from the Negro branch and of course they attended. At the end of the meeting tea was always served. It was understood, however, that the Negro "ladies" would not remain for tea. The Negro women would announce that they must get back, to their offices and the white women would express deep regret that the Negro women could not remain.

The Republican and Democratic parties have national, state and city headquarters during election campaigns. Being very anxious that Negroes shall not be ignored, these parties establish committees of leading Negro politicians. As a rule, however, the Negro headquarters is separated from the general headquarters. If it is in the same building it is isolated and segregated.

A great railroad system some years back decided that no more Negro messengers should be hired because only men should be hired "who can be promoted to higher positions".

These illustrations help to explain and clarify what is in-

involved in what is known as "social equality." They demonstrate that social equality, in the United States, cannot be and is not a "private affair," a simple choice to be made by an individual with the consent of another individual.

In prejudice-ridden America any and all equality for the Negro is looked upon as social equality. According to the American pattern of Jim Crow; to give a Negro a clerical job is social equality. To hire a Negro engineer is to accord the Negro social equality. To give a Negro any work except that of a menial, common labour or domestic service is to "open the doors to social equality."

Negroes must demand and fight for social equality because there is only one kind of equality; full and complete equality. We as Negroes should have all the rights, privileges and opportunities which white people have who are at the same station as we. That is, since Negroes are overwhelmingly wage-earners, we should have the same social, economic and political privileges that white wage-earners have.

No wage-earner, white or black, can have full social, economic and political equality. Not even the white worker has social equality, or economic equality or political equality with his employer, a high government official, the big politicians or with any of the rich.

If white workers understood this they would not feel as they do toward Negroes. If white workers knew that they were socially proscribed by the rich and powerful, economically exploited and politically degraded along with the Negro, they would understand better what attitude they should have to Negroes who have all of these disabilities and the additional one imposed on them as Negroes.

TRAGIC

It is tragic to hear a white worker ask the question: "Would you want your sister to marry a Negro?" He thinks that he has really delivered a mortal blow to the argument for the social equality of Negroes.

It has never occurred to such a white worker that there are white people who take the same attitude toward him in relation to their sisters. They ask: "Would you want your sister to marry a mechanic?"

You see that white workers don't have social equality either. Neither do they have real political equality. And of course being workers they do not have economic equality.

The Workers Party to which I belong says directly that capitalism which is the rule of a few people who own everything, is the source of Jim Crow in the US. That's one of the reasons why Jim Crow is a country-wide practice and not just confined to the South. There is a national policy of Jim Crow to which all Negroes are subjected. The whole country is capitalist and the whole country is Jim Crow. The government of Mississippi is Jim Crow and the government at Washington is Jim Crow.

Negroes are discriminated against in the factories, discriminated against in the factories of Texas and the factories of Michigan. That's why we say that Jim Crow is a part of the present social order and will not be eliminated until it is attacked at its roots.

We of the Workers Party know about and are proud of the many black heroes who have given their lives for freedom. Not only for freedom for themselves but for all the people. Jim Crow America has ignored the real and genuine heroes of the Negro people.

I am talking about Harriet Tubman, Gabriel, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and others. These were truly great human beings; incorruptible, brave, loyal, determined and daring. Just think of it, Harriet Tubman, a Negro woman, taking her shotgun along and going into the South, rescuing Negro men and women from slavery and bringing them north to freedom.

Listen to Peter Poyas, Vesey's magnificent coadjutant, tell one of his men what kind of slaves not to recruit for the Vesey

insurrection: "Don't mention it to those waiting-men who receive presents of old coats from their masters, or they'll betray us." Peter Poyas was no hand-me-down Negro.

Here is what Nat Turner said to his men before they began the Nat Turner insurrection, "Friends and brothers, we are about to commence a great work tonight. Our race is to be delivered from slavery . . . remember that ours is not a war for robbery, nor to satisfy our passions: it is a struggle for freedom. Ours must be deeds not words. Then away to the scene of action."

There was David Walker, pamphleteer and author of Walker's Appeal. Walker was no compromiser. He denounced slavery and all those Negroes who were willing to compromise with the slave system and with the Southern slave masters. He told the slaves to rebel and "when you commence," he said, "do riot trifle, for they will not trifle with you; they want us for their slaves and think nothing of murdering us for order to subject us to that wretched condition; therefore if there is an attempt made by us, kill or be killed."

These are really the great Negroes of the past: Tubman, Turner, Walker, Gabriel, Poyas, Vesey and the other daring men and women who organized the people and led them into the battle for freedom. They and all their kind give the lie to all the slanders about Negroes being cowards.

That's what a lot of people would like for us to be; cowards. Our record needs no defence. Anyone who thinks he is called upon to defend our record is either a scoundrel or a fool. Anyone who attempts to denigrate us will be faced with Tubman and Poyas; Gabriel and Vesey; Turner and Walker, and a thousand unsung and unknown black heroes, right down to this very minute.

The Workers Party is proud to inscribe the names of these black heroes on its banner along with all the unforgettable revolutionary heroes of the oppressed.

We want their names to live and their deeds to live. We want to emulate them and follow their example. We want to be free in a free country and a free world.

• The cartoons accompanying the article appeared in *Labor Action*, 2 June and 23 June 1947

Remembering Kristallnacht

By Tom Harris

75 years ago, Germany and Austria were swept by vicious pogroms against Jews and Jewish property.

The day was called "Kristallnacht" (crystal night) for the way it covered the streets with broken glass. It signalled a shift in Nazi anti-semitism beyond legal and administrative discrimination, and towards mass, violent assaults on the Jewish population.

The pretext for the rioting was the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish-Jewish refugee. Grynszpan shot the junior ambassador, Ernst Vom Rath, five times.

He did not attempt to flee, and identified himself to police. In his pocket was a postcard to his family, reading "I must protest so that the whole world hears my protest, and that I will do. Forgive me." He was only 17 years old.

Grynszpan was acting in retaliation for the persecution of his family in Germany. In August 1938, the Nazi government declared that residence permits for foreigners were cancelled. Permits could theoretically be renewed, but it was announced that Polish Jews would be deported. On 28 October, more than 12,000 Jews were rounded up, allowed only one suitcase of belongings, and transported towards Poland.

However, Polish guards refused them entry, leaving thousands of distressed and homeless Jews stranded on the border. Unable to find shelter in the small border villages in harsh weather conditions, the expelled Jews were caught in miserable suspension. Some tried to escape back into Germany and were shot by soldiers.

It was this catastrophe that led Grynszpan to take revenge at the German embassy in Paris.

The assassination gave the Nazis an excuse (though they would have found another) to launch another wave of anti-Jewish violence. When Adolf Hitler heard of the death of Vom Rath, he abruptly left the commemorative dinner he had been attending. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels announced that "demonstrations should not be prepared or organised by the party, but insofar as they erupt spontaneously, they are not to be hampered." By ten o'clock that evening, Nazi Party paramilitaries in civilian clothing began attacking Jewish shops and property with axes and sledgehammers.

As the night wore on, the ferocity of the attacks intensified. Centuries-old synagogues were soon ablaze, and SS troops

began beating and arresting young Jewish men. Torah scrolls and holy books were burnt and torn up in the street, and gravestones in Jewish cemeteries were smashed and uprooted. Fire-fighters were under instruction to intervene only where damage might spread to non-Jewish property. Jewish shops and homes were left to burn.

The state-induced rioting spread throughout Germany's cities and into Nazi-controlled Austria. It is estimated that 200 synagogues and 7,000 shops were damaged or destroyed, and 91 people killed over two days of rioting, many of them beaten to death in the street or burnt alive.

Around 30,000 Jewish men arrested by the SS were subsequently deported to concentration camps. Suicides have been estimated to number in the thousands.

The reaction of the German public was complicated. Many were drawn into the hysteria of the riots, motivated by years of racist propaganda and by the opportunity to loot. But many others were revolted by what was happening to their neighbours. There are reports of Hitler Youth scouts refusing to carry out instructions, and even local Party functionaries treating their orders with horrified disbelief.

But in the main, the opposition to the riot was passive and too scared of repercussions to intervene. Nazi rule had crushed the labour movement, the left and strangled the traditional channels of dissent.

Eyewitness Arthur Flehinger remembered seeing the faces of people watching the destruction through the curtains and helplessly weeping.

Minorities in danger

The Jewish Socialist Group has produced this statement to mark the anniversary of Kristallnacht and to draw attention to the rise of racism today.

On 9-10 November 1938, Nazi stormtroopers led a wave of violent attacks on Jewish people and property throughout Germany and Austria, which the Nazis had annexed.

During these pogroms, 91 Jews were killed, thousands were taken from their homes and incarcerated in concentration camps, 267 synagogues were destroyed, and some 7,500 Jewish-owned shops were smashed and looted. The Kristallnacht pogroms presaged attempts to remove Jews from German life completely.

Many Jews left hurriedly to seek refuge in friendly countries, including Britain, but Britain was already in the grip of an "aliens scare". Newspaper headlines declared: "Alien Jews pouring in", and claimed that "Refugees get jobs, Britons get dole". The media accused Jewish asylum seekers of "overrunning the country". Despite wide public revulsion at the violence of Kristallnacht, powerful elements in British politics and business continued to admire Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Seventy-five years after Kristallnacht, racists and fascists inspired by the Nazis continue to attack minorities in Europe. In Hungary neo-fascists target Gypsies and Jews. In Greece Golden Dawn members and supporters brutally attack migrants and political opponents. Here in Britain, minority communities, especially Muslims, have been targeted in an atmosphere that is increasingly hostile towards migrants and refugees.

Mindful of this history, we are equally alarmed at continuing fascist violence and the toxic sentiments expressed by many politicians and much of the media against migrants, asylum seekers, Gypsies and Travellers. We stand shoulder to shoulder with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in their efforts to live here in freedom and safety, to contribute to society and be treated as equals.

As Jews we stand together with all communities seeking to combat racism and fascism here and elsewhere.

• List of signatories <http://bit.ly/jsg-kris>

Paul Klee: the quiet revolutionary

Cathy Nugent reviews Paul Klee, an exhibition at the Tate Modern, London (until 9 March 2014).

This exhibition is expansive, comprehensive, chronological, and as well-ordered as the work on display. All that is good.

However, I felt less inspired than I thought I would be. Klee should be my thing. Early 20th century, modernist, hated by the Nazis — what's not to like?

In truth nothing here is not to like. Klee's vast collection of work, in slightly different styles at different points in his life, shows him to be an artist who was constantly experimenting and pushing at boundaries.

It is true, as has been said, that the close texture of musical composition is reflected in the small micro-worlds he created on canvass. (Klee was a highly talented and practising musician as well as an artist).

And colour, colour is his thing too. Blocks of colour, different ranges of colour, startling contrasts of colour.

But is this revolutionary? Is this more than pretty?

On reflection I decided to forgive Klee his tendency to be politically understated and temperamentally introspective. At the time his work, and other contemporary abstract artists', was revolutionary. It is therefore no surprise that he was among the artists considered "degenerate" by the Nazis (his work was found among the huge stash of Nazi-confiscated art recently found in a flat in Munich.)

Unlike other artists of his time Klee didn't depict the seamy side of the Weimar Republic — something the Nazis (hypo-

Klee in his studio at the Bauhaus school (of fine art, craft and design) in Germany, where he taught from 1921 to 1931.

critically) railed against. But some of his work is "off-key", wry, appreciative of the unconventional.

The Nazis would also have hated the work that was inspired by north African landscape, light and life. Being open to the influence of "non-Aryan" cultures and trying to absorb things outside your own experience is something the Nazis with their cold-hearted, violently nationalistic ideology were opposed to.

Do go and see this exhibition if you can. Get someone to buy you the ticket for Christmas and pick a time when the crowds won't be too big. Try to take a longer look.

Southern Tunisian Gardens (1919)

The legacy of Mao Zedong

Camila Bassi begins a series on China's recent history, beginning with the Mao years.

Knowledge of China's past is crucial for understanding the country's present. To illustrate this interrelationship, let's remind ourselves of the case of British citizen Akmal Shaikh.

In 2007, Akmal was arrested by the Chinese authorities for drug smuggling (specifically, heroin), and was sentenced to death despite the fact he was mentally ill. The representation of the case in China by the Party-controlled media recalled the nineteenth century Opium Wars between the British Empire and China's Qing Dynasty, which involved the British trading of opium, from India, within China. The story tragically played out: this time, China was not to be humiliated; so, in spite of the British government's plea for clemency, the Chinese state executed Akmal Shaikh in 2009.

The so-called People's Republic of China was declared in 1949 and marks the contemporary history of China as a one-party totalitarian nation-state, controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

During the 1950s, the conditions of existence in the countryside (where the majority of the population resided) and in the cities were transformed by the CCP, in an effort to economically develop and exert political control within all arenas of everyday life (from work to leisure to home). Agricultural land in the countryside was bloodily "redistributed" to cooperatives and collectives, and cities were ordered into work units and neighbourhood units. The state owned everything. Layers of Communist Party bureaucracy proliferated and corruption thrived.

BUREAUCRATIC STATE

"Enemies Without Guns" was an early Party propaganda campaign that illustrates the pervasive affect the bureaucratic state was able to exert on its population: breeding distrust amongst neighbours, and breaking down camaraderie among the working class and peasant masses.

The Party encouraged the population to anonymously submit the names of those who they suspected were linked to, for example, money, foreign devils and/or the rival Nationalist Party, into designated post boxes.

Alongside early rural land reforms and urban industrial projects, which sought to launch China (then home to one in four of the world's population) into a global superpower, was the omnipresence of the state. Effort towards economic modernisation would go hand-in-hand with political repression - the defining feature of China's political economy.

The 1930s and 40s were shaped by a struggle between the Nationalist Party, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, and the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong. The Nationalist Party fled to Taiwan when Mao took power in 1949. Taiwan has since benefited from US military aid, which is an ongoing source of annoyance for the CCP. Moves by the Chinese state to act on its claim that Taiwan is part of China have long threatened to draw the United States into war.

Tibet is another major geopolitical tension and conflict. The CCP launched a military offensive on the region of Tibet in 1950, claiming the area was a part of China mainland. A Tibetan uprising to CCP rule in 1959 was brutally crushed. The Dalai Lama calls for political autonomy for Tibet, not a separate nation-state. The CCP refuses to negotiate.

While I was in Shanghai in 2008, a local contact of mine relayed a story to me. He'd gone to a Björk

Mao Zedong was responsible for the deaths of millions

gig that year, and at the end Björk had shouted, "Tibet! Tibet!". He said: "This is not how we do politics in China, she should not have said that." It surprised me that a liberal-minded Shanghaiese had such an opinion.

But a combination of two things were at play, a proud sense of nationalism (a tremendously pervasive force in China) and a perception that politics beyond the state is foolish and dangerous.

While most intellectual life was controlled by the CCP, a momentary opening was created by Mao Zedong's instruction in 1956 for the country's citizens and intellectuals to constructively criticise the Party, known as "A Hundred Flowers to Bloom in the Arts and a Hundred Schools of Thought to Contend in Science". What it released was a huge wave of criticism against Party bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption. Walls of universities were plastered with such criticism.

In 1957 Mao declared those he had encouraged previously to criticise the Party as "Enemies and Rightists", and he appointed Deng Xiaoping to head the subsequent "Anti-Rightist Movement". This effectively silenced China's key intellectuals for decades.

When I have visited China in the years 2007-2013, various of my contacts (working in the fields of academia, teaching, and business) have observed that Chinese students and graduates struggle with a sense of critique, i.e., of questioning things. Without doubt, the silencing of the country's intellectuals decades previously has left a legacy on education, where only a few brave teachers and students dare to question.

The launch of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1958 signified Mao's ambition to equal the West in industrial output within fifteen years. Actually it was a huge propaganda campaign with ludicrous and counterproductive initiatives and targets that, in combination with natural disaster, literally starved to death millions.

People were told to convert scrap iron and steel into pots, and so the countryside was marked by rows of giant furnaces that made piles of pots which were useless and cracked easily. And yet it went on. To meet targets, Party bureaucrats inflated the figures for the actual production of grain. Too

much grain left the countryside, generating a food crisis while grain lay stored in excess in the cities. One propaganda slogan, "The corn will grow higher the more you desire", accentuates the farce.

There was little to no questioning of the Great Leap Forward as a consequence of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and Anti-Rightist Movement.

Historian Frank Dikötter, in *Mao's Great Famine: The Story of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe*, argues that the Great Leap Forward, with a death toll of 45 million, "ranks alongside the gulags and the Holocaust as one of the three greatest events of the 20th century.... It was like Pol Pot's genocide multiplied 20 times over".

By 1964 the infamous "Little Red Book", a book of Mao quotes, had been produced and widely distributed. Its reach cannot be underestimated, both within China and globally. And what it came to symbolise was the cult of Mao, that is, his status as a living god and the irrational fervour that went along with that. In this climate, Mao decided that he needed to call on new forces to boost his hegemony in the Party. In May 1966 he launched a campaign that called on the youth to attack the Party and steer it onto the path of true "revolutionary politics". The "Cultural Revolution" was born.

"FOUR OLDS"

The fever-ridden young Red Guards were instructed to destroy the "Four Olds": "Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Customs, Old Habits".

The very cultural and historical fabric of Chinese society was devastated — museums, libraries, temples, street signs, and so on. By 1967 the Cultural Revolution descended into factional warfare, with a splinter from the Red Guards forming, known as the Rebels (supported by Mao). By the summer China was in civil war.

Echoing the destiny of the participants of the Hundred Flowers Campaign who became labelled Enemies and Rightists, the youth that Mao had encouraged to take the banner as authentic revolutionaries were ordered to disarm and, by the end of 1968, were sent to the countryside to be re-educated by authentic revolutionaries. They became known as the "Sent-down Youth".

It is estimated that thirty six million people were harassed during the Cultural Revolution and up to one million killed (Branigan, 2013).

Fang Zhongmou's execution for political crimes during the Cultural Revolution was commonplace in its brutality but more shocking to outsiders in one regard: her accusers were her husband and their 16-year-old child.

Maoists beat her, bound her and led her from home. She knelt before the crowds as they denounced her. Then they loaded her on to a truck, drove her to the outskirts of town and shot her.

More than four decades on, Fang's son is seeking to atone by telling her story and calling for the preservation of her grave in their home town of Guzhen, central Anhui province, as a cultural relic. [...] "My mother, father and I were all devoured by the Cultural Revolution," said Zhang, 60, who is now a lawyer. "[It] was a catastrophe suffered by the Chinese nation. We must remember this painful historical lesson and never let it happen again." (Branigan, 2013)

In addition to the political and everyday human horror is the cultural vacuum left by the Cultural Revolution. What does culture actually mean in China today? It is hardly surprising that one of the country's main contemporary crises is that of culture.

The question of Mao's successor arose in the early 1970s, with the deterioration of his health. There was popular distrust for the vying of power by the Gang of Four (who led the Rebels faction during the Cultural Revolution, and included Mao's wife).

After Mao's death in 1976, the Gang of Four were arrested. Mao's successor was to be Deng Xiaoping, a pragmatist, but nonetheless someone who was there right from the start.

Reference:

• Branigan, T (2013) "China's Cultural Revolution: son's guilt over the mother he sent to her death". *Guardian*, bit.ly/HRzYnS

The left on Grangemouth

By Dale Street

The Unite union's defeat by Ineos at the Grangemouth oil refinery and petrochemicals plant in Scotland merits serious analysis and discussion by socialist organisations. We need to understand what happened and draw appropriate lessons in order to minimise the risk of such defeats in future.

Much of the left press has been desperate to spin a narrative of a militant workforce champing at the bit to take radical action, but being held back (and, ultimately, stitched up and sold out) by a capitulatory bureaucracy.

Workers Power told us: "The workers and their shop stewards, who bravely campaigned for a 'No' vote (i.e. rejection of the new terms and conditions), refused to be blackmailed." By contrast, "McCluskey shamefully fled the battlefield at the first threat from Ineos billionaire boss, Jim Ratcliffe."

The WP version of reality continued: "What followed (after Ineos announced closure) was an utter disgrace to trade unionism and a total betrayal of the loyalty of the workforce to its union. So-called socialist general secretary and darling of most of the left, Len McCluskey, not only accepted all of Ineos' demands but 'embraced' a deal that extended the strike ban for three years."

A common pattern. But is it what happened in this case? A statement by Ineos Unite convenor Mark Lyon said: "I made the call to accept the company terms and it was not at all easy. The decision was made by me but with the full endorsement of our stewards and our members. I make no apology to anyone for this decision."

"It is our judgement that they (Ineos) were prepared to close the site down and our members preferred to keep their jobs and take a hit on terms with the plan to work our way back."

"Len McCluskey came to Grangemouth to give us support and solidarity. He did that but did not make this decision... we did."

The eventual deal at Grangemouth represents a huge setback for workers, but it is simply not consistent with facts to suggest it was foisted on an unwilling workforce from above by Unite's national leadership.

Both *Socialist Worker* and the International Socialist Network paint a similar picture, with both deeming Unite's affiliation to the Labour Party a central cause. *Socialist Worker* said: "Despite McCluskey's often fiery rhetoric, his strategy rests on winning a Labour election victory, not on workers' struggle." And, according to the ISN, "Unite's leadership was still distracted, playing games in the Labour Party. Not only did they lose those games, they took their eyes off what was happening to their actual members."

The SWP and ISN's starting point is not an analysis of the actual events at Grangemouth, but their own position on the Labour Party (that it is an irrelevance and a diversion, and that no struggle against its leaders using the existing Labour-union link is possible). The facts are then interpreted to justify the preconceived position.

Yes, they can — but socialists have to assess honestly

Such an approach entails ignoring events in the real world which contradict that "analysis". Thus, when Mark Lyon's statement was posted on the ISN website over a week ago, the response from the ISN was... not to respond at all.

This was despite the fact that the person who posted Mark Lyon's statement was the author of the article which it contradicted! But what did reality matter for the ISN when compared with an opportunity for (inaccurate) denunciation?

And if events at Grangemouth unfolded as claimed by the SWP and the ISN, then one would expect no shortage of Unite members in Grangemouth to be criticising their leadership (at plant, Scottish and national level).

But neither the SWP nor the ISN articles (or any other article written from the same angle) carry any quotes from Unite members in Grangemouth criticising their leaders for having sold them out.

In fact, the best that the SWP could come up with by way of a Unite activist providing the obligatory statements about "bullying bastard bosses" and "what was needed was to occupy the plant" was a Unite convenor in Donnington in Shropshire (who has been providing similar on-cue and on-message quotes to the SWP for over a decade).

The ISN's references to "playing games in the Labour Party" and Unite taking its eyes off "what was happening to their actual members" merit particular attention.

The mainstream media, the Tory leadership, and Tory strategists like Lynton Crosby have launched countless attacks on Unite's alleged activities in Falkirk Labour Party, using them as their central conduit for their attacks on the Labour Party.

But the ISN majestically dismisses the focus of those attacks (i.e. Unite's involvement in the local Labour Party) as a mere case of Unite "playing games".

STEVIE DEANS

ISN is right to insist that Unite focus on what's happening "to their actual members". But one of those "actual members" is Stevie Deans.

When Unite defended him — not just in Ineos against management's attacks, but also in the Labour Party against attacks by party officials — it was not getting bogged down in "playing games in the Labour Party". It was defending one of its "actual members" — which is what trade unions are meant to do.

In contrast to the above analyses, the Socialist Party (SP) focused heavily and sympathetically on the dilemma facing shop stewards in the plant itself. But it too approached the situation by looking for opportunities to justify its own dogmatic and sectarian position on Labour. Labour's pro-capitalist policies, the SP said, were "holding the union back," Labour "does not support workers in struggle," and Unite should therefore "come out clearly in favour of a new mass workers party."

In other words: Unite should pull out of the Labour Party in exchange for... the SP's spectacularly unsuccessful Trade Union and Socialist Coalition.

The other curiosity about the SP's analysis was what was not in it: a call for a general strike.

This was not an oversight. The SP leaflet distributed at the rally in Grangemouth on 20 October also made no mention of a general strike. Nor did the SP's model motion for union branch meetings, drafted in response to Ineos' announcement of closure of the plant.

For the SP, a general strike is something to demand in motions to TUC congresses and trade union conferences or when Cameron suffers a defeat in Parliament (e.g. over Syria). But when a potential major industrial and political dispute looms on the horizon — the call for a general strike suddenly disappears. Perhaps the reason is that it's a sloganistic article-of-faith designed to catch a mood, rather than a serious strategy proposal.

What characterises much of the left analysis of Unite's defeat in Grangemouth is:

- Substituting a simplistic notion of workers-want-to-fight-but-leaders-sell-out for serious analysis (and, even if that simplistic notion were true, failing to explain how the leaders managed to get away with selling out such a highly organised workforce).

- Adapting their analysis in order to fit in with their own pet themes and hobbyhorses.

Hicks and the witch hunt

Another Sunday, another issue of the Sunday Times, another attack on Unite (on pages 1, 4, 16, 17, and 33).

But this time Jerry Hicks — three-time general secretary candidate, founder of "Grass Roots Left" in Unite, and now a leading figure in the new "Unite Grass Roots Rank and File" — has given a helping hand.

Hicks later backpedalled, and stressed that he was opposed to any attempt to use the complaint he has made over Unite's general secretary election in a witch hunt against the union. But that was all too little, too late — and singularly unconvincing.

According to the *Sunday Times*' front-page article: "Hicks said this weekend: 'Was Falkirk an aberration or a modus operandi? There are serious questions that need to be answered about these tens of thousands of non-members of the union who were sent ballot papers.'"

The reference to "tens of thousands of non-members" receiving ballot papers relates to Hicks's complaint to the Certification Officer, alleging that in the Unite general secretary election held earlier this year 160,000 ballot papers were sent to former members not entitled to vote.

Unite's response is that the members' subscriptions had lapsed but they were still entitled to vote. Under rule 4.1 of the union's rulebook members can be up to 26 weeks in arrears before being removed from the membership lists.

"Hicks says that it is not credible that nearly 160,000 members were in recent arrears of membership," continues the *Sunday Times* article. But in a union with 1.4 million members it is entirely credible. Annual membership turnover in a union is often 25%.

But the issue here is not (yet another) complaint by Hicks to the Certification Officer. It is his statement: "Was Falkirk an aberration or a modus operandi?"

This was no slip of the tongue by Hicks. In an earlier statement about Grangemouth Hicks wrote on his website of Unite's "infantile, unfunny comic capers of infiltration through recruiting members to the Labour Party."

Hicks says that Unite engaged in "infiltration" in Falkirk — isn't it credible, therefore, that there was a similarly bad "modus operandi" in this year's general secretary elections?

Hicks was very proud of the *Sunday Times* coverage of his complaint to the Certification Officer. In an early-morning post on his website he boasted:

"Jerry Hicks' challenge to validity of Unite General Secretary election makes *Sunday Times* front page. The *Sunday Times* front page article 'Union Boss Len McCluskey Elected by Phantoms' carries my complaint to the Certification Officer."

In fact, the *Sunday Times* front page article was nothing but another vicious witch-hunting attack on Unite, drawing parallels between supposed malpractices in Falkirk and supposed malpractices in Len McCluskey's re-election.

It was also another disgraceful attack on Stevie Deans. The article makes a linkage of Stevie-Deans-Unite-convenor (nearly lost everyone their jobs), Stevie-Deans-Falkirk-Labour-chair (vote-rigging) and Stevie-Deans-election-campaigner-for-McCluskey (vote-rigging).

Solidarity with his own union in the face of this witch-hunt? Solidarity with a fellow union member who has been hounded out of his job and his union and Labour Party positions?

Of such solidarity there was not a word in Hicks' piece. Instead, narcissism trumped solidarity. "The media are responding to our [sic — should read: "my"] press release of 9th September," claimed Hicks.

No. The *Sunday Times* was not responding on 10 November to a press release issued by Hicks on 9 September. It was engaged in an ongoing witch-hunt.

The next time Hicks throws his hat into the ring in another general secretary election, Unite members should remember this scurrilous fiasco.

And those on the left who backed him in previous elections might want to publicly dissociate themselves from his behaviour.

Resist jobs massacre!

By Ira Berkovic

Thousands of jobs are on the line as bosses in the shipbuilding, manufacturing, and aviation industries plan huge layoffs.

BAE Systems plans to axe nearly 2,000 jobs by closing, or significantly reducing, sites in Glasgow and Portsmouth, ending shipbuilding entirely in the southern English city. The Polimeri chemical refinery in Southampton plans to close, threatening 300 jobs, and the Flybe airline, based in Exeter, plans to cut 500 jobs.

Unions organising workers at the BAE shipyards and the Polimeri plant, plan a demonstration outside the filming of BBC's "Question Time", which takes place on 14 November in Portsmouth.

The unions are in talks with BAE management

over its cuts plan, but activists and officers say that the bottom-line negotiating position from all unions will be to resist job cuts entirely. Unite, GMB, Prospect, and UCATT all have members at the BAE plants under threat.

Union activists have also described the media presentation of the BAE job losses as a conflict between

English and Scottish workers as "a red herring".

The BAE, Polimeri, and Flybe job cuts would represent a huge blow to workers in southern England particularly, with many thousands more jobs in the supply chains of all three companies threatened by the cuts and closures.

A united response from all unions involved is necessary, led by shop stewards and convenors in each workplace and mobilising local labour movement bodies and working-class community campaigns.

In BAE's case, socialists in the workplace and local community should pose the question of "transition", as Lucas Aerospace workers did in the 1970s, developing a workers' plan to repurpose their workplace towards producing socially-necessary goods rather than military hardware. Workers will under-

standably want to focus on saving their jobs before discussing questions of transition and conversion, but if the long-term future of manufacturing jobs is to be secured, questions of the control of industry, and what workers' skills are being put to use to make, must be posed.

The campaign against job losses launched by Portsmouth TUC, which held a rally on 10 November, must centrally involve convenors and shop stewards from the effected workplaces.

If BAE refuses to pull back from its cuts plan, workers should discuss work-ins, occupations, and the demand to take job-cutting employers into public ownership.

BAE relies on British government contracts for work — the state, as well as BAE bosses, should be held to account.

More strikes due in fire dispute

By Darren Bedford

Firefighters in England and Wales were posed for their fourth short pension strike this week, as the battle began to harden into a more protracted dispute.

On Wednesday 13 November, FBU members in England and Wales will strike from 10am to 2pm, another short action designed to show that firefighters do not accept the government's unworkable pension changes. The differences have hardened since the last strikes on 1 and 4 November, after the fire minister withdrew part of an earlier offer, making

the actuarial reduction for retiring early even more draconian.

The most prominent issue is the government's plan to force firefighters to work beyond their current retirement age of 55 to the age of 60. The government's own review this year showed that at least a quarter and perhaps 90% would not be fit enough to work to 60.

The government proclaims that firefighters would still get a generous pension, but the FBU maintains that most firefighters will not be able to work a full career to get it. When the government says firefighters will get a £19,000 pension, they ignore the

fact that it is reduced if retirement takes place before 60. Thus at 55, the reduction was previously around 22% — meaning an annual pension reduced to under £15,000.

Now that has been withdrawn, the reduction is over 47%, meaning firefighters could work for 35 years to age 55, but then

face dismissal for lack of fitness and then a pension of around £9,000 a year — half what they had paid for, and only received ten years later.

Not surprisingly, FBU members are furious at this move by the government. The union will now ballot members across the UK for action short of a strike, with the result out at the beginning of December. At present, there is no visible end to the dispute. Although the government has moved to consult on proposals to prevent the "no job, no pension" scenario, firefighters now see the full extent of the government's pensions robbery.

With further contribution increases planned for next April, and firefighters paying as much as a sixth of their pay in pension contributions, more action seems highly likely in the coming months and into the new year.

Viva Tres Cosas!

Outsourced cleaning, catering, and security workers at the University of London are balloting for strikes in their long-running campaign to win sick pay, holiday, and pension equality with their directly-employed colleagues.

The workers are organised by the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), a small union with few resources. Solidarity and financial support are essential if the workers are to be able to take the kind of action necessary to force concessions from the bosses. You can donate to the strike fund online at bit.ly/3cosas-strikefund.

For more information on the campaign, including updates on the ballot result and strike dates, see facebook.com/3coca, 3cosas.tumblr.com, and 3cosascampaign.wordpress.com

Uni workers to strike again

By a UCU activist

Higher Education workers' unions UCU, Unison, Unite (and the EIS union in Scotland) have called a strike on Tuesday 3 December.

Lecturers' union UCU has begun a work-to-contract, asking members not to take on any duties not strictly required by their terms of employment.

Universities depend on the willingness of staff to work well beyond reasonable hours, and a well-organised campaign will help put management under pressure. Local organisation, down to departmental level, with regular members' meetings, is the key to making the work-to-contract effective.

Already one employer — the University of Wales Trinity St David's — has threatened to deduct pay from staff who refuse to do unpaid overtime! Others are likely to follow suit. Activists should be

prepared to step up the action quickly if such local attacks materialise.

There are rumours circulating that some universities hope to scupper the action by imposing a 1% settlement before Christmas — giving staff the "bonus" of a backdated pay rise to 1 August at a time of year when bills are high and many workers will find it hard to turn down the money. It's vitally important to expose any imposed offer for the underhand trick it is, and encourage everyone involved to keep fighting for a rise that actually helps meet the cost of living.

Management know that if the dispute continues into the New Year and hits first semester exams they will have real problems. If we keep up the fight we can win.



Rail cleaners occupy bosses' office

By Jonny West

Cleaning workers employed by Mitie on First Great Western (FGW) trains occupied FGW's Swindon offices as part of a two-day strike to win living wages.

Mitie Group made pre-tax profits of £58.8m in the last financial year, and paid out dividends to shareholders of £20.6m (an 11.9% increase on the previous year's figure). Its highest-paid director "earned" nearly £1.4 million, a 7.4% increase. Despite this, cleaners still earn less than the £7.20 "living wage" (£8.55 in London). The workers' union, the RMT, has rejected a 3% pay increase offer. Mitie cleaners earn 30% less than workers doing the same job who are employed directly by FGW.

The strike also seeks the end of "zero-hours" contracts for FGW cleaners.

RMT said: "First Group

landed a jackpot rollover with a two year contract extension on Great Western that will make them and their sub-contractors a fortune, but while the boardrooms are awash with cash, exploitation at the sharp end on this prestige, inter-city rail contract is rife."

RMT is also balloting its members in all grades on London Underground for strikes against the use of agency labour. A union statement said: "As of 2 April this year, there were 829 'non-permanent' staff on London Underground. LUL's continuing use and abuse of agency staff is seriously detrimental. We reaffirm our demand that LUL stops using agencies and offers their workers permanent employment — including those of the 33 former Trainpeople employees that it has not yet employed."

The ballot closes on 2 December.

