

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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International day of solidarity with Greece,  
18 February 2012: Brussels, Paris, Copenhagen

# Stop the banks strangling Greece!



## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

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## Birmingham students challenge ban

Edd Bauer, Birmingham Guild of Students Vice President Education and a supporter of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, spoke to *Solidarity*.

On 15 February, we had a mass "Take back your campus" protest at Birmingham University against a High Court injunction to stop demonstrations, which management got last November and which remains in force until November 2012.

Hundreds of students from Birmingham and around a dozen other universities took part. It ended in an occupation of the university's corporate conference centre. Student activists showed we would



respond to aggressive moves with our own aggressive defiance.

On 20 February, a court threw out the charges against me and two other Birmingham Uni activists, Simon Furze and Daniel Lindley. We were arrested last September for unfurling an NCAFC banner from a bridge outside Lib Dem conference. The prosecution admitted they had no evidence and had to apologise to the court!

The law invoked against

us was section 23a of the Road Traffic Act, brought in after the miners' strike, following the incident in which two miners tipped a concrete block off a bridge. The law was framed to criminalise workers in struggle, and now it is being perverted even further to criminalise peaceful protest — a banner is not a concrete block. The judge said he had never heard anything like the interpretation of the law the prosecution were arguing.

So now the charges are dropped, yet I spent ten days in prison and was suspended from my sabatical position for three months due to this nonsense. Simon and Daniel also spent days in prison.

What happened to us now regularly happens to

dozens of activists every year, and many of them spend a lot longer in prison. The student movement has its political prisoners, there is no doubt.

We need to defend our right to protest. Alfie Meadows has his case coming up again on 26 March, and that's going to be important. But this is not just about the right to protest.

**We're defending our ability to resist cuts and privatisation and attacks on living standards, and that's the basis on which we can build the broadest and most popular response to repression.**

• The NCAFC is running a "Take back your campus" campaign to fight for democracy and the right to organise on campus. See [anticuts.com](http://anticuts.com)

## Wages not workfare

By Dan Rawnsley

Between January and November 2011 58,000 people in the UK worked for free for high-street shops, charities and government departments as part of the government's "Mandatory Work Activity" or "Work Experience" programmes.

Both "workfare" schemes involve unemployed people working 30 hours a week whilst receiving at most £53.45 a week (under 25s) or £67.50 (over 25s).

On the MWA project people who are deemed not to be trying hard enough are forced to work for four weeks. If they refuse to work their benefits are cut for 16 weeks for the first time, six months for the second time and, under the Welfare Reform Bill, three years for the third time.

The WE programme is optional, though claimants are sometimes not informed that the "job" they are applying for is unpaid.

The Boycott Workfare Campaign has collected stories about the attitude of managers towards this new source of cheap labour. In one a man involved in a workfare programme at Tesco (which has been in the news over this issue recently) was told he wouldn't be given a job because the manager could easily

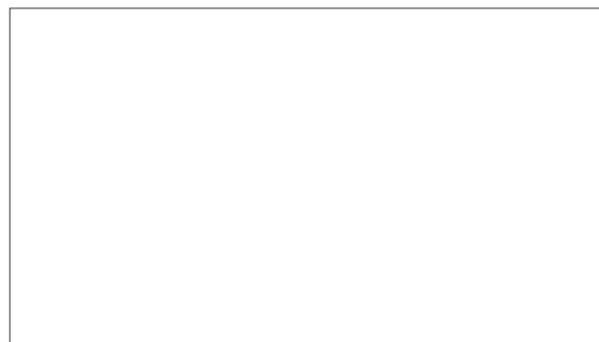
phone the Job Centre and get a new group of free workers. Workfare is taking away paying jobs and putting people into situations where they feel unable to speak out against management bullying or unsafe working conditions, for fear of losing their benefits.

The TUC reaffirmed its opposition to workfare schemes in 2010, but in January of this year the Communication Workers' Union executive issued a letter to its members in Royal Mail stating that "following full consultation on the detail of the initiative the CWU are pleased to support the Royal Mail Work Experience Programme" which will see 10 people in each region being drafted in to work, unpaid, for 25-30 hours a week.

Boycott Workfare has rightly condemned this shameful position and is calling on CWU activists and branches to press their leadership in to opposing workfare.

The "Boycott Workfare" campaign has called a day of action targeting employers participating in the scheme on Saturday 3 March. Companies involved include Tesco, Asda, Holland & Barrett, Primark, HMV, and Topshop.

For more details, see [bit.ly/xs7KLx](http://bit.ly/xs7KLx)



## School victory, Chicago-style

Parents and students occupied a school in Chicago which had been slated for "turnaround" by the Public School administrators.

That is a process which involves the entire staff of a school being sacked and a new one brought in. The school would have been turned into an Academy.

Activists from the local Occupy group then formed a human chain around Piccolo School to stop police from evicting the protest, which ended in a victory.

**Campaigners accused the authorities of failing to consult with the parents, students and local community and systematically underfunding the school.**

• [www.ctunet.com/blog](http://www.ctunet.com/blog)

## Boot camp school

By Sarah Giles

**A proposed free school in Oldham has become the latest of Gove's flagship school model to hit the headlines, and this one raises serious concerns over what our society thinks education is for.**

The proposal for the Phoenix free school in Oldham involves the school being run entirely by current or ex-service personnel.

This includes the headteacher (the proposed candidate is a captain who has been on tour in Afghanistan), all the teachers and any other staff. There is currently no requirement for free schools to employ qualified teachers.

The rationale for this school is, according to the proposed headteacher, having a zero-tolerance policy for poor behaviour. He says an "official warning" will be given to pupils that talk in class.

This is because "we have got to a point in modern behaviour management where the emphasis is on negotiation between the student and the teacher".

I'm left asking, why is negotiation a problem? Un-

less of course you see children as beings that should be seen and not heard, or in fact beaten (physical or not) into submission by adults.

Even more telling, the school's aims are quoted as being that no student leaves the school with an "inflated sense of self-worth."

As a teacher, I am quite clear that one of my aims is creating a sense of self-worth and personal security in every child. Why then the idea that our children (or more accurately the children of working-class communities) should be militarily controlled?

A similar response was seen in response to last August's riots — demonisation and draconian measures instead of answers to social inequality.

Crime, gang culture and behaviour is an issue in working class communities. But the solution is not to deprive young people of expression and self-worth, when largely they are missing this to start with.

Is education to develop critical thinking, expressive, confident young people with life chances? Or to beat working class kids into submission?

**Keep the military out of our kids' education!**

# Right takes hold in Hungary

By Stan Crooke

**In Hungary, capitalist crisis has led to triumph for the right, not the left.**

In late 2011 the Bloomberg corporation classed Hungary as the eighth-riskiest economy in the world — second only to Greece as a likely candidate for bankruptcy.

Two ratings agencies have downgraded Hungary's public debt to junk status. In October, December and January investors were not prepared to buy bonds put up for sale by the government. The market price of Hungary's bonds already in circulation fell so that the (fixed) interest payments on them now represent a yield of 10% a year.

The forint, the Hungarian currency, was the weakest currency in Europe in late 2011 and fell to a record low. Over the past 12 months it has lost 8.5% of its value against the euro. Over the same period the main stock index in Hungary fell by 20%.

Interest rates have continued to rise and now stand at 7%. VAT has recently been increased from 25% to 27%, and inflation is running at 5.5%, nearly double the official target for inflation. For the fifth year in a row, wages will lag behind inflation.

**UNEMPLOYMENT**  
Unemployment is around 11% and the labour-force participation rate of 55% is among the lowest in Europe (where the average is 65%).

Meanwhile the ruling Fidesz party (elected in 2010 with a majority of two-thirds in Parliament) has rushed through Parliament a new constitution and an accompanying package of more than 200 laws which seriously undermine the country's democratic credentials.

The new Hungarian constitution opens with references to God, Christianity, the Hungarian Holy Crown, the fatherland, and traditional family values such as the duty of children

to look after elderly parents. The rest of the constitution follows in this vein.

Harking back to a mythical Hungarian nation of 10 centuries ago, all members of ethnic Hungarian minorities abroad are defined as members of the Hungarian nation.

Life commences, and enjoys constitutional support, from the moment of conception. Marriage can take place only between a man and a woman. Life sentences, with no possibility of parole, are to be imposed in cases of violent crime.

**BANS**  
The powers of the Hungarian Constitutional Court have been curtailed, while the President is empowered to dissolve parliament if it refuses to accept a budget.

The constitution also declares the forint to be the Hungarian national currency, bans governments from increasing the public debt (currently standing at 80% of GDP), and declares a range of issues to be covered by "Cardinal Laws" which can be amended only by at least a two thirds majority in Parliament.

Fidesz has also introduced a new electoral law which reduces the number of constituencies and redraws the new boundaries to its advantage,

Ironically, the Fidesz party which has introduced such an anti-democratic constitution — triggering popular protests on the streets and also protests by the institutions of the European Union — began life as a pro-democracy youth movement set up to challenge Hungary's now defunct Stalinist regime.

In the years following the collapse of Stalinism Fidesz failed to win more than 9% of the popular vote and performed increasingly poorly in successive elections.

1994 saw a right-wing "coup" within the party, triggering a major split, with many of Fidesz' founding members and their supporters resigning

## Protest against the new constitution

from the party as it moved in an increasingly nationalist direction.

Fidesz also recruited members who formerly belonged to the pre-1989 Hungarian Communist Party. Three members of the eight-man Fidesz cabinet are former CP members.

Fidesz has also cracked down on cultural freedoms.

Government critics have been sacked from editorial positions, an independent radio station has lost its licence (supposedly for not playing enough Hungarian music), and a popular rapper has been under criminal investigation for using lyrics from the national anthem.

**RELIGIOUS**  
Religious equalities are also under attack. A new law has cut the number of "recognised" religions from more than 300 down to 14.

None of those 14 are Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist sects. To secure "recognition" a religion must be vetted by the security services, have at least 1,000 followers in the country, and secure parliamentary approval.

A socialist government, or even a consistently democratic bourgeois one, would not "recognise" any religions. But the new Hungarian laws are not a step towards secularism. They are a move towards privileging certain sects — predominantly Christian ones — over others.

In fact, according to Fidesz leader Viktor Orban, the country's Prime Minister, the West's abandonment of specifically Christian values is to blame for its current economic — and moral — crisis.

In July a new Labour Code will weaken workers' rights, undermine national minimum wage protection, and "encourage" part-time working and a "more flexible" labour market.

None of these measures were even mentioned by Fidesz in their manifesto for the 2010 elections. But once it had secured more than two thirds of the seats

in Parliament, it was too good an opportunity for Fidesz to miss.

Fidesz' drive to centralise power in its own hands has extended to economic policy. This has triggered conflict with European Union institutions and the International Monetary Fund.

In 2010 the government threw an IMF delegation out of the country, after it had called for cuts in welfare spending. Fidesz has also nationalised pension funds, imposed new taxes on services, and allowed Hungarians with mortgages in foreign currencies to pay them off at artificially low rates, costing mortgage lenders about 5% of their assets.

At the close of 2011 the Fidesz-controlled Parliament introduced a flat-rate universal income tax, a cap on public debt, and virtual government control of the Hungarian central bank (which is forbidden under EU treaties).

The European Union and the IMF responded by breaking off talks about possible credit facilities for Hungary, and by demanding that the laws giving the government control over the central bank be withdrawn as a precondition of the resumption of talks.

Orban dismissed criticisms by denouncing the EU and the IMF as "international leftists", but subsequently started to backtrack in order to allow for a resumption of negotiations with them.

**ECONOMIC**  
Fidesz' economic policies are no better than its social policies.

Even where it can invoke issues of democracy (such as the right of an elected government to control a country's banking institutions), its economic policies are narrowly nationalist.

According to recent opinion polls, support for Fidesz has slumped to less than 30%, with some polls indicating only 18% support.

**Effective opposition to Fidesz will have to be organised on the streets and in the workplace.**

# Euro cuts at heart of French poll

By Vicki Morris

**The first round of the French presidential elections is on 22 April, the run-off between the top two candidates on 6 May.**

The right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy, Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), is polling on 26% compared to François Hollande, candidate of the Socialist Party (PS), on 30%.

However, if you add up the scores for all "right-wing" candidates and all "left-wing" candidates, and if they divide among Sarkozy and Hollande respectively, Sarkozy would win. If you add all the voters (left and right) against the new euro cuts treaty, then the opponents are a big majority.

On the far left, the Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (New Anti-capitalist party — NPA) is running Philippe Poutou; Lutte ouvrière (LO) is running Nathalie Arthaud.

To stand, candidates must collect the signatures of 500 elected representatives, including mayors, by 16 March. Poutou is struggling. Marine Le Pen of the fascist Front National (FN — National Front) stands at 14% in the polls, but is also struggling to get the 500. Her father Jean-Marie Le Pen got only 507 signatures in 2007 — but won 10.4% of the vote (3.8 million votes).

**LEFT**  
The far-left but increasingly eccentric Parti des travailleurs (Workers' Party) is not standing this time (it got 0.5% of the vote in 2007). Its representative Gérard Schivardi has declared: "These elections are pointless, the presidential power is non-existent!"

The once powerful, now shrunken Communist Party (PCF) is not standing its own candidate this time. It polled 1.9% in 2007. It is backing the left-wing career politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon, currently on 8%. In 2008 Mélenchon left the PS and formed the Parti de gauche (PdG — Left Party). The PdG and the PCF and some smaller fragments together make up the Front de Gauche (FdG — Left Front) for the 2012 election.

The FdG programme is radical sounding, packed with "interesting" ideas, e.g., a constituent assembly for a new (sixth) republic, limiting presidential powers and strengthening those of parliament.

It proposes "the right to work", 1700 euros minimum wage (LO demands

the same); the highest salary no more than 20 times that of the lowest in an enterprise. The FdG will impose a levy on financial transactions to pay for emergency house-building; 200,000 new homes a year for five years.

LO and the NPA offer programmes of radical transitional demands, such as workers taking control of banks and enterprises; the sharing out of work without loss of pay to end unemployment; wages indexed to prices. None of this is proposed as achievable without social and political struggle, and that is maybe why, with confidence low, NPA and LO scores are also low.

Poutou is below 1% in the opinion polls, an unknown compared to Olivier Besancenot, candidate of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) in 2007. Besancenot quickly became famous as "the postman" when he first stood in 2002, and got 4.1% in 2007. (The LCR set up and dissolved into the NPA in 2009.)

**ARTHAUD**  
LO's candidate, Nathalie Arthaud, likewise succeeds a well-known figure.

Arllette Laguiller stood as LO's candidate in every presidential election since 1974 and was a national figure. She scored 1.3% in 2007 — squeezed by Besancenot, who appealed particularly to young voters (10% of 18-24s, 8% of 25-34s). Arthaud is on 1%.

Finally, squeezing the far-left, there is the fairly strong showing of the PS. Hollande says he will row back on austerity, and the pension age increase — for some. He will tax big companies more in order to pay to create jobs; he promises 60,000 more teachers. He will re-negotiate the EU's new stability pact.

Alarmed even by such relatively tame promises, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel is supporting Sarkozy. However, Sarkozy is still massively unpopular for many reasons, primarily the social attacks by his government. He is tainted by sleaze. He seems flashy in the age of the austerity that he himself insists on. France has lost its AAA credit rating; unemployment is 10%.

● FdG: <http://alturl.com/c4563>  
● LO: <http://alturl.com/kjcne>  
● NPA: <http://alturl.com/zixxe>

## Zimbabwean socialists face jail

The Zimbabwean state is prosecuting a group of socialist, trade union, student and human rights activists (many of them members of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe) for treason.

Despite lack of evidence, the magistrate, acting as a tool of Robert Mugabe's regime, has refused a request to dismiss the case. This means that the comrades may soon

face jail. Send solidarity messages to [iso.zim@gmail.com](mailto:iso.zim@gmail.com)

**Solidarity protest: Stop the treason trial! Free the Zimbabwean socialists!**

**7pm, Friday 2 March**  
Zimbabwe House, 429 Strand, London WC2R 0JR (Charing Cross rail or tube)  
Details: 07796 690 874

## Glasgow's Labour rebellion

Scotland  
By Dale Street



**Glasgow City Labour Group's 15-strong majority collapsed to just two — one of which was the vote of an independent councillor — in the vote on the council's 2012/13 budget earlier this month.**

In the run-up to the vote half a dozen members of the Labour Group resigned the Labour whip, some only shortly before the vote. Other rebels had previously resigned from the Labour Group (in one case, jumping ship to the SNP).

Leading rebel figures say they will contest this May's election, standing under the banner of "Glasgow Labour" on an anti-cuts platform.

According to Tommy Morrison, one of the ex-Labour councillors: "I believe it will contest 21 wards in the city. I think there will be 23 candidates, many standing on the banner of re-election (i.e. existing councillors)."

Another of the ex-Labour councillors, Stephen Dornan, has attacked the Labour Party: "This is a completely avoidable disaster ... the Labour Party should have been focused on developing the policies to place it squarely to the left of the SNP."

So far so good? Well, no.

Last year the ruling Labour Group's budget contained £100 millions of cuts. All the Labour "rebels" of today unhesitatingly voted through those cuts.

This year's budget involved £45 millions worth of cuts. £35 millions of these cuts had been voted through last year but were being implemented only this year. The cuts which today's rebels resigned over are largely the cuts they voted for last year.

### CAMPAIGNING

**In the twelve months the rebels have not been involved in any anti-cuts campaigning. In fact, none of them have any record of any involvement in any anti-cuts campaigning.**

What has happened between last year's budget and this year's, however, is that 17 of the 47-strong Labour Group were ruled inadmissible to stand for re-selection.

Labour claimed that it was rooting out "deadwood". The de-selected councillors and their supporters claimed that they had been victims of the notorious and long-standing faction fights within Glasgow Labour Group.

The rebels were all de-selected councillors who, in that sense, had nothing to lose.

The "rebels" include some unlikely heroes. Willie O'Rourke was already suspended from the Labour Group for inappropriate comments about a nine-year-old rape victim ("She wanted it to happen").

Ruth Black, a one-time member of the Scottish Socialist Party, split with Sheridan to set up "Solidarity". Elected as its sole councillor, she suddenly jumped ship and took the Labour whip. She won a council grant to run LGBT support services over better-established candidates, and the drop-in centre she ran went bankrupt.

Although any pretence that the rebels are champions of anti-cuts campaigning is preposterous, they do have legitimate arguments about the undemocratic nature of their de-selection (although, having resigned from the Labour Party, they are no longer in a position to pursue them).

They were not de-selected by their wards but by a Labour Party official drafted in from London.

It is also impossible to fathom what criteria were applied in the de-selections.

Alistair Watson, for example, who presided over Strathclyde Partnership for Transport at the time of a £100,000 expenses scandal, was left untouched.

During the budget vote Gilbert Davidson, who sits on the board of City Building (Glasgow), distinguished himself by allegedly threatening one of the rebels that her son would be sacked from City Building if she failed to vote for the Labour budget. Davidson has not denied the allegation, and neither has the Labour Party.

Some of the rebels can also genuinely argue that they are hard-working when it comes to dealing with individual complaints from their constituents.

The fact that the rebels are no anti-cuts champions should not obscure the fact that the Labour Group in the City Chambers are hardly any better.

**What's needed is effective control over the Labour Group being exercised by a reinvigorated Glasgow Labour Party.**

## The CPGB's legacy today

Letter



**In 1973, *International Socialism*, the theoretical journal of what is now the Socialist Workers Party, serialised the memoirs of the pioneering British Trotskyist, Reg Groves which later formed the basis of Groves's *The Balham Group: How British Trotskyism Began*.**

Re-reading the book it struck me how many of the criticisms levelled by Groves against the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in the 1930s could, depressingly, be applied to elements of the would-be Trotskyist left today.

Commenting on CPGB intervention into a 1930 dispute in the woollen industry in Yorkshire, Groves wrote: "The *Daily Worker* sloganised this struggle as it sloganised all struggles, large or small, making it faceless and drab. To anyone on the spot, the slogans appeared to have nothing whatever to do with the course of events, nor did they seem to have any meaning for those directly engaged in the battle."

The inability of the CPGB to follow the logic of the class struggle and seek to guide the dispute bears a close resemblance to the SWP's completely mad "all out, stay out" slogan for the strikes of 30 November 2011. In both cases, the lack of engagement with tangible reality stemmed from a sectarian approach to agitation, seeing it as a means through which to "build the party" rather than advance the interests of the working class.

Familiar, too, was Groves's criticism of the CPGB's propensity to form front organisations in an "attempt — vainly — to hide itself and its political identity".

One such example is the Workers' Charter, a document of demands for workers and the unemployed. The front campaign culminated in a conference in Bermondsey on 12 April 1931. Discussing attendance, Groves commented: "Of the 316 organisations represented there, only sixty-eight union branches and seven co-op guilds could be called genuine, non-party organisations." Right to Work and Unite the Resistance, anyone?

Anyone who has had a broad-based local anti-cuts group completely taken over in a sectarian manner will sympathise with the example of the Wandsworth Trades Council's association for unemployed trade unionists.

During the Comintern's ultra-leftist Third Period which branded social democrats as "social fascists", the CPGB instructed its members to break up such organisations in order to build the membership base of its own front organisation, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Thankfully, local CPGB members sympathetic to the Left Opposition refused and the CPGB later u-turned on its original instructions.

My point is not simply to score points against the SWP. My hope is that holding up a mirror to the way in which that organisation conducts itself in the wider movement could prompt SWP comrades to dwell on the reflection. My fear is that even if they fail to recognise the outward appearance of Stalinism staring back at them, as with Dorian in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the soul of the SWP has long since been corrupted.

Liam McNulty, Cambridge



## "The Treason of the Intellectuals, and other political verse" by Sean Matgamna

**A collection including items previously published in *Solidarity* and forerunner publications over the last 25 years.**

**Available soon on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) or at £9.99 post free from AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Rd, London SE1 3DG (order at [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate))**

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## Workers' Liberty and the politics of anarchism

**A new AWL pamphlet**

**A symposium of articles, polemics and speeches exchanged between Workers' Liberty and various anarchists in 2011. Including articles by Ira Berkovic, Iain McKay (editor, *Anarchist FAQ*), North London Solidarity Federation, Ed Maltby and Yves Coleman. Also including "All feathered up: a new defence of anarchism", Martin Thomas's review of *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* by Lucien Van Der Walt and Michael Schmidt.**

**Available to read and download at <http://tinyurl.com/anarchismpamphlet>**

**To purchase a copy, visit the website or send a cheque for £5.00 (payable to 'AWL') to Workers' Liberty, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.**



# Stop the banks strangling Greece!

**On 21 February a European Union summit in Brussels agreed a second "bail-out" for Greece, or rather for the banks which hold Greek government debt.**

As part of the deal, EU leaders will impose on Greece even more severe cuts, and external controls similar to those imposed by the great powers of Europe on countries like Egypt and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century.

At the same time, drunk on neo-liberal superstition, they are pushing through a treaty to make "balanced budgets" mandatory for all eurozone countries.

Even conservative and mainstream economists warn that the deal means years of economic decline in Greece and is likely only to postpone Greece defaulting on its debt payments, not prevent it. The EU leaders' measures are economically ruinous, and will throw petrol on the fire of nationalist and chauvinist reactions all across the continent.

*Solidarity* and Workers' Liberty have drafted the following appeal to the left and the labour movement across Europe to rally, continent-wide, to stop the strangling of Greece.

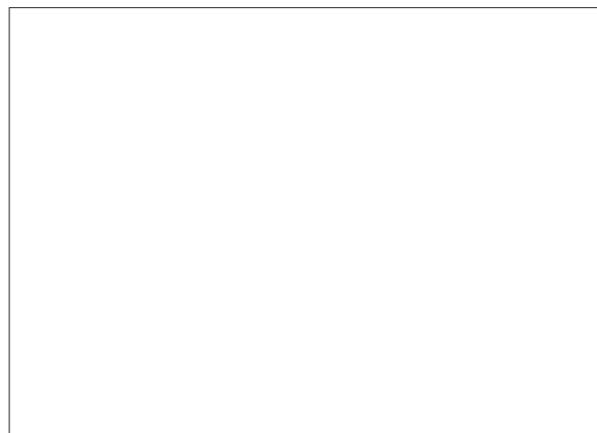
## For working-class solidarity across Europe: sign this statement!

The leaders of the European Union, acting on behalf of Europe's bankers, are strangling Greece. We call on workers, trade unions, and political parties of the labour movement, all across Europe, to mobilise to stop them.

The Troika of the European Union, European Central Bank, and IMF wants to impose on Greece:

- devastating cuts;
- changes in law to attack workers' collective-bargaining rights and conditions;
- commitments not only from the Greek government but also from the major political parties to continue those cuts

## How can we rebuild working-class solidarity?



**Louise Raw, author of *Striking A Light: The Bryant & May matchwomen and their place in history*, speaking at "New Unionism: how workers can fight back"**

**In 1909, Tom Mann — one of the key figures of Britain's "New Unionism" and the "Great Unrest" which followed it — wrote that the "essential preliminary condition" for successful struggle was "working-class solidarity".**

AWL's 18 February dayschool "New Unionism: how workers can fight back" discussed historical experiences and asked how we can rebuild that solidarity today.

Over 100 activists attended, including healthworkers, tube workers, teachers, call-centre workers, Sodexo catering workers, and city cleaners, as well as students working part-time to help fund their studies.

Sessions were not "this-is-what-happened-in-history-here-are-the-lessons" lectures, but workshops and discussions that attempted to get to grips with specific lesson.

Further Education worker Colin Waugh led a discussion on the fight for independent working-class education, which touched on how the fight for an independent, labour-movement-based activist education movement relates to struggles for access within the state education system.

A workshop on labour representation used small-group discussion to explore differing ideas on the issue, from "Lib-Lab" figures like Alexander MacDonald to the pioneers of

after new elections;

- a large chunk of Greece's public revenues to be put aside into an externally-controlled bank account, to be available for debt repayments.

Other demands on Greece include:

- appointment of external officials to monitor Greek public spending;
- postponement of elections, and installation of a government of unelected "technocrats".

Such measures:

- are socially and economically ruinous;
- flout the democratic and national rights of the Greek people;

- threaten to disrupt progress made over the decades toward reducing barriers between the countries of Europe, by using the financial crisis to demand centralised control of a scope beyond what is proper to any democratic federation of nations. In doing this they are provoking a nationalist counter-reaction.

Unless and until the workers, the trade unions, and the political parties of the labour movement mobilise to insist that these impositions are abandoned, we are complicit in these acts of destruction. In place of these destructive measures, we call for:

- cancellation of the debts of Greece and other crisis-hit countries;
- public ownership of the banks and high finance, and their reorganisation into a democratically-controlled public service;
- **replacement of the governments, in the leading countries of Europe, which have set about strangling Greece, and the creation of a democratic Europe, unifying the continent but respecting national rights, and democratically answerable to its working-class majority.**

- To sign the statement, email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org)

the Labour Party like Keir Hardie.

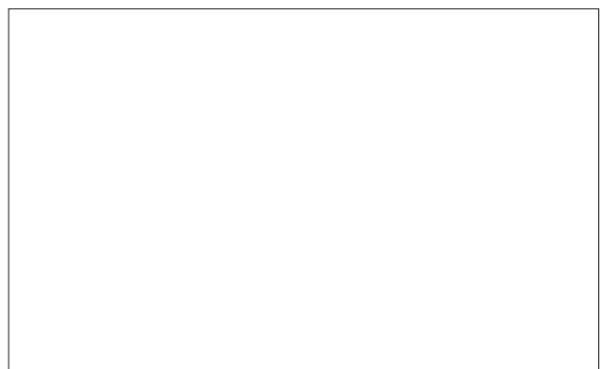
Jill Mountford and author Louise Raw discussed women workers' organising in New Unionism and the Great Unrest, and a workshop on the life of Tom Mann discussed how the organised socialists intervened (or, in some cases, didn't intervene) in the struggles of the period.

Union activists involved in "greenfield" projects to organise unorganised workers today discussed the pros and cons of the modern labour movement's "organising agenda", and possible alternative radical models for organising.

Kim Moody, co-founder of the US rank-and-file caucus Labor Notes, led a packed workshop on workplace organising today, using *Labor Notes' Troublemaker's Handbook*. Worker activists told stories from their own places, discussing what had worked for them and the whole group discussing how such experiences could be generalised, proliferated or learnt from. A "London Troublemaker's Group" is planned as a follow-up (see page 11).

Fundamentally, New Unionism and the Great Unrest were periods of struggle in which huge numbers of workers attempted to elevate class solidarity from a principle of struggle into the guiding, controlling principle of their workplaces, communities, and society. As that remains our aim today those lessons should be built into the political DNA of the revolutionary left.

**A pack of background reading from every workshop is available: [bit.ly/xjZJNL](http://bit.ly/xjZJNL)**



## Help AWL raise £20,000

**A consistent point of discussion at the Saturday 18 dayschool on New Unionism was why the period of historical New Unionism, from the late 1880s, is so overlooked by most of the far left.**

Many AWL members believe that it's part of the left's "retreat from class", a slow ideological suicide that has seen leftists substitute first the Stalinist states, and latterly political Islam, as the progressive force that can take on the established order. If you see Hamas, Hezbollah and the Iranian government as the frontline of the world struggle for freedom, you're unlikely to be much concerned with the activity of 19th century London dock workers.

But Workers' Liberty has not made that retreat. We believe that only the organised working class — thinking and acting independently as a class for itself — can liberate humanity. That's why we focus on learning and re-learning the lessons of periods like "New Unionism" by organising dayschools like that on Saturday 18 February. We are one of the few groups on the left to do so.

But to continue to do so, we need money. We need money to continue publishing *Solidarity* as a weekly, improve our website, organise other events such as our Ideas for Freedom summer school, and for a host of other costs.

**The fundamental focus of our work, as evidenced by our "New Unionism" dayschool, is to put working-class self-emancipation back at the heart of the socialist project. If you agree with this aim, please support us financially.**

Please consider:

- Taking out a monthly standing order to the AWL. There is a form at [www.workersliberty.org/resources](http://www.workersliberty.org/resources) and on this page. (Even a few pounds a month really does help.)

- Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate).

- Organising a fundraising event.

- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university / college or campaign group.

- Getting in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

For more information on any of the above, contact us: tel. 07796 690 874 /

[awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, SE1 3DG.



**Total raised so far: £8,473**

We raised £830 this week from donations, a new

standing order, and sales of merchandise at our New Unionism school (thanks to Sean, John, Colin and Paul).

## 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 .....

# Class struggle dispatches from Iraq

By Falah Alwan

**1,200 workers in a cement factory in Karbala have held a strike calling for increased benefits. The factory is operated by the French company Lafarge, and bosses want to massively increase production to about 60,000 tonnes per month.**

This is a huge amount for an old factory and the capability is not really there to meet these targets. According to the contract between Lafarge and the Iraqi government, the furnace must be upgraded before the increase in production can take place, but the upgrade hasn't been made. The furnace has received routine repairs only. It's meant a massive increase in workload for the workers. The workers struck on Sunday 11 February and have given bosses ten days to meet their demands.

At Lafarge's Bazian plant, near Suleymaniyah, drivers have also taken strike action, demanding greater safety protection in the workplace. They closed roads to and from the plant, meaning that goods couldn't enter or leave.

In Basra, three cleaning workers have died in an industrial accident. They were cleaning an oil tanker in precarious conditions and fell in. They were working on the "daily wage system", which is casualised and gives no insurance or compensation in case of dangerous working conditions or accidents.

Bosses' disregard for workers' safety has also been demonstrated by the importing of cranes and other industrial equipment from Japan, purchased because they were cheap. No prior tests or checks were carried out and the equipment was later found to be radioactive, having been used in clean-up and reconstruction following the disaster in March 2011.

A delegation from FWCUI visited Cairo recently to attend the conference of the new Federation of Independent Trade Unions, which was held in Cairo. We met with workers' leaders from a variety of sectors, and talked about new trends in the international workers' movement that are breaking from the old bureaucratic unionism.

We talked particularly with Egyptian and Tunisian activists about the possibility of forming a new international tendency of workers' organisations, and the possibility of an international conference was discussed. We'll meet again in Cairo in three or four months to discuss things further. From our point of view, it's important that any international regroupment is based on the basic, day-to-day tasks of the workers' movement and doesn't have an unnecessarily ideological or doctrinal basis.

The threat of an American or Israeli attack on Iran is, of course, being discussed by people in Iraq. It's being discussed with a lot of fear and trepidation. We know from our own experience in Iraq the results of such an invasion, so people are worried about it.

**They're also worried about Iran's influence within Iraq, and how Iran might try to turn Iraq into a battlefield in the event of any war.**

• Falah Alwan is President of the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI), one of Iraq's main union federations. This article is a summary of the latest in a series of monthly Skype meetings between Falah, AWL members and other labour solidarity activists worldwide.

# Egypt: what political

organised against religious attacks on the country's one million, mainly poor, Coptic Christians.

Meanwhile Egyptians have watched as negotiations with the US over aid led to an \$1.6 billion aid package of which \$1.3 billion is to go directly to the military!

The worsening situation undoubtedly led to many Egyptian democrats taking their stand alongside the courageous youth who took to the streets after the football massacre.

It was an opportunity to focus and bring together those opposed to the sabotaging of the struggle that started a year ago. Much they did in the same way as last year — taking the issues into the suburbs of Cairo and other cities of Egypt.

The Egypt Revolutionaries' Alliance — which brings together over 50 political groups, along with university and school students and, most importantly, independent workers' unions — made a call for civil disobedience to start on 11 February, the anniversary of Mubarak's resignation. The call was made with varying degrees of clarity and confidence. Trade union activists were more guarded about what was possible.

The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, formed five days into the 2011 revolution, has made huge strides over the last year.

At its conference in late January this year 293 unions registered, representing two million Egyptian workers. But many of the newly organised workers haven't had the strike experiences of those coming out of the disputes of 2008. Whilst the unions have often given a sense of an identity to many Egyptian workers, they have yet to see themselves as a collective force, particularly in a political arena.

The trade unions are now demanding proper full-time contracts for full-time work, a minimum wage of LE1,500 per month, a maximum wage of not more than ten times the minimum, the official recognition which is still denied them, a trade union liberties law, the purging of corrupt officials from state institutions and companies, and the re-nationalisation of privatised companies. Mubarak's cronies continue to profiteer in these privatisations, often asset-stripping and closing down the previously nationalised sites and selling the land to speculators.

## REINVIGORATED

**A strike on 11 February was successful in a number of areas. It appears to have reinvigorated a number of disputes. At the Ain Sokhna port dockers launched a sit-in on 9 February and then an indefinite strike on the 11th with threats by the workers to take over the port if their demands weren't met.**

But the (general) strike call did not have the popular appeal of last year, when there was a clear link between the call to bring down Mubarak with the everyday problems, the extensive corruption and oppression that Egyptian workers faced. This year, with elections already held and the unpalatable result, many Egyptians were confused what the call for "civil disobedience until SCAF steps down" meant. Is it a call to bring forward the presidential elections? Is it a call to replace the state and the incoming government with something else? If so what?

Not surprisingly both SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood are making the most of the "failure", as they see it, of the civil disobedience call. Although the strength of the post 2 February mobilisation did frighten them and push them into calling for the presidential elections to be brought forward, the Brotherhood used the street battles with the regime to strengthen their hand in their negotiations with SCAF for who is dominant in the new regime.

On 17 February other parliamentarians in the People's Assembly (PA, the lower house of parliament) made initiatives to harness the street movement. Three MPs — of the Free Egyptians, the Social Democratic parties, and the Revolution Continues coalition — plan to form a "revolutionary council". "Around 14 coalitions and movements including the April 6 Youth Movement asked us to lead a revolutionary council," MP Abu Hamed told the *Daily News Egypt*.

Whether such initiatives have been called for by the protestors and whether they could lead to giving a clearer political focus for Egyptian workers remains to be seen. At present these councils are intended primarily as an adjunct, giving the democratic protestors a more credible body through which they can assert themselves politically. The parliament

**Hand drawings of this year's martyrs (in Tahrir Square) and right**

**Pete Radcliff visited Cairo earlier this month. He reports on the political situation facing democracy and trade union activists**

**The massacre at the football stadium in Port Said on 1 February is widely believed to have been consciously planned by the Egyptian Security forces — an attempt to divide the democracy movement by a brutal attack on a more socially isolated but physically militant section. But it has produced the opposite effect.**

The massacre of over 70 Al-Ahly fans, or Ultras, first led to huge street protests in Cairo and other cities and then spread far wider, involving students, the urban poor and trade unions across Egypt.

Ever since the results of Egypt's Peoples Assembly elections became clear (a date for the Presidential election has yet to be announced), revolutionaries have had to grapple with how to maintain their movement. The new Assembly is dominated by Islamist parties.

The greatest weakness of last year's popular dissent was the illusion it had in the military. Those illusions have pretty much disintegrated. But the hated Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) remains in control, and that is both powerful and brutal.

In the four days of protest between Tahrir Square and the Ministry of Interior which followed the football massacre, 11 were killed, 30 were partially or fully blinded and an estimated number of 2,000 required hospital treatment. Last October 28 Coptic Christians were murdered following protest. 45 were killed in the days following November protests about compensation for those injured at the beginning of 2011. There were 17 deaths and brutal attacks on women protesters on 16 December 2011.

Prior to this month trade union and democratic activists in Egypt saw their future being threatened by continuing brutal rule by SCAF, operating Mubarak's anti-union laws, and by the oncoming ideological oppression of an Islamist government, whilst the west looked on seemingly with approval. The trial of Mubarak has been a joke. The trial's result and verdict planned for 22 February is expected to lead to a trivialisation of his crimes and a light sentence.

The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the election front of the Muslim Brotherhood, had until 8 February made few criticisms on the delays to the Presidential election. Needless to say, the FJP made no criticisms of the election process that barred parties based on class. It made less and less criticism of the corruption of the army and the continuing plundering of the economy by the military.

But then the FJP shares with SCAF a fierce hostility to secular trade unions and the democratic activists who have or-

# al voice?

## Why I'm standing: Realigning the anti-fascist movement

Justin Baidoo, a trade union and socialist activist in South London, is standing for Unite Against Fascism as assistant secretary at the UAF conference on 25 February. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

### Why are you standing?

As an active anti-fascist campaigner for four years, I think there is a need for a national anti-fascist network. AWL and others tried to create something with Stop Racism and Fascism, but it didn't go very far. Hope Not Hate is an ineffective pressure group, and farcically has just split from Searchlight. UAF, though I have many criticisms of it, is a real national network. Following arguments inside and outside the SWP, there are elections for a national leadership. I'm taking this chance to stand for further change in the campaign, to make it more democratic, more based on local activism and more working-class politically.

I'm supported by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council, which set up the South London Anti-Fascist Group (now South London Community Action Network) and by my union branch, Unite Croydon and Crystal Palace.

### If you get elected, what changes will you push for?

I want to go beyond "parachute anti-fascism" — reactive, parachuting into an area when the EDL, BNP or whoever do a demo, arranging things with the police, but then disappearing. We need a long-term, pro-active, trade union based approach. We need to organise with local forces, particularly local labour movements to fight fascism more consistently.

To do that, we also need democracy in the campaign. These elections are a first step, but they are somewhat tokenistic. We need proper input for local groups and a fully democratic national structure.

Also UAF should be helping, not hindering, proper local groups, ideally I think with trades councils at their heart like in South London.

We need to drop token, fake anti-fascists like David Cameron and other Tory, Liberal and New Labour big-wigs from the campaign. That's so we can offer concrete solutions.

At the moment UAF just says "multiculturalism is great, defend it". Yes, but this is rearguard and weak. We should be taking up the policies which our labour movement stands for. Of course the unions are weak and they sell people out, but the labour movement is there to be improved. We need demands on jobs, housing and services and all the issues the far right exploits.

Clearly an anti-fascist campaign can't be a surrogate political party, but we need a labour movement consensus.

If you'd get rid of bourgeois politicians, what are the criteria for accepting an ally? We need to define anti-fascism, and fascism.

Fascism is an authoritarian movement with nationalist and racist tendencies which aims to crush any challenge to the system — against oppressed racial minorities, the disabled, LGBT people but also against trade unions and the socialist movement. From that it should be obvious that we can't ally with people currently in power who also attack our people and our movement.

That means an end to keeping quiet about homophobia. But it also means we can't support politicians who

promote Fortress Europe, who supported clearing out Dale Farm, who promote racism and discrimination.

### That still seems unclear. For instance, aren't all immigration controls discriminatory? But would you make that a red line?

I think where exactly the line would be defined can't be set *a priori* — it would require debate and discussion. The point is there should be a line. I'm not looking for a full socialist program, I'm looking for a serious alliance. I don't want to get into Trotsky's language of united front and popular front, but that's what we're talking about. I'm talking about not allying with clear enemies.

### Are you standing with any other candidates?

Not at the moment. It's worth saying that the whole nomination process has been kept very quiet, and it's quite complicated to get nominated.

What's interesting is that as I understand it I'll be standing against [leading SWPer] Martin Smith.

I don't know what my chances are, but there are a lot of people my campaign has struck a chord with. I'm hoping that numbers will increase as my campaign gets out there.

### Beyond UAF, what do you think are the key issues facing anti-fascists and anti-racists?

Fascism proper seems to be waning somewhat in Britain. The BNP are going down and the EDL are still strong but have not stepped into electoral politics yet — though their alliance with the British Freedom Party is worrying.

But apparently some EDL are also entering UKIP, who did incredibly well in the European elections and are a force. I'm not sure the far right will register that much in the London elections. But beyond the still strong danger of street fascism, we have an authoritarian, right-wing political agenda in power, attacking migrants, savaging our living standards and so on. To some extent the official right works in tandem with the far right, encouraging them.

A lot of the liberal left seems to think that the far right threat is over, but socialists should know better. The far right burgeoned in a period of relative calm and economic growth because beneath it was a growth of casualisation, precarity, agency work and the whole Blairite agenda. Now we face economic crisis and as the Tory "reforms" really hit, the relationship between state-sponsored and fascist reaction could blossom. I think you saw the dangers in the right-wing response to the riots. In any case, with mass unemployment, homelessness and falling living standards, we will see a lot of angry and confused working-class people of all colours — not just white.

The responsibility on socialists becomes enormous. Part of that is a strong anti-fascist movement which is making working-class arguments and providing answers, not allying with people who are anti-working class. If we get this wrong the workers' movement could be set way back.

**I suppose we could start from scratch, but I think it's better to have a go at realigning and transforming the anti-fascist movement which already exists.**

- More on Justin's campaign, see his blog: [www.tnponline.org](http://www.tnponline.org)
- English Defence League: wash out or warning? [www.workersliberty.org/node/18300](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/18300)

### The burned-down headquarters of Mubarak

is widely seen as "old conservative men" by protestors but the parliamentarians do not see these revolutionary councils as any alternative to the the parliament. And an alternative governmental force is needed!

The economic crisis gripping Egypt is severe. International capital is virtually boycotting Egypt. Foreign investment plunged from \$6.4 billion in 2010 to \$0.5 billion last year.

Tourism, on which 15 million Egyptians depended, has collapsed with a reduction by over 30% through 2011. 50% of Egyptians live on or below the poverty level. SCAF claim that they have reduced this but that claim is not credible. The issue of who governs, who can end corruption, poverty and violent attacks of the state is crucial.

### IDEAS

**There have been developments in building revolutionary and socialist ideas. The Revolutionary Socialists have clearly built well, primarily amongst students.**

Some of their activists at times speak on behalf of the labour movement, organising as they do along with independent unions in the Workers' Democratic Party.

But they are limited by the views of their main backers, the SWP in the UK. Hence they refused to back the struggle for Libyan democracy and are leaving the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists to make the loudest popular protests over Syria. With their blanket opposition to all Israelis, they fail to distinguish their politics on this issue from Islamism or old-style Arab nationalism.

During the February battles, but probably before, there have been obvious tensions between workers and more optimistic students. There is an urgent need for revolutionaries in Egypt to make clear slogans rather than rhetoric.

The workers movement is still new but it needs to develop quickly. It needs to ensure that its popular base and its understanding of the issues of concern to Egyptian workers links with the wider movement of students, unemployed and others.

It means organising, as the Ain Sokhna port workers threatened to do, to "nationalise" by taking control of their workplaces. It means attempting to build the organisations that can defend the street protestors from the slaughterous onslaughts of SCAF and appealing to the dissenters in a predominately conscript army.

**It means clarifying a programme of working-class liberation that is clear on solidarity with all workers and democrats in the Middle East and North Africa.**

# Luddites were not backward-looking

By Cathy Nugent

This year marks the 200th year anniversary of the high point of the the “Luddite” revolt (November 1811-February 1813).

The Luddite revolt was a quasi-insurrectionary movement of textile workers taking action against their employers by breaking machinery, setting light to factories and other acts of “violence”. The revolt started in Nottinghamshire and spread to the wool districts of Yorkshire and the cotton mills of Lancashire.

“Luddism” is a pejorative term today, meaning backward-looking hostility to new technology. But that distorts the historical meaning of the Luddites’ struggle. This was a heroic movement for working-class rights, which, by the standards of the time, was a coherent challenge to the profit system.

Objection to particular new machines may have been a common and even central impetus in the struggles of 1812. But the form of their action — machine breaking — has to be understood in historical context.

Machine-breaking first started being used by groups of workers sometime in the seventeenth century. The last incident took place in the 1830s. Some incidents throughout that period had nothing to do with hostility to new machines, but were a form of “collective bargaining”, conducted to win demands on completely different issues.

In an era when trade union organisation was illegal, “machine breaking” was a logical and sometimes effective form of action. Smashing machines at night-time was much safer than striking and trying to organise pickets.

The Luddite movement was part of the tradition of machine breaking but it was much more organised. For that reason Luddism has been aptly described as a quasi-underground trade union movement.

The precise details of how new machinery was affecting the workers in 1812 differed from place to place. In Nottinghamshire new machines were deskilling the work in the stocking trade and the quality of the goods was diminishing. In the West Riding the specialised (finishing ) work of a particular and powerful group of textile workers was under threat from new machinery.

## DEPRESSION

**A more general factor — trade depression, induced by conditions created by the Napoleonic Wars — was important. It was widely believed (even by some members of the ruling class), that conditions could have been (but weren’t) ameliorated by the government.**

In the West Riding more than a third of all manufacturers were forced out of business in 1811-12. Employers were cutting wages and laying off workers. New machinery was being brought in, in the West Riding at least, not just to enable capitalist expansion as it had been in the boom years before the War, but as a defensive measure, in order to safeguard profit.

At the same time the degree of control over the labour process that some trades had enjoyed was being undermined. For example, legislation deregulating the apprenticeship system was introduced in 1809. E P Thompson argues that the workers felt a loss of rights, a diminished status and a sense of injustice, and this was the single most important factor behind the movement.

In short, technological innovation, when and where it happened, was linked to smashing up the power of the workers.

The machine breaking and rioting which took place in 1812, was not just spontaneous elemental workers’ protest. The movement adopted guerrilla, even “terroristic”, tactics — the lives of some bosses and their families were threatened, one boss was killed. This was class war, fought with the means that were available to our class at that time.

How the Luddites saw themselves will never be known as no records of Luddite meetings remain. This was not because Luddites were illiterate. It was because they had to keep their affairs secret, for fear of penetration by spies and informers. Some historians argue the Luddites may have wanted to organise a general uprising. The movement must have been inspired by notions of justice and democracy, put into currency by the French Revolution and the English Jacobin movement (enthusiasts for the which had been active in the north of England. If the Luddites were “insurrectionary” in their aspirations, this too had to remain secret.

In February 1811 workers in the Nottinghamshire stocking industry began destroying knitting frames. A depression had gripped the hosiery trade, as it had other trades. The nature of the work was changing. Knitted cloth of poorer quality could now be made by relatively unskilled workers using bigger machines. The bosses took on cheap labour by employing apprentices to do the work of quali-

fied workers. The skilled workers, whose conditions and wages had been undermined decided to take action.

In a three week period over two hundred stocking frames were destroyed. By March, 1811, several attacks were taking place every night. The Home Office sent in regular cavalry to “quieten” the area.

On 4 November 2011 machine breaking action resumed in Bulwell (near Nottingham) against a hated hosiery boss, Edward Hollingsworth. Workers from several villages gathered and, so the story goes, were led by a military-style commander who called himself “Ned Ludd”.

The name was a pseudonym for a local leader, and had probably been used before, maybe as early as 1779. It would be used again and again. The Bulwell workers were to become part of a generalised revolt and were disciplined; they moved in formation and were armed. They surrounded Hollingsworth’s barricaded house, but he had guns and killed one of the workers. The group moved on to attack Hollingsworth’s workshop, destroying only the new knitting frames.

The “Luddite” struggle spread around Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire, and gradually to Yorkshire and Lancashire at the beginning of 1812.

For various reasons, there had been few attempts to introduce new technology in Yorkshire. Here Luddism was initiated by the croppers. They wanted to stop the introduction of a new shearing frame to a mill near Brighouse by an up-and-coming entrepreneur, William Cartwright. They saw this as the beginning of changes by all employers in the area which would put them out of work.

## POWER

**The croppers had tremendous power. In 1802 they had organised a strike in Leeds against the use of “overage” apprentices, i.e. the employment of adult workers at less than the adult rate for the job.**

Eighty croppers brought out a factory of over 1,000 people. The croppers won. It was only a matter of time before one employer, or many employers, would attempt to sideline, undermine and replace an uppity group of workers by bringing in new machines.

When croppers began losing their jobs in West Riding, the croppers of the entire county began to organise. They met in secret at a pub in Halifax to plot and plan. As well as the immediate threats they would have discussed the wider issues: trade unionism, republicanism, the ideas of Tom Paine, revolution, parliamentary action and so on.

After a series of attacks around the country they set out to destroy the cloth-finishing machinery at Cartwright’s Rawfolds Mill.

The croppers’ main organiser was a young man from Huddersfield called George Mellor. He led the attack on 11 April 1812 at Rawfolds. Unfortunately the mill was protected by armed guards; two of the croppers were mortally wounded in the attack. Seven days later three men, with Mellor in command, retaliated by killing William Horsfall, a particularly obnoxious local mill-owner.

The Rawfolds events acted as a spark for demonstrations of anger in many places throughout April 1812: Ashton, Barnsley, Birmingham, Bolton, Carlisle, Cheadle, Coven-

try, Doncaster, Eccles, Macclesfield, Manchester, Middleton, Oldham, Rochdale, Saddleworth, Sheffield, Skipton, Stockport, Tintwistle and Wilmslow.

Moving through the countryside in heavy disguise and with blackened faces, the Luddites made swift and surprise raids. They were a highly successful “enemy within”. No one knew when they would strike next. Luddite discipline was reinforced by secret oaths and hand-signals. Such things were typical at this time when trade unions were banned. But such things also made the bourgeoisie paranoid.

1812 also saw attacks on Lancashire cotton mills. Local handloom weavers wanted to stop the introduction of power looms, and they were suffering from the massive increase in wheat prices. Food riots also took place — in Manchester, Oldham, Ashton, Rochdale, Stockport and Macclesfield.

Neither the local nor the central state had ready and sufficient forces to act to put down the Luddites. There was no police force as we know it in that time; much of the armed forces were fighting the French. But local magistrates could swear in special constables.

## ADVANTAGE

**The weakness of the ruling class gave the Luddites enormous advantage initially. They could move around the countryside largely undetected. However the ruling class, facing an insurrectionary situation, was eventually compelled to act.**

In February 1812 the Tory government made machine-breaking a capital offence. Later they sent 13,000 troops in the Luddite areas. Based in Manchester, the force effectively established martial law. They used torture and employed spies to get information. They began to make arrests.

In early June 1812 the first trial took place in Lancashire. Seven men and one woman were sentenced to death by hanging. Three of the men had stolen bread, cheese and potatoes during a riot. Four were convicted of an arson attack. The woman, Hannah Smith, had stolen potatoes, and was to be hanged for jumping on a butter cart and selling its contents to a crowd.

In West Riding the army formed special commando units to chase groups of Luddites through the countryside. They eventually managed to break up and repress the movement. Eventually Mellor and other West Riding Luddites were arrested, tried and found guilty. Seventeen were hung, seven were transported.

The Luddite revolt was not, as it has been depicted, an irrational response to “inevitable” technological change. It was an attempt by the groups of workers most affected by industrialisation to stop their livelihoods from being destroyed. They wanted the right to control the pace and the effect of innovation and change.

**They wanted to kick back against the cruelty and ruthlessness of the “masters” who were asserting their right to make a profit, no matter what the social consequences.**

• For information on anniversary events, see [www.luddites200.org.uk](http://www.luddites200.org.uk)

## Voters shift left, but struggles need a new force

By Theodora Polenta

**Current opinion polls in Greece give parties to the left of Pasok (roughly equivalent to Labour) well over 40% of the vote in the new elections due there in April. They show strong feeling against the “memorandum” (the cuts), but dispersed and expressed in often confused and contradictory ways.**

In the last parliamentary elections, in October 2009, before Greece’s economic crisis exploded, Pasok and New Democracy (roughly equivalent to the Tories) had 77% of the vote. That score has decreased to under 40%.

The elections planned for April, even though they come after all the memorandum policies and “private sector involvement” (PSI) agreements have been ratified in parliament, are causing headaches to politicians and capitalists. Lucas Papademos, Greece’s “technocrat” temporary prime minister; Evangelos Venizelos, the Pasok finance minister; Antonis Samaras, ND leader; Angela Merkel, German chancellor; Nicolas Sarkozy, French president; Wolfgang Schäuble, German finance minister; Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF — all would prefer to postpone the elections as long as they can, unless a militant workers’ movement and social unrest imposes them. They know that even ND and Pasok are fully signed up for the cuts, and fully committed to a coalition, they cannot guarantee a parliamentary majority.

In October 2009 Pasok took 44% of the votes, ND 33.5%. KKE, the diehard-Stalinist Greek Communist Party, had 8%; Laos (far-right populist) 5.7%; Syriza (a coalition round the former Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party) 4.6%.

In polls published on 20 February, ND was down to 24%. Pasok was at 13.9%. In other polls it has been below 10%, paying the price of being at the steering wheel of the aggressive anti-working-class attacks during the last two years.

### DIMAR

**The biggest gainer in every poll is the Democratic Left (Dimar) of Photis Kouvelis, which originates as a right-wing split in 2010 from Synaspismos, the former Euro-communists who are the core of the Syriza coalition. Dimar is being consistently recorded as the second biggest party, and polling 15% or more.**

At the time of its formation in August 2010, and until recently, Dimar did not unequivocally opposed the memorandum and the austerity measures. When it split it accused Syriza of being influenced by ultra-left forces and putting too much political emphasis on the mass movement and not enough on parliament.

Dimar has selectively voted for certain memorandum policies (such as that for the dismantling of the pension funds). It did not participate in the student movement and the “indignant citizens” movements, but opposed them.

It vehemently opposed Papandreou’s call for a referen-

dum on the 26 October agreement, and gave left cover to the formation of the coalition government. The leader of Dimar stated: “It is essential the formation of a transitional government for a brief period of time that can lead us to elections. Any other alternative can complicate things even further”.

Recognising the anti-memorandum feelings of the majority of the Greek population, Dimar has shifted its policies to a clear anti-memorandum agenda, “realising” now that the politics of the first memorandum were not introducing positive reforms but were disastrous for the country.

But should we add the percentages of KKE, Syriza, and Dimar together in order to demonstrate the potential of all main left parties electoral alliance? Does it reflect the last two years’ working-class struggles and the struggles of the broader neighbouring community non-payment movement? Was Dimar part of these struggles? Does Dimar currently have links or would politically prioritize its work within the trade union movement?

### OLD PASOK

**Generally Dimar do not participate in any way to the struggles. They try to present themselves as the “old good Pasok”, even though they don’t say that openly.**

The differences between the left and right-wing tendencies of Synaspismos and Syriza became apparent back in the 2006 during the militant student movements against the restructuring of the education by the then ND government and its attempts to violate article 16 of the constitution, which obliges the Greek state to offer all Greeks free education on all levels at State educational institutions. The main line of Syriza was to support and participate in the student movement.

However, academics and intellectuals of the right wing of Syriza condemned the student movements and occupations, as a parochial form of struggle and participated in an initiative of “1000” academies in favour of structural reforms in all educational establishments.

Differences re-emerged during the 2008 students’ and workers’ movement. Formally Syriza stated its support to the movement, but the central line of the Syriza right wing was to condemn every form of violence.

The emergence of working-class struggle exposed and increased the differences between Syriza and its right wing tendency, and the onset of the current economic crisis, the implementation of the memorandum policies, and the intervention of the Troika, made the differences irrevocable.

The system was in need of a left that would provide the IMF and EU inspired anti-working class politics with a left-wing and sensitive face. Within the context of a European crisis of social democracy, the necessity of a nominally left-wing party that would defend “the law and the constitutions”, that would be in favour of “constructive contributions to the capitalist system and the political establishment” and would detach itself from the workers’ movement and trade-union struggles was posed by the shift of

millions of workers away from Pasok social democracy.

At first Dimar said: “Even in the context of the memorandum policies and the Troika’s restrictions, there is still space to create a transparent and fair pension and social security system”.

Dimar leader Photis Kouvelis stated that he would not support the “existing corrupted pension and social security system”. “Left-wing perspectives on the crisis mean reductions of the deficits and control of the debt. The effects of the crisis should be equally distributed to all layers of society, and not solely on the working class. The solution lies to the implementation of big structural changes on the Greek state”. “Anti-capitalist and anti-systemic positions as an answer to the crisis expose the ultra-leftism of Syriza’s policies”.

During critical historical times, and when the class struggle poses questions of workers’ control and a workers’ government, the reformist and legalistic left that condemns any confrontation with the establishment will always seek to reinvent itself, advocating new “historical compromises”.

In 1964 that tendency in 1964 supported George Papandreou and the centre-left so that the Tories (ERE, forerunners of ND) would lose the elections. In 1967-74 it responded positively to the calls of the Greek military junta for liberalisation. To the choice “Karamanlis [conservative leader] or Junta” it provided support to Karamanlis in 1974. More recently it seeks constructive amendments so that memorandum politics can be applied more effectively and open the road to an era of capitalist development and prosperity.

### DOGMATIC

**The “liberal left” is essentially the dogmatic left that has placed itself consistently within the political lines drawn by the capitalist class and the mainstream political establishment.**

Dimar voted against the second memorandum package on 19 February, but still portrays the memorandum policies as necessary evils to secure Greece’s position in the euro and believes that memorandum policies can be reformed! Dimar supports refugees and gay marriage. It is in favour of nuclear disarmament and ecological policies. It supports drug legalisation.

But it is against the combat strength of the working-class movement and the militant strike of the Greek Steel workers.

Dimar views socialism as a moral theory of charitable feelings towards the economically weak and disadvantaged, and not as an ideology that arms the working class for struggle against the whole of the capitalist class.

The workers and the working-class movement do not need another political party to sympathise and moralise and

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

talk about the unfairness of reducing the workers' wages. Venizelos and the government are already doing that and express their deep and sincere regret for having to reduce the workers' wages and pensions.

KKE's score in the polls published on 20 February was 11.9%, a smaller increase than might be expected since KKE's trade-union front, PAME, has led big demonstrations and strikes, and the Greek Steel workers, who are in the vanguard of the working class struggle, on strike since 31 October, are mainly led by KKE-PAME.

KKE is paying the price for its refusal to discuss left unity. It declares itself the only consistent "anti-monopoly" force. Whenever movements have emerged which they could not control, KKE has abstained or openly opposed them, as with the non-payment neighbourhood movements outside its control and the media workers' disputes.

Repeatedly KKE does its best to demobilise the resistance by ensuring it is divided into separate demonstrations, in separate places, or at separate times on the same day. KKE ignores, or is openly hostile to, movements that are not under its control, such as the 2011 movement of "indignant citizens" in the city squares, accusing them of being petty-bourgeois, middle-class, or anarchist.

KKE may use vague revolutionary lingo and may say that "people's power" and "people's economy" are the only alternatives to capitalism's economic crisis.

However, KKE totally detaches the socialist strategic aim from their current tactics. In every speech by its secretary Aleka Papariga, KKE says that the working-class movement is not politically mature, and its political consciousness is not advanced enough to accept the slogan of socialism. But if the strategic aim of a socialist society is not mature now that capitalism is destroying the lives of millions of people, then when it will be?

KKE's conservatism and its Stalinist reflexes are exposed in its current struggle against "the legalisation of drugs". KKE and its youth front KNE are campaigning against legislation to decriminalise drugs, based on statistics showing that 40% of those in jail for drug offences are individual users.

KKE refuses to campaign against homophobia or in favour of women's rights. Its recent letter of condolence to the state of North Korea and its nostalgia for the former Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe both limit its electoral support and, more importantly, indicate its unsuitability to lead the struggles to come.

## INCREASE

**Syriza has seen its percentage increase to 10.7%, far less than the hopes of the 13 far-left groupings, ranging from Maoists to Trotskyists, who have aligned themselves with Synaspismos in the Syriza coalition.**

In 2008 Syriza became synonymous with the youth protests, but since then it has oscillated between a militant youth section and a more "respectable" political leadership coming from Synaspismos and aiming essentially for a human-centred capitalism.

In 2010 a right wing split away from Synaspismos to form Dimar. The far-left groupings in Syriza hoped for a change of direction towards clearer anti-capitalist revolutionary politics; but the central leaders of Syriza firmly believe that a more social-democratic Keynesian type of capitalism can get Greece out of the crisis.

They talk about the necessity of investment and stimulating the economy, and the urgency of development, "ignoring" the fact that capitalist development always takes place at the expense of and through the sacrifices of the working class.

Instead of calling for nationalisation of the banks under workers' control, Syriza calls for "monitoring and controlling the banking system". Instead of raising the slogan of defaulting and refusing to pay the Greek debt, Syriza asks for the renegotiation of the Greek debt, the creation of eurobonds, the printing of money by the European Central Bank, etc.

Syriza always asks for elections to pacify and bring back stability to Greek society. They are seeking an electoral front or alliance with the soft-left anti-memorandum MPs that have been expelled from Pasok. They are also approaching the Greens, whose politics are very similar to German Greens and on a lot of issues are to the right of the traditional labour parties.

Syriza is also approaching its own right-wing split, the Democratic Left, to discuss future political and electoral alliances.

The major aim of Syriza is an electoral alliance, as broad as possible, which will record the anti-memorandum sentiments of the population in a very loose way. But such a coalition can reach no positive left-wing programmatic agreement. A coalition whose only ambition would be to reflect the disenfranchisement of Pasok members and a general vague resentment of the Greek population towards the two major political parties cannot offer hope, inspiration and a strategic aim to the working class.

The cooperation of the left in the trade union rank and file movement and in the political arena is imperative. As long as the left remains fragmented, the EU/ ECB/ IMF Troika and the coalition government can carry on undeterred, im-

## Greek Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos

plementing further anti-working-class politics.

However, an effective and lasting left coalition can only be formed with a coherent agreed left wing political manifesto aiming at the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. Even small reforms and gains for the working-class movement will be achieved only as by-products of clear anti-capitalist struggle, and not within the agenda of "realistic" reformism.

## STAGNATE

**The far-right populist party Laos has seen its percentage stagnate at around 6.9%. It has paid the price for establishing itself as the most consistent pro-memorandum party until the very last minute, and participating in Papademos's coalition government alongside Pasok and ND.**

The recent U-turn of Laos, voting against the second memorandum package, reflects the political pressure on Laos and its fear of inroads into its base by the openly fascist and racist party Xrisi Aygi, which is currently polling around 3%.

Both KKE and Syriza have gained electoral support because they have been, with their political weaknesses and limitations, part of the anti-memorandum, anti-austerity movement. Their electoral gains are not a reflection of them

developing correct analyses and theses. They are the results of the massive exodus of working class people from Pasok, and a desire for a protest vote against the mainstream political establishment.

The Greek Steel workers, the media workers, and the other workers on strike show the whole working class the only realistic and effective route to resist the attacks are orchestrated in unity by the government, the bankers, the industrial leaders, and the productive and unproductive capitalists, under the supervision of the Troika. The only realistic road is the road of uncompromised class struggle.

We need a united workers' front in both the private and public sector alongside the unemployed, the refugees, and the civil disobedience neighbourhood movements.

The working class is in need of a revolutionary left party to speed up the above process by not only participating and observing the struggles but organizing and being the vanguard of those struggles.

**Against the continuous crisis and destruction of our lives brought by the decaying Greek capitalist system, we should aggressively state our anti-capitalist manifesto and our program of transitional demands, which should be linked to our strategic struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.**

# Finkelstein's change of heart on Israel boycott

By Clarke Benitez

**Prominent anti-Zionist writer Norman Finkelstein has broken from the "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" (BDS) movement, denouncing it as a "cult" and saying that it is based on a politics of "eliminating Israel" but is too dishonest to say so.**

Finkelstein, whose books include *The Holocaust Industry* and *Beyond Chutzpah*, has until now focused much of his work on arguing his view that Israel and its supporters internationally manipulate or manufacture claims of anti-Semitism and imagined existential threats to Israel in order to suppress criticism of the state. But now he has denounced the movement he was a prominent supporter of for disguising its real aims — the destruction of Israel — behind "disingenuous" posturing.

He also criticised the BDS movement for its ineffectiveness, claiming that they talk up victories like that against Veolia (the French company who pulled out of a transport project in Israel after a campaign) to mask a lack of more substantial successes. He claims that many of the Palestinian civil society organisations which back the movement are paper operations.

Finkelstein has not suddenly become a revolutionary internationalist on the question. In the interview where he makes the statements, he continually emphasises "international law" as the point-of-departure for his views on the question and attacks the BDS movement for "leftist posturing". But many of his criticisms ring true; Workers' Liberty has also criticised BDS's tactical inefficacy and argued that a tactic of root-and-branch boycotts of everything Israeli

only makes sense in the context of thoroughgoing hostility to the existence of any Israeli-Jewish national entity.

**Hopefully Finkelstein's comments can help open up space within the Palestinian solidarity movement for further discussion of the approach and, despite the limitations in Finkelstein's own politics, lay down a marker for the idea that one can be for independence and justice for the Palestinians without supporting the BDS movement.**

## "Zionists" to blame for Greek crisis?

**UK left group Counterfire is promoting a long, rambling statement co-authored by "Zorba The Greek" composer Mikis Theodorakis as the main focus for their Greek solidarity work.**

Somewhat bizarrely, the statement appears to blame America ("Wall Street") rather than European imperialist powers for Greece's plight.

This view appears somewhat less bizarre, however, when one learns of Theodorakis's view that "Zionists" and "the Jewish-American lobby" are the shadowy forces behind all the world's problems (they even "control 99% of global musical life", a truly astonishing feat).

Theodorakis, now 87 years old, belongs alongside "anti-Zionist" saxophonist Gilad Atzmon in that category of talented artists who make good music but have horrendous, anti-Semitic politics.

**These people have no positive role to play in the development of healthy international solidarity.**

# Sparks beat Balfour Beatty

By Darren Bedford

**A day after the High Court refused to grant Balfour Beatty Engineering Services an injunction to stop a planned strike by Unite members, BBES performed a spectacular and embarrassing u-turn and backed down from their plans to impose new contracts for electrical and mechanical construction workers which would have involved pay cuts of up to 35%.**

Balfour Beatty was one of a group of eight construction industry giants, representing over half of the work in the UK, who in summer 2011 announced plans to unilaterally

leave the Joint Industry Board (the union-negotiated collective agreement governing pay, terms and conditions for electrical and mechanical construction workers) and impose a new deal, the "Building Engineering Services National Agreement" (BESNA) without union consultation.

BBES's climbdown comes after Unite, which had initially been slow to back the rank-and-file-led campaign (with national officer Bernard MacAuley even referring to the rank-and-file committee as "cancerous"), stepped up their own support for the campaigning, dedicating more union resources to it and demanding national-level talks with BBES

bosses. Unions internationally, including the influential International Brotherhood of Teamsters in the USA, also threatened action against BBES if they did not back down.

**OFFICIAL**

**Certainly, a greater level of official involvement from Unite and the threat that they would dedicate more of their considerable resources to targeting BBES, will have given BBES bosses pause.**

But Unite's active support for the dispute was never automatic and had to be won through concerted rank-and-file pressure. When Unite surrendered in the face of legal threats around the

December strike, the rank-and-file committee kept its nerve and struck anyway.

The dispute so far, while not perfect, has been a lesson in rank-and-file organising and tenacity. The direct actions have continued despite apparent intransigence from the contractors and it seems likely now that the remaining six will follow BBES's lead.

The battle is not won, however. A joint statement from Unite and BBES bosses says that both parties are "committed to high level talks within an agreed timeline with the aim of creating new proposals and ensuring agreed terms are honoured." In other words, rather than making a de-

fence of the JIB a non-negotiable bottom line, Unite will help BBES bosses draft another alternative agreement.

**ADEQUATE**

**A refusal to budge on defending the JIB would be a start, but even that would not be adequate.**

The JIB itself is a shoddy deal — the result of defeats for construction industry unions. It needs replacing with a deal that guarantees living wages, safe conditions, an end to blackmailing and direct employment to end the agency hiring now common in the industry. Unite should use the momentum of BBES's u-turn to go on the offensive to win new

gains in the construction industry. Its conciliatory talk is worrying, to say the least.

The rank-and-file committee is unlikely to let its guard down. It deserves the credit for this victory, which could set an enormous precedent: a major private-sector employer has been forced to back down from huge cuts because of a sustained campaign of grassroots-led direct action, including wildcat strikes. While the sparks are far from winning their war, they have won a major battle.

**Other workers should take inspiration.**

• Abridged from <http://bit.ly/zShtgE>

## NTT cleaners win

By Ira Berkovic

**A union campaign has won reinstatement and the living wage for cleaners employed by Dynamiq working at NTT Communications Ltd. in London.**

The Industrial Workers of the World Branch adds the victory to a growing list of wins against major cleaning

contractors in London.

Prominent IWW rep and cleaning worker Alberto Durango remains out of work, however, and IWW members, supporters and other trade unionists will demonstrate at 6pm on Thursday 23 February at Heron Tower (near Liverpool Street) to demand Alberto's reinstatement.

**For more information see <http://on.fb.me/wtdhET>.**

## Workers occupy against job losses

By Stewart Ward

**Workers are occupying a packaging plant in Bootle, near Liverpool, after bosses locked out employees in the midst of a battle over redundancies.**

Managers at the Austrian-owned Mayr-Melnhof Packaging plant wanted to axe 37 jobs, prompting a strike by members of the Unite union. Bosses responded

by locking the workers out, a step unprecedented in British labour history since the 1950s.

Around 40 workers occupied the site at around 11:30am on Saturday 18 February and vowed to stay until management resumes negotiations about the job losses.

Workers agreed to suspend their action following a promise of talks from management, but called a solidarity demonstration on the morning of Monday

20 February to keep up the pressure on bosses.

**Mayr-Melnhof is part of a small but significant revival of the tactic of occupations in British and Irish labour disputes, and follows occupations of La Senza workers in Dublin, the ongoing occupation of the Vita Cortex plant in Cork and the use of flash occupations of sites and contractors' offices in the electricians' battle against pay cuts and deskilling.**

## GMB to debate Labour link

By Ken Davis

**The June 2012 congress of the GMB, Britain's third biggest union, will debate the union's political activity and its relationship to the Labour Party after a large number of branches submitted motions on the topic.**

The GMB has historically been a "Labour-loyal" union and its leadership has found ways to prevent its relationship to the party being openly and frankly discussed at its Congresses. But a recent statement from its Central Executive Committee said:

"The CEC noted that over a quarter of motions to GMB Congress from branches across the whole of the UK relate to the political stance of the union. The CEC determined that the union's relations with the Labour Party and what GMB members expect and want from the Party will form a major plank in the debate at GMB Congress in

Brighton in June."

The statement comes in the wake of press statements by union leaders including the GMB's Paul Kenny, Unison's Dave Prentis and Unite's Len McCluskey criticising Labour Party leaders and indicating that their unions would be reviewing their relationship with the party.

It remains unclear what the parameters of the GMB's debate will be. A debate at its 2008 Congress explored the possibility of withdrawing funding from sponsored MPs that had failed to support the union in key industrial battles; motions proposing the withdrawal of funding were defeated after GMB leaders said that Labour ministers "sometimes have to answer to higher priorities than GMB policy."

**Workers' Liberty members in unions where the issue is debated will argue against precipitous disaffiliation and for unions to use their weight to assert inde-**

**pendent working-class political interest, both within the Labour Party and outside of it.**

## Hospital workers strike

**Support workers at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon will strike on Thursday 23 February in a battle with bosses over workplace bullying.**

The workers, employed by contractor Carillion as porters, cleaners and catering workers, have faced consistent bullying, intimidation and harassment from managers. They have already taken strike action in the dispute.

The workers travelled to London on Tuesday 21 February to demonstrate at the Carillion's Euston headquarters.

## London teachers to strike

By Pdraig O'Brien

**Teachers across 12 sixth-form colleges in London will take half a day's strike action on Thursday 23 February.**

The workers at Brooke House, Christ the King, Coulsden, Havering, Leyton, Newham, Sir George Monoux, City and Islington, St Charles, St Francis Xavier, Woodhouse and John Ruskin will walk out from lunchtime. The

strikes are part of a national campaign against cuts to college budgets and attacks on pay and conditions. The strike action, however, is initially limited to London.

Funding cuts could mean a 12% for colleges over the next year. The National Union of Teachers has called a lobby of Parliament for the day of the strike.

The decision to strike for just half a day was taken

after employers agreed to further negotiations on a 2013 pay deal.

Rinaldo Frezzato, of Waltham Forest NUT, said sixth-forms were "at severe risk of redundancies if the Government's cuts go ahead."

**"That means children's education will suffer because they will have less courses available and ultimately that will leave Britain's economy in a worse state."**

### London Troublemakers' Group

**How can we organise to win power in our workplaces and our unions? Come and meet other rank-and-file trade union activists to discuss strategies for fighting back at work – and winning. We'll be using *Labor Notes' Troublemaker's Handbook* and will be joined by *Labor Notes* co-founder Kim Moody. This is our first meeting, and we hope to develop an ongoing programme of workshops and training. Anyone interested in worker organising, from any trade union, is welcome to attend.**



**Wednesday 28 March, 7-9:30pm, upstairs at the Exmouth Arms (Starcross Street, nr. Euston)**

**For more information, contact [skillz\\_999@hotmail.com](mailto:skillz_999@hotmail.com) or ring 07961040618**

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## Nice job

£50,000  
a year for  
a 10 hour  
month

## Working as a consultant for Circle

Mark Simmonds, the Tory MP who will speak at the 29 February "Winning Business in the New NHS" event, and a shadow health minister while in opposition, gets £50,000 a year for ten hours a month "consulting" from Circle, who on 1 February became the first private health care firm to take over an NHS hospital (Hinchingbrooke, in Cambridgeshire).

## Health 11:59 Alarm Protest!

Join the protest outside  
"Winning Business in the  
new NHS" conference

Wednesday 29 February 8am  
King's Fund, 11-13 Cavendish  
Square, London, W1G 0AN

The new "Health Alarm" mobilising committee is organising a protest on Wednesday 29 February outside the "Winning Business in the New NHS" conference.

The conference sums up what the Health and Social Care Bill is all about. Private profiteers will pay £354 a head to attend this business conference and find out best how to gouge profits from the new, semi-privatised, Tory NHS.

Health Alarm says: "There's no time for complacency. There is still time to stop the Coalition's Health and Social Care Bill, which is set to strike a massive and grievous blow to the NHS.

"We are launching a mobilising committee which will complement other lobbying and campaigning efforts on the NHS by organising and publicising street protests and rank-and-file action to demand the bill is withdrawn and to put forward a positive plan to rebuild the National Health Service.

"We demand also the repeal of the cuts to the NHS, the liberation of the NHS from extortionate PFI charges, the reversal of the marketisation already imposed.

"We call on the Labour Party to publicly reaffirm Andy Burnham's promise that a future Labour government will reverse marketisation of the NHS by this government."

Initial signatories include: David Price (Centre for Primary Care and Public Health, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry), John McDonnell MP, Jade Lori Baker (NUS Women's Committee), Michael Chessum (NUS National Executive), Alison Brown (Sheffield Save Our NHS), Dave Osler (author and journalist), and Daniel Lemberger Cooper (vice-president-elect University of London Union) (all in personal capacity).

Contact: Rosie Woods, 07734 088 243,  
healthalarm@yahoo.co.uk,  
healthalarm1159.wordpress.com.

## Nice friend

Andrew Lansley, currently Tory health minister, got £21,000 from John Nash, boss of private health firm Care UK, in November 2009, to pay for Lansley's private office when in opposition.

John Nash  
boss of Care  
UK



## Unions protest against Bill, 7 March

The big general union Unite has called a protest and lobby of Parliament against the NHS Bill for 7 March. It will run from 1pm at Westminster, and be followed at 6pm by a TUC "Save the NHS" rally in Central Hall,

Westminster.

Unite says: "The coalition's Health and Social Care Bill, which is currently making its way through the House of Lords, will destroy the NHS that we know and love. Your help is

needed to kill this bill. Time is running out. If we don't act now the Bill will soon be law.

"Unite wants this to be the biggest ever lobby of parliament".

• Transport: [bit.ly/zDyuhN](http://bit.ly/zDyuhN).