



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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www.workersliberty.org

Schools for students, not for markets!



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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Anti-semitism on the rise

By Phil Grimm

The number of anti-semitic attacks in Britain has spiked to the highest level on record, according to the Community Security Trust.

The group reports incidences of threats, property damage and violence towards Jews in the UK have doubled in the last year. The rise in anti-Jewish incidents has been manifested in racist comments online, graffiti on synagogues and Holocaust memorials, as well as physical attacks on individuals.

Anti-semitism has been increasing across Europe as

a whole. In central and Eastern Europe, right-wing forces such as Jobbik in Hungary and Russian separatists in Ukraine have scapegoated elusive Jewish elites and Zionist conspiracies for the plight of their countries. Last month Jewish businesses and centres in France were placed under armed guard after the killing of hostages at a kosher supermarket in Paris.

Anti-semitic incidences in western Europe tend to peak during escalations in the Israel-Palestine conflict. During Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, protesters in Paris smashed up the Sephardi Jewish area of Sarcelles. In Berlin, protesters were

heard to chant "Jew, Jew, cowardly pig, come out and fight alone."

Contemporary European anti-semitism draws both on anti-Jewish feeling among some sections of Muslim communities, but also on older reserves of Jew-hatred in the conservative, Christian establishment. In France, National Front-inspired racism and Muslim anti-semitism have formed unlikely alliances in the collaboration of Alain Soral and the comedian Dieudonné.

All forms of racism are poisonous, both because of the threat they present to the lives and dignity of the targeted group, but also be-

cause they apportion the blame for the very real problems of class society onto innocent scapegoats. This is particularly apparent with anti-semitism, which often takes the form of a conspiracy theory. The injustices of capitalism are blamed on a hidden, powerful Jewish elite, rather than the real ruling class. Revenge for the horrors of the conflict in the Middle East are taken out on innocent Jews in Paris suburbs.

The German socialist August Bebel called anti-semitism "the socialism of fools", but this foolishness is also lethal. Socialists must fight it root and branch.

Tories will help property kings

Property developers who convert empty properties are to be exempted from commitments to build affordable housing.

The City of Westminster, a Tory council, said it stood to lose £1 billion in affordable housing contributions. But much more will be lost across other boroughs in London and other areas of the country.

The government claims that the previous requirement on developers to pay towards affordable housing was a "stealth tax", preventing empty properties being redeveloped. Yet development companies are falling over each other to develop unused land, affordable housing tax or not. Property

developers are making mega profits from redevelopments, exemptions merely mean they avoid paying for affordable housing even where they can afford it!

Property developers also avoid building and managing affordable homes themselves by making monetary contribution to councils, often much lower than the actual cost of building the quota of affordable housing.

These exemptions allow property developers to increase profits from building in our towns and cities, change the demographics of areas, force rents up and move affordable housing out of the city.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS
Italian presidential election, Turkish metalworkers' and Iranian teachers' struggles. Read about them here, from the Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network and others: bit.ly/Int-news

USDAW lets down Tesco members

By Bill Holmes

Tesco workers in stores facing closure can take little solace or hope from the efforts of their biggest union.

USDAW, which represents retail workers and has a sweetheart deal with the retailer, has said nothing to challenge Tesco's plans to close 43 stores around the UK.

Although in its statements it has promised to keep "job losses to a minimum" and see as many workers as possible redeployed, it has stopped far short of condemning the closures or redundancies.

It is important to remember why Tesco has taken this step.

It is not because it has huge losses mounting up, nor even a one-off big tax penalty to get off its books.

No, it simply made not as much profit as it said it would.

Put another way, its greedy bosses are worried they won't get their per-

formance-based bonus this year and have taken drastic action.

Solidarity does not advocate a profit-based economy in any case, but even under capitalism's rules this is extreme.

As, supposedly, a body representing members of the working class, USDAW should be joining its members in opposing any job cuts.

But instead it is bowing to its own — and not its members' — interests.

If it speaks out too loudly against Tesco it risks the retail giant cutting its sweetheart deal, forcing it to fight to recruit members (and a share of their pay to fund its bureaucracy) and possibly compete with other unions, fight to get recognition nationally or in each store, and potentially lose a large chunk of its membership.

Of course a union should also pick its battles wisely — but that would be a tactical choice for workers in a long tiring struggle, not a giving-up on core principles.

Reimagine the NHS!

By an NHS worker

The recent damning report by the King's Fund "think tank" into NHS reforms, and the news that NHS providers have voted against the NHS watch-dog Monitor's tariff for NHS services, show growing dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the NHS.

In an unusually outspoken attack on the government, the King's Fund claims David Cameron exhibited a "failure to exercise due diligence" when allowing Andrew Lansley's reform proposals to become law. Despite being firmly in favour of a market in healthcare, they describe the government's reforms as a shambles of mismanagement, over complication and confusion.

The report says the reforms have weakened the general understanding of how the NHS functions. It describes a healthcare system where "governance and accountability have become more complex" with the potential for unaccountable power to run amok.

While shying away from placing the current crisis in our hospitals directly at the feet of the Health and Social Care Act, they say "it seems likely that the massive organisational changes that resulted from the reforms contributed to widespread financial distress and failure to hit key targets for patient care."

They highlight the findings of the Berwick report on Patient Safety, which suggests the complicated model of multiple regulators, all at arm's length from the Department of Health, sitting alongside NHS England, needs to be streamlined."

The Berwick report on Patient Safety (2013) says "The current regulatory system is bewilderingly complex and prone to both

overlaps and gaps between different agencies. It should be simplified."

Yet the report is not entirely critical of the Conservative Party. It casts Jeremy Hunt as a damage limiter and promoter of patient safety — at odds entirely with his role in the attempted downgrading of Lewisham Hospital's Accident & Emergency and Maternity Departments, which required a Judicial Review for them to be saved.

The government has now changed the law to prevent a defeat such as the one they suffered at Lewisham, and has openly said the new law would reduce the ability of the local community to have a say in how health services were provided.

What is the services tariff? This tariff is the amount each NHS funded provider will be paid for doing work within the NHS.

75.1% of providers lodged formal objections to the proposed tariff by Monitor, throwing planning of budgets within the NHS, and ultimately the government, into disarray.

The NHS providers feel that they can not continue to provide vital services while budgets continue to shrink.

REMOVED

Over £20 billion has been removed from health service budgets in this manner during the coalition government.

The downward trend is no longer sustainable, particularly as large parts of this cost saving have come direct from workers' wages, in the form of below-inflation wage rises and staffing cuts, which even hospital managers realise can't continue forever.

Monitor's role as the all powerful overseer of finances is putting incredible strain on our health service. As hospitals struggle with



a growing bed crisis, the solution from the financial watchdog is to cut the money paid out for some accident and emergency admissions to half of what it really costs. This is not a government body in touch with the realities on the ground.

By attempting to privatise and reduce funding for our NHS at the same time, the government have created a system that nobody trusts or believes in, without the money to fund it properly. We are now beginning to see the endgame for universal service provision.

In December 2014 North East and West Devon Clinical Commissioning Group announced a number of cost saving changes, stating that services such as a second hearing aid were not cost effective.

The reality of a system that is unaccountable, ungoverned and under resourced is that services

that we used to think of as routine will disappear and we will not know which way to turn, which unelected government quango to blame, or how we can get ourselves out of this mess.

The King's Fund now says we must focus on "the physiology of the NHS rather than its anatomy". This is obvious nonsense. Politicians have spent at least the last 10 years dissecting our health service and have created a neo-liberal monster. It is only with a thorough understanding of what made our NHS remarkable and unique at its inception that we will save it now.

We must remove the health-care market and re-imagine a National Health Service based on social solidarity fit for today's health needs. Those currently entrusted with managing the NHS are not up to the task.

Unis should be open for political debate

By Gemma Short

Universities are increasingly becoming depoliticised zones, where political debate, campaigning and promotion of views are policed, controlled and pushed out.

When recently distributing posters for Workers' Liberty's socialist feminist conference All the Rage at London universities, I was repeatedly stopped from putting up posters, told posters must be approved by the university or the Student Union, unable to find poster boards not behind locked plastic casing or unable to gain entry to university premises.

The blockages come not from political concern over the content of the event, or a certain speaker (although that would also be wrong), but from an all-encompassing policing and commercialisation of university spaces.

At Sheffield University, where I was a student five years ago, poster and flyer on campus used to be relatively simple. There were many poster boards in Student Union and university buildings and outside where posters from a variety of political and social events were found. Banners were often hung from trees and the space outside the Student Union building was full of leaflet distributors every day from noon to 2pm.

In recent years student activists at the same university have been prevented from leafletting on campus, told to move stalls from campus (both political and charitable organisations). They find it hard to book meeting rooms or put up posters. Many poster boards have been removed.

These are not the only threats to free speech at university. We need to assert the idea that universities are places of political debate, where racist, sexist, homophobic views should be challenged and protested against, not bureaucratically removed from view. They are places where students should be free to use university and Student Union space and resources.

Workers' Liberty students have written a model motion about free speech on campus. See: bit.ly/Campus-motion.

Demand democratic review of Rotherham council and cops

By Charlotte Zalens

Rotherham's council cabinet resigned en masse on 4 February after a report into child sex exploitation in the borough heavily criticised the running of the council.

Labour council leader Paul Lakin said he would quit as leader and also as councillor. Shortly afterward communities secretary, Eric Pickles, announced his department has sent commissioners to take over the council, pending elections in 2016.

The report, commissioned by Pickles' department, concluded that "The council's culture is unhealthy: bullying, sexism, suppression and misplaced 'political

correctness' have cemented its failures."

It was already clear from the Jay report, published in August 2014, that Rotherham was systematically failing children. This case has demonstrated a basic lack of care for and understanding of some of the most vulnerable in society.

Police and senior social workers systematically blamed victims of sexual exploitation, often wrongly categorising them as "out of control" or as cases of alcohol and/or drugs misuse. Police often, on finding young girls with much older men, arrested the girls for offences such as being "drunk and disorderly" and failed to investigate the men.

When the Jay report was pub-

lished the Daily Mail ran the headline "Betrayed by PC [politically correct] cowards". Attacks on the council as being "too politically correct" come from a desire to attack Muslims, not from any coherent analysis of the situation.

However Rotherham Labour council's method of tokenistic "multicultural events" and communicating almost exclusively with self-appointed "community leaders", often religious ones, has led to corruption, abuse and alienation of victims of sexual exploitation both white and within the Pakistani community.

The Jay inquiry spoke to Pakistani women's groups from the area who stated categorically that the practice of communicating solely with "community leaders"

disenfranchised them and prevented them tackling abuse within their community.

70% of Rotherham councillors still deny the extent of child sexual exploitation, and council services are not fit to support and challenge sexual exploitation. Yet central government intervention in councils is not democratic and should be opposed.

Experts, such as non-statutory youth work project Risky Business, who are closer to the community and who have raised the issue of sexual exploitation, as well as the local labour movement, should be involved in a thorough and democratic, review of council services and the police.

How not to reverse Labour's fortunes

Socialist Campaign for
a Labour Victory



By Anne Field

He's promised to bring back the sale of alcoholic drinks at football matches.

He's pledged to make Labour the true patriotic party, patriotically committed to the patriotic interests of patriotic Scotland. And he's been photographed jogging along the Clyde wearing a Scotland team football top. But none of this has been enough for Jim Murphy, the recently elected leader of the Scottish Labour Party, to achieve a reversal in the party's poll ratings.

According to a recent poll in sixteen Westminster constituencies in Scotland (fourteen held by Labour, and two by the Lib-Dems), Labour will hang on to just one of the fourteen seats in the May general election.

The poll revealed an average swing from Labour to the SNP of 25%. In none of the seats did Labour's share of the vote drop by less than ten points. In only six of the seats did its share of the vote drop by less than twenty points.

The SNP are now on course to win Coatbridge, where Labour picked up 70% of the vote in the 2010 general election. Since last September's referendum, opinion polling has consistently put Labour on course for no more than four or six seats in this year's general election.

Unless there is a sudden collapse in support for the SNP, the Scottish Labour Party is now heading for its worst electoral performance since 1918. 2015 would be the first time since 1955 that Labour did not top the polls in Scotland.

The ongoing upsurge in support for the SNP is also a threat to the chances of the May general election producing a Labour government, or even a coalition government with Labour as the senior partner.

Labour is certainly on course to win seats in England. But gains in England could be outweighed by a haemorrhaging of seats to the SNP in Scotland. This would leave the Tories as the party with the most seats in Westminster.

Scottish Labour's dismal standing in successive opinion polls is the result of a combination of factors.

Under Thatcher and Major, Labour dominated Scottish politics. It held 50 Westminster seats and controlled the major urban local authorities. But it had no strategy to challenge the Tories as they laid waste Scotland's industrial heartlands.

Under Blair, Labour in Scotland followed the same pattern as Labour in the rest of the country. Disillusion with Blair, especially over the Iraq War, saw membership collapse and electoral support decline.

Labour's ongoing shift to the right allowed the SNP to posture as a left-wing party. It narrowly won the 2007 Holyrood elections, and went on to win an absolute majority of seats in Holyrood in 2011.



Tories out? To be replaced by the SNP?

Although last September's referendum saw independence rejected by 55% against 45%, the "Yes" campaign (i.e. the SNP) made inroads into Labour heartlands: the SNP, backed up by their leftist bag-carriers, portrayed independence as the way to beat austerity.

Since then the SNP has blamed Labour's collaboration with the Tories for the defeat of the "Yes" campaign. (In fact, the "Yes" campaign was defeated because a majority of the people of Scotland preferred the status quo to the all-things-to-all-people independent Scotland which was on offer from the SNP.)

FAILED

Jim Murphy embodies those historical factors: unswerving support for Blair; support for the Iraq War; backing the last Labour government's attacks on welfare benefits and free higher education; an elevation of spin over substance; and collaborating with the Tories in the referendum.

No surprise then that Murphy has failed to boost the party's electoral prospects.

The Scottish Labour Party has alienated many of its core voters by failing to offer a radical alternative to the politics of privatisation, anti-union laws and austerity. But the growth in support for the SNP and its portrayal of independence as a cure-all panacea is not a shift to the left.

As Mark Ferguson put it in a recent article on the LabourList blog: "In many ways Scottish politics in 2015 is now a little like Northern Ireland — your view on the state of the union is what swings votes, more than economic or social concerns. That's a terrifying political environment in which to operate."

The pro-independence left itself is a prime example of the elevation of the "constitutional question" over economic and social concerns, and over basic class politics. The Radical Independence Campaign (Ayrshire) has proudly announced:

"RIC Ayrshire will be organising a 'The People Demand' March for April in North Ayrshire. We intend to set off from Katy Clark's constituency office and move through the three towns to Ardrossan South Beach." The announcement met with a mixed response. Some posts on the RIC Ayrshire Face-

book page suggested going door-to-door or confronting Katy Clark at her surgery (to demand an explanation of why she called for a "No" vote in the referendum) as an alternative to a demonstration. Other contributions argued that staging a demonstration in Katy Clark's constituency was not really a good idea. These were countered by responses along the lines of: she collaborated with the Tories in the referendum, so what's the problem? The Facebook page which announced the event has since been taken down, at least for the time being.

But the fact that RIC could be contemplating staging such a demonstration in the constituency of the most left-wing Labour MP in Scotland — number three on the SNP's list of target seats — underlines how far removed the pro-independence left is from class politics.

6k fees? No! We want free education!

Labour say they will cut tuition fees from £9000 to £6000 if they win the general election in May.

This is part of a two-stage plan in which fees will eventually be replaced with a graduate tax.

Whilst both of these options are better than the current system, they are still not good enough. The proposals should be rejected in favour of free education for everyone funded by taxing the rich.

As long as there is a price tag on education, no matter how low, there will always be someone who cannot afford it. It reinforces the idea that universities are businesses. Students will request "value for money", driving a wedge between lecturers' struggles for fair pay and better conditions and the students who should be supporting them.

It isn't just individual graduates who benefit from a university education, it is society as a whole. Therefore it should be paid for by those who are most able to pay — the rich.

The efforts from the student movement to keep tuition fees on the agenda for the duration of the coalition government is putting pressure on the Labour party, but we need to continue pushing them.

• National Demonstration March 28: bit.ly/NCAFC-demo

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory combines campaigning to elect a Labour government in 2015 with seeking to put pressure on Labour for clear working-class demands, working to strengthen and transform our labour movement, and arguing for socialism.

socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com

The omission was politics!

Letters



I am starting to feel that Colin Foster is deliberately misunderstanding me (*Solidarity* 352).

In November, *Solidarity* chose to publish an article by Jon Lansman. The headline was "Labour needs anti-cuts policy, not a new Blairite leader". The article said nothing about an anti-cuts policy nor how anyone might get Labour to take up such an anti-cuts policy. It said much about how a new Blairite leader would not help, but nothing about what anyone could do about it.

The article, I restate for the umpteenth time, did not tell *Solidarity* readers anything they didn't know, nor argue for anything that was contentious for anyone to the left of Alan Johnson. It did not suggest any activity which readers could get involved in to either stop a leadership election or get an anti-cuts policy; it was pointless.

Colin now suggests the article "decoded" machinations among Labour MPs. The problem with this line is that the bourgeois press had already "decoded" the machinations; anyone with an interest would have been aware of the potential coup.

Lansman's article did nothing more than say we should be against the coup, which I guess everyone to the left of Miliband who gives a stuff, is. I have continued this interchange because I think it is bad practice for our paper to carry simple commentaries, with lowest common-denominator Labour left politics.

Recognising something as a rightward shift (like the coup against Rudd in the Australian Labor Party in 2010) and then raising our own politics is not the same as running an article which says "don't get rid of Rudd" and raises none of our own programme nor explains what activity readers can undertake to prevent the coup.

I am not in favour of a leadership contest. I do not think a plausible left challenge for the leadership is possible in the current circumstances. I do not think that nothing can be done in the Labour Party. I remain a member, I just think

very little can be done and we shouldn't pretend otherwise.

The nominations threshold of MPs for a leadership challenge is not a separate matter from the condition of the British Labour Party. It is one of the rule changes the Blairites brought in as part of their closing down of the Party's democracy. It also affects the possibilities of achieving change by working within the party.

The question remains what is the most effective way to make propaganda to break the logjam of British politics? Are the more advanced layers of the class more easily attracted to fighting for a workers' government or for a Labour government, with a list of slogans that are far removed from what any currently conceivable leadership of that Party would offer? We cannot work around the existing movement, but we must find ways to revolutionise and re-energise it.

Articles like Lansman's are a hindrance to doing that whether you think it best done by a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory or by a Campaign for a Workers' Government.

Duncan Morrison, Lewisham

Schools for students, not for markets!

For the Tories, education is about training children and young people to follow instructions and to jump through stereotyped hoops, and grading them accordingly.

That approach works poorly even to develop job skills, and very poorly to help young people become confident, co-operative, practically-competent, informed, critically-minded, imaginative thinkers.

It does work to classify most young people as “failures” and accustom them to subordination; and to “sort” the labour market into a hierarchy. It does create sort-of “markets” in which students compete with students, teachers with teachers, schools with schools, universities with universities, and all are kept in holy fear of the Great God Market. And to make it work better? Just squeeze harder!

The Tories have announced (2 February: bit.ly/10pc-cut) that if they win the general election they will remove the notional protection they promised to school budgets in 2010, and cut by around 10% over four years.

Because school budgets allow little flexibility — either you

have a teacher in the classroom, or you don’t — such cuts will mean lots of teachers and other staff losing jobs, lots of students losing options, lots of schools operating in ill-maintained or inadequate buildings.

Despite the nominal no-cuts promise since 2010, teachers have suffered cuts in real pay. Many schools have already suffered from the siphoning of funds to “free schools” and academies. And a not-negligible amount from those siphoned funds has ended up in the pockets of head teachers or “executive heads”, through high pay or through such things as contracts given to firms in which the heads or their cronies have an interest.

That’s the Tories. And what would Labour’s education shadow, Tristram Hunt, do? He is terrified of rejecting Tory policies outright on any front, because that might seem too left-wing.

The teachers’ unions and the whole labour movement should campaign for the reorganisation of education on democratic, accountable, emancipatory lines.



Morgan: more stereotype hoop-jumping

In the *Sunday Times* on 1 February, education secretary Nicky Morgan said that she would “launch a war on illiteracy and innumeracy... We will expect every pupil by the age of 11 to know their times tables off by heart, to perform long division and complex multiplication and to be able to read a novel”, she said.

“They should be able to write a short story with accurate punctuation, spelling and grammar... Some will say this is an old-fashioned view, but I say that giving every child the chance to master the basics and succeed in life is a fundamental duty of any government”.

Worse, every school where, in both of two successive cohorts, any single child fails to meet the standards, will be forced to become an academy in federation with “outstanding” schools, and head teachers will be removed.

So, more smashing-up of local democratic control of schools, and more pressure from the top which will force its way downwards to heads, to teachers, and finally to the children.

No doubt this plays well to bedrock Tories who believe that primary schools are staffed by loony lefties who roll in at 8.50am, leave at 3.45pm, and don’t give a stuff about whether children can read, write or add up. The reality is that the average working week for primary teachers is over 60 hours and that the vast majority care passionately about the children they teach.

OBSESSION

No one would contest that primary education should ensure that every child goes to secondary school literate and numerate.

Whether the rote learning of their times-tables or the learning of a specific method for division and multiplication indicates a child is numerate is another matter.

Speedy recall of tables facts is a useful skill and should be encouraged, but this government’s obsession with going up to the 12 times tables just demonstrates their inability to think outside of their own experiences. The 11 and 12 times tables were everyday needs when measurement was in feet and inches and money in shillings and pence, but are not so in a metric and decimal world.

Children should be able to multiply and divide, but why must we dictate the method they use to do it? No one in adult life is at a disadvantage if they “chunk” to divide numbers rather than use the long division algorithm. Again, it smacks of “it’s the way I learnt” approach to formulating the curriculum.

“Being able to read a novel” seems as vague as to be worthless. Which novel? Does the child just need to understand the basic events of the novel, or do they need to understand the motivations of the characters and why events occur? Maybe they just need to be able to get to the end of the book.

Being able to “write a short story with accurate punctuation, spelling, and grammar” is, again, vague. Whether you inspire children to write fluently and effectively by a focus



on grammar, spelling and punctuation is questionable, although clearly children do need to learn all of these skills. This marks is a further focus on the secretarial skills of writing against the imaginative, creative, organisational and expressive skills.

A focus on these times-table, long-division, and spelling-grammar targets will exert a huge pressure on schools and teachers to concentrate on teaching them as discrete skills and at the cost of a more rounded and textured curriculum. Already the pressure in schools which are deemed to be underperforming is high to focus on literacy and numeracy at the exclusion of virtually everything else — although there is a lot of evidence that literacy and numeracy skills are best obtained through a rich and varied curriculum.

Morgan’s announcement indicates an increase in the gov-

New education secretary Nicky Morgan continues Michael Gove’s policies, modifying only the presentation.

ernment’s meddling with and control of the curriculum. England is unusual in Europe for having such high level state control of the curriculum. In primary schools there is only one way we are allowed to teach reading: synthetic phonics “first, fast and only”. Regardless of the merits of synthetic phonics, the proscriptive sole use, works against teachers using their professional judgement about how best one of their pupils may learn.

All this shows how massively mistaken, to say the least, has been the shift in the publicity from the leaders of the National Union of Teachers from “Gove out” to “Tell Nicky”.

Tristram Hunt, shadow education minister, responded to Morgan’s announcement by saying that a Labour government would reverse the rule change that allowed unqualified teachers to teach permanently in a classroom. He spotlighted the quality of teaching as the key factor in raising attainment.

With his previous commitment to license all teachers and to force them to undergo regular testing, that tells you that Labour too will be blaming teachers for the failings in education. The poverty of Labour’s response to the onslaught on education by Gove and Morgan is shocking.

The last Labour government commissioned Jim Rose to review the primary curriculum. His report suggested a radical and inventive overhaul of primary school education which lessened the grip of central government over the curriculum.

The report was far from perfect, but why doesn’t Hunt mention it? We should demand an incoming Labour government implement it immediately.

Empty words on teacher workload

Education secretary Nicky Morgan has also announced her response to the Department for Education’s survey showing the huge scale of overwork in education.

The government’s Workload Diary 2013 survey had already shown the average primary teacher working nearly 60 hours a week, and the average secondary teacher 56 hours, a marked increase since 2010.

Her key points, according to the BBC, are:

1. Commitments by Ofsted not to change their handbook or framework during the school year, except when absolutely necessary
2. Giving schools more notice of significant curriculum changes, and not making changes to qualifications in the academic year, unless urgent
3. Tracking teacher workload by carrying out a “large scale, robust survey” in 2016, and then every two years.

In summary: nothing, apart from lukewarm words.

That Gove was a figure of hate within education is understandable. But he was not the problem, only a particularly unpleasant symptom. His replacement with Morgan was simply an attempt to win a few teachers’ votes for the Tories.

Yet the leaders of the National Union of Teachers played into the Tories’ hands with their dramatic change of tone in response to the superficial change of minister, and that they called off all national action with the excuse that they had to see what the new minister would offer.

This shows the importance of building the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC), the rank-and-file campaign in the NUT to ensure that the union fights for the needs of teachers and of students regardless of who the government or the minister is.

The Holy Alliance against Syriza

By Dora Polenta

A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of Syriza (not yet of communism). All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Draghi and Schäuble, Dijsselbloem and Renzi, French “Socialists” and German Christian-Democrats...

Two things result from this fact:

1. Syriza is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power.

2. It is high time that Syriza should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of Syriza with a manifesto of the party itself (and an iron determination to implement this manifesto).

Nice and inventive was the wording of Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis in his joint press conference in Berlin with German finance minister Schäuble in Berlin: “We must respect existing EU regulations, but we should not dissolve democracy with a sledgehammer that says that elections do not count!”

But the German and eurozone leaders broadly insist on respect for the agreements that they had imposed on the wretched government of Samaras and Venizelos, although those agreements are in fact a “sledgehammer” which seek to cancel the Greek parliamentary elections.

The decision to call an emergency Eurogroup (meeting of eurozone finance ministers) on 11 February was taken at the Euroworking Group (EWG) on Thursday 5 February in Brussels, where Greece was represented by the new head of the Finance Ministry’s Council of Economic Advisers, Professor George Chouliarakis. According to all information he encountered a very tough stance from all the EU partners.

The 18 member states of the eurozone asked the Greek side

to formally request an extension of the financing arm of the current memorandum program until the completion of discussions on the next program. On this basis they requested, the Greek government to present a “cost” program, with detailed mapping of the structural changes which should be submitted formally to the Eurogroup.

On 3 February, the European Central Bank decided not to recognize the Greek bonds as collateral to provide liquidity (i.e. notes) on Greek banks. This ends one of the main arteries of financing in our country, leaving open only the emergency funding through ELA.

The EU leaders say they “respect” the decision of the Greek people, but... the agreements must be observed strictly! In other words their message is as follows: “you can vote for whatever you want, but the memoranda should continue smoothly, your debt will not be written-off or haircut and you should carry on paying it properly; otherwise your country will be bankrupted”. This is the raw, brutal blackmail of the European imperialists.

The European Central Bank stopped accepting Greek bonds as collateral (from 11 February), and rejected Syriza’s government request for the issue of additional treasury bills amounting to €4.5 billion to finance the country. The European Central Bank activated the ELA mechanism for providing liquidity to the Greek banks, but decided that their liquidity needs will be reviewed fortnightly.

As of now, the liquidity [ready cash] of the Greek government runs out within February.

According to a leaked document, the German government’s demands are as follows:

- Continue the agreed “reform” agenda on revenue management, taxation, management of public finances, privatization, public administration, health, pensions, social security, education and the fight against corruption
- Maintain the EU/ ECB/ IMF “Troika”

- Honour the commitments to repay the debts to the ECB, IMF, EFSF, EU countries

- The Greek government to accept the independence of the Bank of Greece and the setting-aside of €11.5 billion of unallocated balances of the “package” to strengthen the banks

- A primary budget surplus of 3% this year and 4.5% from 2016

- Continuation of privatisation, including airports, electricity and ports, with an aimed revenue of €2.2 billion euros for 2015

- 50,000 departures from the public sector, changes to the pension system, flexible labour contracts, no increase of the minimum wage to the pre Memorandum levels.



Yanis Varoufakis

Make the rich pay!

The explosive social needs in Greece can only be met with a practical application of the logic: “Make The Rich Pay”. Measures could include:

- The effective taxation of net profits of firms in the corporate sector of the economy with a rate certainly around the 50% level

- A lump-sum tax on profitable businesses for the additional profits gained due to the memoranda policies in the last five years of capitalist crisis

- Expropriation without compensation of utilities, and putting them into service under public ownership and workers’ control in order to safeguard jobs and the preservation of social production.

The Syriza-led government should immediately launch a coordinated media campaign for the people of Europe in order to enlighten them, with a documented Black Book, about the extent of social destruction to our country and to convince them that the aim of the bailout agreements was never intended “to pay the Greek people with the money of the German, French, and Austrian people”, but to transfer the wealth of the people of Europe to the bankers and oligarchs.

92% of the money coming through the Troika since 2010 has gone to the commercial banks and other financiers who owned Greek government debt. In other words, the German working class has been forced by its government to bail out the German banks, the French working class has been forced by its government to bail out the French banks, with Greece only as an intermediary.

The Syriza government could also organise an interna-

tional conference on the Greek and European debt, with the participation of economists sympathetic to Greece, the result of which would be a “Declaration of Athens”, to form the basis of international economic diplomacy.

The government should proceed without delay to put directly under public control the Financial Stability Fund, and the management and control of the banks including the Central Bank of Greece. The €11.5 billion of unallocated balances of the “package” reserved to strengthen the banks should be committed to meet the needs of the public.

UNITED

We need a general mobilisation of the movement and the Left. We need a united front of the Left.

The Syriza party organisation cannot be put into suspense because “now we have the government”. A radical wave of radicalisation and re-invigoration of Syriza’s rank and file is required.

Now especially it would be wrong to elect a President of the Republic from the right or centre-right. A President of the Republic from the opposite camp may prove at a critical moment to be a powerful weapon against the Syriza-led government of Syriza.

Ministers’ statements like those from Varoufakis that privatisation will not stop, or from Skourletis that increasing the minimum wage to €751 will not be legislated directly but instead later and after consultation with the “social partners” (i.e. the bosses), create confusion and disappointment for Syriza’s rank and file and enhance the intransigence of the

EU leaders.

The government should make clear that only the debt is negotiable with the eurozone leaders, not the Thessaloniki program.

The EU leaders’ weapon is codified as “Grexit”: the threat of kicking Greece out of the eurozone through stopping conversion between euros in Greece and euros outside Greece, and the provision of liquidity [cash] to the Greek banking system.

This does not mean that the EU leaders positively want Greece’s (orderly or disorderly) exit from the eurozone. They know very well that that would have costs and risks for the stability of the eurozone and the state of the European economies.

But the cost for them is greater if a small nation like Greece is successful in implementing the total reversal of the austerity policies imposed throughout the EU. They want to save the euro and they want Greece to stay in the eurozone, in order to avoid dangerous shocks, but under the condition that Greece will bow down to their demands and will continue the austerity policies.

This is a crucial trial of strength. The Syriza government must be ready to respond to the blackmail by declaring its preparedness and its Plan B if the event of a Grexit.

Only if the EU leaders understand that the Syriza government is willing to do whatever it takes to defend the survival of the Greek people will they retreat and conclude that concessions to Greece are a price worth paying for the survival of the eurozone and the euro.



Thousands on streets in Greece

On 5 February thousands rallied in Syntagma Square, Athens, with the slogan: “We are not going to be blackmailed, we are not going to succumb, we are not afraid, we are not going to step back, we are going to win”.

The turnout indicates a boost of confidence since the 25 January elections. After two years of a relative lull in working-class struggles, after years of austerity, the workers, the young people, and the unemployed people are taking to the streets to claim what they have lost. They are on the streets to defend what they consider as their own government against the national and foreign predators and oligarchs.

The following rallies planned for 11 and 15 February will be even more massive and militant, provided that the Syriza leaders exhibit determination to implement the Thessaloniki declarations.

A poll conducted by the University of Macedonia found 72% of the Greek people supporting the government in its conflict with the lenders. 43.5% even of ND voters approved of the Syriza government first days. 75% overall approved of the Syriza-led government and firmly believe that the government will fulfil its election pledges.

The programmatic statements by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras have committed the government to restoring the minimum wage to €751 (although gradually); abolition of anti-labour legislation; abolition of the ENFIA (regressive property tax); raising the tax-free threshold to €12,000 euros; restoration of collective bargaining agreements and metenergeia [the law that made it obligatory for a business to respect a collective contract up to six months after it had expired]; restoring the “13th month” for low-income pensioners; stopping the auctioning of first homes; writing off poor household’s debts; preventing the banks from selling off people’s debts to capitalist vultures; re-opening the Greek public broadcasting corporation ERT and re-instating ERT workers; stopping privatisations; re-employing the public sector workers, cleaners, and school guards; the abolition of public sector “reserve employment”; the abolition of the €5 fees in hospitals; re-introduction of Sunday as a holiday.

The Greek government states that the EU constitution has no clauses for implementing austerity but it has clauses for solidarity. The EU constitution has no clauses about allegiance to external demands, but it has clauses about the freedom to exercise policy at a national level.

Whatever about that, for the bourgeoisie it is important to crush the untamed Greek people and send a message to all

the peoples of Europe.

The Syriza-led government does not seem to have a Plan B. Sooner or later you the government will need to set up such a plan, because the conflict is inevitable and the room for manoeuvre is small.

The Syriza-led government must also reckon with conflict with “domestic” capital. Greek capitalists can be expected to engage in a series of practical actions of hostility to the government, including capital flight, bank run and economic sabotage.

Our manifesto is as follows: we do not pay their debt, we move over the banking system in the hands of society and workers, we nationalise the strategic sectors of the economy, we apply social and workers’ control and management throughout the economy, we end the “games” of the speculators through control of capital movements and foreign trade, we design the economy to meet the needs of the working class majority.

CONTROL

We build democratic structures in society, the workplaces and communities to control and make the decisions that define our lives.

We need revitalisation and reinvigoration of the neighbourhood communities and the building of workers and popular committees’ councils to form workers defence squads and workers militias is urgent to fight capitalist sabotage the fascist gangs of Golden Dawn and a threat of a military coup by the State.

No confidence in the state apparatus! Changes in ministries and persons are not enough. Restructuring of the police and the army on a democratic basis, cleansing and removal of all fascist elements and paramilitary organisations.

Syriza should open the doors of the party to the youth and the workers, and invite the workers to organise in their unions and to enforce the application of labor law. It should invite the European workers who look with hope at Syriza’s government to fight against their reactionary governments for a Europe of workers, for the United Socialist States of Europe.

Finally, as in any conflict, Sun Tzu’s motto applies: “Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” Our strategic direction should be: overthrow of austerity to make way for major social and political upheavals in Greece and Europe as part of a transition plan for socialism. This is not maximalism, but necessity.

Answering the euro ultimatums

The eurozone leaders were accustomed to dealing with politicians in Athens of the type of Papandreou, Samaras, and Venizelos, ready to make U-turns at the first pressure.

The energetic start by the Syriza government threw Berlin and its allies off balance. Essentially the Greek government told them: we will negotiate the debt and the bailout agreement with you, but changes within our country are our problem and will not fall within the remit of the negotiations.

That is precisely what both Europe and Greek capital won’t accept. The Greek debt itself is “peanuts” for the eurozone. A certain reduction of the Greek debt could be swallowed. What cannot be swallowed is a Syriza government showing that another way, out of austerity, is indeed possible, and giving wings to the feet of leftist radicals throughout Europe, as demonstrated by the huge rally for Podemos in Madrid.

Tsipras, Varoufakis, Dragasakis and other Greek government figures have made numerous conciliatory moves. Varoufakis praised Schäuble as the “creator” of the eurozone and declared himself (though he later backtracked) in agreement with “67%” of the memorandum program. Dragasakis said that he did not intend to change any of the management and directors of the banks.

The Syriza government put aside the issues of reduction of debt, and of a “pan-European conference on the debt” based on the historical precedent with German debt after the Second World War. It put aside the issue of renationalisation of privatized public enterprises. Yanis Varoufakis went so far as to argue that privatisations like Cosco’s in the port of Piraeus are welcome because they “modernise the economy” and “increase competitiveness.” The government has accepted the territory of balanced budgets and primary surpluses.

The government now asks only for an extension of debt repayments and lower interest rates, and an annual primary surplus of 1 to 1.5% of GDP, instead from the 4.3% to 4.5% demanded by the eurozone for 2016 and after.

None of that pacified the eurozone leaders or increased the negotiating power of Syriza. There is only one way out for the Syriza-led government of Syriza: the application and extension of the radical program approved by the Greek people, the mobilisation and organisation of new major social struggles, the militant solidarity of working-class people and the worse-off across Europe, and support and encouragement for the most direct forms of democracy and workers’ control.



Schäuble and Varoufakis

Euro-solidarity is possible!

By Martin Thomas

Since the Greek debt crisis broke in early 2010, Costas Lapavitsas has advocated Greek exit from the eurozone. He argued for that in an interview with *Solidarity* back in May 2010 (bit.ly/cl-exit), and has written much about it since then.

He is a Marxist economist specialising in the study of financial systems, a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and, since 25 January, a Syriza MP in the Greek parliament.

Straight after 25 January, he published a new book, *Against the Troika*. It has a foreword by Oskar Lafontaine, who was SPD minister of finance in Germany in 1998-9 and later (until retiring because of ill-health) a leader of Die Linke; a preface by BBC journalist Paul Mason; and an afterword by Alberto Garçon Espinosa, leader of the United Left in Spain. It is co-written with Heiner Flassbeck, a Keynesian economist who was deputy to Lafontaine as a minister and later a top official in Unctad.

The book, perhaps because of Flassbeck's influence, has a different balance from Lapavitsas's previous arguments. It poses euro-exit not as the ideal, but a risky fallback which the Greek government should nevertheless see as the main option.

The book argues that in principle "the step to create the European Monetary Union [EMU] was fully justified from an economic point of view" and that when the world moved to a norm of floating currency exchange rates from the late 1970s it was "quite sensible" that "many smaller countries refused to adopt a system of fully flexible exchange rates. For smaller countries in Europe, monetary cooperation has been an important way of avoiding falling victim to the vagaries of the financial markets".

But Germany's wage squeeze since 2000 has made the system malign. It means acute competitive pressure on other countries in the eurozone, and chronically weak market demand. Since 2010 the EU leaders have insisted on "asymmetric adjustment" — i.e. wage cuts and deflation in deficit countries but unchanged policies in Germany", and this is "a

recipe for disaster".

"If all countries try to improve competitiveness by cutting wages, the result would be a race to the bottom. In that race, no country could improve its condition, but everyone would lose because domestic demand in the union as a whole would fall".

Greece's plight could be eased by an increase in German wages; an official policy aiming at higher inflation in Germany than elsewhere in the eurozone; and cancellation of a large chunk of Greece's unsustainable debt (which is now, as Lapavitsas and Flassbeck show, mostly held by public bodies of the eurozone: the main effect of the "bail-outs" has been to transfer the risk from commercial banks to those public bodies).

Lapavitsas and Flassbeck dismiss that possibility. They do not say that it is economically impossible (which it isn't, even under capitalism). But (they say) "there is no European 'demos'" to sustain such an effort of Euro-democracy. "And nor is there any realistic prospect of such a 'demos' emerging in the foreseeable future".

RULE OUT

In other words, they rule out a surge of European working-class solidarity — even, initially, at the level of a surge of anti-cuts, pro-workers'-rights struggles across several countries.

They argue, unanswerably I think, that a left government in Greece cannot extract serious concessions from EU leaders without "raising the spectre of EMU exit. A left government should not be scared or cowed by this prospect", but use it.

Lapavitsas and Flassbeck see this in terms of a left government saying, at some point: "Well, then, we quit". But they also give a useful list of gambits for a left government to push the envelope of the eurozone: creating credit, or printing euro-dominated IOUs, within the country, without ECB authorisation; restricting commercial bank operations; imposing capital controls.

Strategically, a left government would do much better to push those gambits to the limit, openly recognising and explaining the risk that the ECB would cut it off (in effect, make

"Greek" euros inconvertible to other euros) and simultaneously campaigning for European working-class solidarity to oppose such moves by the ECB, than to save the ECB trouble and undercut solidarity by quietly walking out.

Lapavitsas and Flassbeck are surely correct that a left government which says that it will never take the risk of being forced out of the eurozone, and therefore can always be scared by the EU leaders and the ECB threatening expulsion, disables itself. But, having dismissed the possibility of even an emergent European democracy-in-struggle, they fall back on the idea of exit as a tactical ploy.

And there, where the book needs to be precise, it becomes vague. Lapavitsas always presented his plan as "a progressive exit", differentiating it both from reactionary exit (which was and is a possibility) and from socialist revolution. It is a plan for a less malign capitalism, with the balance of forces tilted back to labour.

Lapavitsas and Flassbeck register difficulties. The exiting government would find it hard to get its drachmas accepted even by Greek people for Greek transactions, since they would prefer and hoard the euros still circulating in Greece. Getting "medicine, food, and fuel... would become a significant issue in the short run". "Oil and other commodities have to be imported and would become vastly more expensive..." Improbably (I think), they suggest that the Greek government which had been unable to get concessions from the EU leaders might yet negotiate eurozone assistance to ease the exit.

In the new version, exit is to be followed by nationalisation of the banks. But in fact even a "reactionary" exit would probably require that. And for subsequent policies? An exited Greece is recommended "interstate agreements with sympathetic governments" (Putin's Russia? China?), "priority on [public] loans to Small and Medium Enterprises in the tradable sectors", and a tilt in tax policy to favour SMEs. The book tacitly assumes that Greece's "unit labour costs" would be reduced (mostly, presumably, by devaluation of the drachma) to make Greek capital more competitive.

Defeating capital on a European task is a daunting task. But no lesser aim will serve to guide labour movements in this crisis.

Peter Hain's dim and feeble future

Matt Cooper reviews Peter Hain's *The Future of Socialism*

Tony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* was published in 1956. Crosland had been a Labour MP (and would be again) but had lost his seat in the 1955 general election.

Labour had won power in 1945 on a welfare state programme that included the creation of the NHS and a new system of benefits. Their Keynesian policies aimed at full employment, limited nationalisation and the first steps to decolonisation. By 1948, this programme had been implemented and divisions began to open within the Labour government and Party. The majority of the leadership wanted to go no further in limiting capitalism. The left argued for more nationalisation, faster decolonisation, and a foreign policy not aligned to the USA. But the Labour government had built the British nuclear bomb and was playing second fiddle to the US-led war in Korea. Labour lost power in 1951 not because of its radical ideas, but because it had run out of ideas.

The problem then for the right-wing Labour leaders was that the Conservatives had mostly accepted Labour's reforms and Labour had no clear political alternative to the Conservatives. It is in this context that Crosland wrote his book; he wanted to create a "revisionist" programme that was distinctive both from the left wing of the Labour Party and the Conservatives.

It is thus odd that Peter Hain (Labour MP for Neath and the holder of a series of minor Cabinet posts under Blair and Brown) should look to *The Future of Socialism* as a source of reinvigoration for the Labour Party. Today the basis for difference between the parties (and one Hain strongly asserts) is the rate of deficit reduction.

Furthermore, the basis of *The Future of Socialism* has been falsified by events. Crosland argued that capitalism no longer existed in a meaningful sense since industry was run by managers, balanced by the power of the trade unions; that the mixed economy and instruments of economic planning meant that private companies were circumscribed by the democratic state; and the state's ability to redistribute wealth made the private ownership of some economic assets largely irrelevant.

Crosland believed that these gains could not be reversed and that socialism in Britain had only two goals: ending of disadvantage through welfare, and eradicating the importance of class. That would be done through increased equal opportunity, particularly in education and the equalisation of life chances through redistribution.

CAPITAL RESURGENT

Hain is clearly aware that Crosland's optimism was not founded, that the capitalist class has strengthened its grip on society, but does not draw conclusions.

Hain recognises that the weakening of the organised working class has allowed inequality to increase, but he does not see these changes in terms of class. Rather, history is presented as a series of accidents. New Labour was too timid, he says, and too much in the thrall of neo-liberal ideas. It thus regulated the banks too lightly, and allowed the banking crisis to take hold.

The Conservative-Liberal coalition's austerity policies are not seen as attacks on the working class, with the downward drive on wages and welfare boosting profit. Rather, the Conservatives are ideologically-beholden fools. Hain's mantra is higher spending now would create growth and that would

take care of the deficit.

Hain proposes to tax the rich more, through higher income tax, national insurance, inheritance tax, mansion tax and luxury goods VAT. All welcome, but won't the rich just decamp to the nearest low tax jurisdiction, taking some of their higher paid managers with them? Hain has, as they say, no Plan B. Such capital flight should be met with expropriation of that capital.

Hain proposes a national investment bank to support small and medium sized businesses, regulate the banking sector more, and invest more in training. This may all make sense for a rational capitalist economy, but does not add up to the future of socialism.

Although Hain criticises New Labour for being too neo-liberal, many of his proposals are utterly imprisoned in New Labour ways of thinking. His proposals for helping disadvantaged children in education consists of changing Ofsted rules to give "outstanding" only to schools that address disadvantage. This is actually less radical than Labour's policies after 1997 which focused on ending child poverty and sought to redirect resources for early intervention into poorer areas through Sure Start.

This is a feeble book bereft of any real understanding of what the Conservative austerity agenda is and the need for a working-class response to it.

As Tony Crosland wrote in 1956, "to-day, conservative and indolent-minded people on the Left, finding the contemporary scene too puzzling and unable to mould it in old familiar categories, are inclined to seek refuge in the slogans and ideas of 50 years ago." Here, at least, Crosland had a point with staying power.

Solidarity with Syriza

What can the left demand?

By Barry Finger

For Syriza to triumph, it is not enough for it to play tough with the European Union. not enough to bypass the structure of the European Central Bank to find individual national allies, not enough to refuse to cooperate with capitalist auditors.

Greece has already lost 30% of its GDP since the peak before the crisis, with unemployment standing at 25%, a decline only comparable to that seen in the US during the Great Depression. Syriza is fighting for fiscal leeway to revive the public sector, slow the pace of job cuts, raise pensions and boost consumer demand in an effort to revive the Greek economy.

On its own, the best the beleaguered left government can extract will be a short-lived debt holiday. The Greek state, the Greek working class, needs a permanent debt jubilee. And this is not their need alone. Syriza needs to free itself from the state's dependency on thoroughly redundant banking system imposed from on high as a prior restraint against democracy. But it cannot break these structures alone.

Austerity is a means of disinvesting, of asset stripping the public sector and dismantling social safety nets. It is a means of maintaining slack labour to impose social discipline and keep the working classes divided against itself. But this is a policy choice, just as the prolonged (second) depression imposed on Greece by the EU is, itself, a gratuitous imposition — a demonstration effect and a warning to workers everywhere that previous victories are revocable.

This needs some unpacking. It is a basic accounting identity that expenditures in any economy equal income. What comes out of one pocket goes into another until, in the end capitalists get what they spend and workers spend what they get.

This also means that all leakages from the economy — net private savings plus leakages arising from trade deficits plus government spending balances — must cancel each other out. If, as in Greece, there is to be net private savings that accompany additional leakages in the form of trade deficits, the Greek government must spend in excess of tax revenue. There can be no net private savings in any economy with trade deficits without the accumulation of government debt. Government debt equals private savings.

And conversely, if the Greek state is to run surpluses needed to pay back its foreign creditors, the private sector has to dissave (invest in excess of savings) and run trade surpluses from which these additional investment funds can be drawn. This dissaving must be equal to the targeted government surplus.

Turning a trading deficit into a surplus, where there is a single currency and therefore no possibility of depreciating the Greek currency with respect to that of its trading partners leaves only one alternative: collapsing the domestic price structure. It is the only path available for Greek capitalists to undercut their foreign competitors. Capitalists are, of course, always eager to cut wage costs. So that, in the context of mass unemployment, presents few problems.

But gaining a competitive edge also requires cutting profit margins in a Greek capitalism already overinvested relative to profitability. And this needs to occur where supplemental markets are shrinking due to a collapse of the state sector. Greek capitalists can therefore have no realistic expectations that lower profit margins will be offset by increased domestic sales.

Because capitalists will not invest in a deflationary spiral, no government — no matter how obsequious before the demands of finance — could ever satisfy the claims of foreign creditors through austerity. It can sell off the state's assets, including those that generate tax revenues. But as soon as it also reneges on its pension, health care, housing and social welfare obligations it contributes further to the very deflationary slide that makes domestic investment pointless. In short, private investment in excess of savings is simply not feasible. Even if Greek capitalism were able to reverse its trade deficits, the reversal cannot translate into conditions

commensurate to the demands on the Greek state to accumulate surpluses.

That is why austerity is simply self-defeating. It cannot restore Greece to fiscal solvency. Greek capitalism, as it now stands, is a dog chasing its tail. What austerity will do, in contrast, is to consign Greece to permanent debt peonage, carrion that predatory bankers can feed off. Capitalist depressions, it is true, lay the predicate for recovery by slashing excess capital values and raising the rate of exploitation. They allow the economy to restructure in a leaner and more capitalistically profitable fashion. But that's as far as they go.

Capitalist recoveries cannot be completed through market forces alone. They cannot, in a word, be completed capitalistically. Markets require a decisive exogenous jumpstart in the form of public works projects, mass infusions of state spending or wars — which are a combination of the first two — before an upswing can be fully set into motion.

Because of this, capitalists can never agree on when to call a halt to the restructuring processes of depression. Market fundamentalism is their religion; and its ideology, the study of economics, a faith-based discipline. Calling an end to a depression is a decision that must be politically forced. American capitalism was utterly demoralised during the 1930s, facing an emboldened and radicalised labour movement. It needed a savior. Even then, the "economic royalists" fought the Roosevelt administration tooth and nail in an attempt to moderate and call off the state's, as of then, unprecedented economic intervention. German capitalism needed the reassurance of Nazism to destroy working class resistance before it would willingly accede to state intervention.

PROFIT

Capitalist elites today are less concerned with economic revival than with bringing the crisis of profitability stemming back to the late 1960s to an end. And this by vanquishing the welfare state.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to roll back the historic gains of the European working classes. Before it approves of state intervention, the ruling elites evidently must convince themselves that the depression has exhausted its potential to restore social discipline in as memorably traumatic and disorienting a manner as it possibly can.

The "genius" of the Eurozone structure is that there is no means within its existing architecture to politically force the economic upheaval that is needed. The European Central Bank (ECB) does not, by design, have the authority to directly fund national deficits. Such deficits in excess of 2% of GDP are a violation of the terms of membership in the Eurozone. Yet only by massive pump priming can Greece revive its economy to the level that it might later raise sufficient tax revenues to service its foreign debt while continuing to fuel its recovery.

The ECB has only one tool. It can only engage in quantitative easing to purchase toxic assets (such as sovereign Greek debt) and remove them from the balance sheets of private bankers. It can inject the banks with Euros as an asset swap. But, as has been shown, there is no incentive for Greek capitalists to borrow from banks, awash in liquidity as they may now be, for productive investment. There is simply no profit potential. All that quantitative easing can now do is fuel speculative bubbles — primarily financial — as capitalists look for other means of hoovering income independent of the actual creation of goods and services.

Capitalism has long decommodified money. In the Euro-



zone, capitalism has also denationalised it. This fiat money, unlike gold, is not scarce. It is created by the ECB at will by computer-generated deposits into the accounts of private banks and their depositors. Unlike gold or silver, there are no natural limits to its creation. But it is still lent with an interest rate premium into existence, as if its supplies were somehow limited and needed to be rationed. The ECB acts, by legal constraint, as if it were still the guardian of a measurably specified commodity hoard.

Euros therefore enter into existence capitalistically as a claim on surplus labour, long after money has shed its commodity shell. And long too after money as capital is called upon as a functional requirement and social necessity for public finance. This constraint too, is an essential design aspect of the structure of the Eurozone.

It is the inability of the Greek state, straitjacketed by a capitalist financial system using post-capitalist monetary tokens to repay its debts, that gives apparent weight to the claim that Greece is living beyond its means. This is a bankers' worldview. But no nation can truthfully be said to be living beyond its means as long as there is unused capacity and unemployed workers. The attainment of full capacity employment is the real upper limit to potential state spending. Beyond this lies the only objective constraint, the only test of whether an economy is living beyond its means — state induced inflation.

Here, then, is the raw material that the European labour movement and its parties have to work with: denationalised money that is not internationalised; decommodified money that is not socialised. Euros remain the product of a banking system that retains the traditional power of the purse to keep popular appetites and grass roots democracy in check, rather than acting as a counterweight to the destructive tendencies of the capitalist accumulation process. It is a banking system that has outgrown the class relations that gave birth to it, while constrained to function under conditions where its powers remain untapped.

This same central banking system resting on the same tools that — if collectivised under public oversight, if wrested from capitalism and from its capitalistically imposed restraints — has the latent potential to ease the stranglehold capitalism traditionally has had over the state.

Socialised central banking would permit Greek democracy, and democracy in the EU member states, to freely finance its collective recovery without the accumulation of debt, to eliminate the waste of financial speculation, to provide guaranteed jobs on demand, basic income supports, secure retirements and to carve out new spheres of decommodified use-values. It can finance worker coops and other experiments in alternative forms of egalitarian enterprise ownership. It can do so up to the full potential of the inflation barrier.

This is an immediate basis for actionable class solidarity. Syriza cannot socialise the ECB alone.

Anti-war Russians hold key to Ukraine

By Dale Street

At the time of going to press (10 February), negotiations are continuing about ending the fighting in the south-east of Ukraine. France, Germany, Russia, the US and Ukraine are involved in the negotiations. Further talks are due to take place in Minsk on Wednesday 11 February.

Fighting resumed in late January, when Alexander Zakharchenko, leader of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), announced a new offensive on all fronts. Since then, the Russian-separatist forces have extended the area under their control.

Although there are differing estimates of how many Russians are fighting in Ukraine — either “voluntarily” or as part of its armed forces — there is certainly no dispute that Russia has provided the DPR with state-of-the-art military equipment.

Equipment provided by Russia has included Buk and Strela anti-aircraft missile systems, Grad and Uragan rocket-launchers, surveillance drones, electronic communications jamming devices, and “reactive” tanks (covered with boxes of explosives, which destroy incoming missiles).

According to military experts, Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 revealed major weaknesses in its equipment and armaments. A major modernisation programme was subsequently undertaken. Its results are now being “tested” in Ukraine. Ukraine cannot match the hi-tech military hardware provided by Russia.

After declaring independence in 1991 Ukraine reduced its armed forces from 450,000 to 130,000. When fighting first

broke out in the south-east last spring, only 6,000 of its troops were combat-ready.

Up to 80% of the money spent by the government on military contracts after 1991 disappeared in backhanders and fraud. Ukraine's airforce is grounded: it is defenceless against the missile systems provided to the separatist forces by Russia.

Some of Ukraine's military equipment was designed in the 1930s and manufactured in the 1970s. Boots, helmets and bullet-proof vests for many Ukrainian soldiers have been provided through public fundraising efforts, not by the Ukrainian state.

The Ukrainian government has appealed to the US and EU countries to provide the military equipment it needs to defeat the Russian-separatist forces. American political leaders are divided over the question of military aid. EU leaders are against supplying military equipment.

KILLED

As the fighting continues, so too do the human casualties. Nearly 5,500 have now been killed, and over 12,000 wounded. Nearly a million people are internally displaced within Ukraine, and another 600,000 have fled abroad.

This week's talks may or may not result in a ceasefire. That ceasefire may or may not prove long-lasting. But the talks will certainly do nothing to resolve the political issues which underpin the military conflict.

Russia will continue to occupy the Crimea and use its de facto control of the Donetsk and Lugansk “People's Republics” to dictate policies to Ukraine. Putin will present

himself as the strong leader who stood up to the West and will stamp down even more on internal dissent.

Ukraine itself will continue to be ruled by corrupt oligarchs committed to the privatisation and austerity policies which have already proved disastrous for EU states. The main threat to their rule may well come from the far right, who will accuse them of betraying Ukraine to Russia.

And the working class — in Kiev-governed Ukraine and in the DPR/LPR — will be called on to accept cuts in living standards and attacks on their democratic rights because of the threat of external aggression.

Ukraine cannot defeat Russia militarily. In fact, even if it were to be supplied with the firepower needed to defeat Russia, it would be at the unacceptable cost of transforming even more of the Donbas into a wasteland than it is already.

Apart from backing Ukrainian socialists, the left internationally needs to support the anti-war movement, such as it is, in Russia itself. As the Ukrainian-Canadian socialist Marko Bojczun put it in an article after last August's Russian invasion:

“The only force that can get the Russian military out of Ukraine will be a mass anti-war movement in Russia. All defenders of Ukraine's right to national self-determination must lend their support and solidarity to the Russian anti-war protesters who are trying to launch that movement and who are being picked off and imprisoned by Putin's regime.”

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Dead end looms in Ukraine

By Ilya Budraitskis (*Open Left website*)

Since yesterday the world has stood still in expectation of the outcome of talks about the Donbas. All parties with any possible interest are involved in the talks: Russia, the EU, the US and Ukraine.

The most striking thing about these talks is the decision not to divulge what is being discussed.

On Thursday Hollande, Merkel and Poroshenko spent five hours discussing something in Kiev. On Friday Hollande and Merkel spoke with Putin in Moscow. Tomorrow a phone conversation in the “Normandy format” (Russia, Ukraine, France, Germany) is scheduled to take place. And Merkel and Obama are due to meet in Washington on Monday.

There has been a complete lack of transparency about all these meetings. But observers are in agreement about one thing: the possibility of the Ukrainian conflict turning into a major war is close as it never has been before.

The January offensive in the Donbas, in which Russian troops were practically openly involved, is probably Putin's last possible attempt to “use pressure to achieve peace” on his terms.

“Chicken game” — the Russian president's favourite bloody game, and one which he has already played several times during 2014 — has now practically exhausted its potential. The time has come for everyone to put their cards on the table.

The EU is prepared to pay any price to prevent a major war in Europe. The US is prepared to provide weapons and heat up the conflict, while distancing itself from any direct involvement. The Kremlin is prepared to do practically anything in order to secure a formal victory without formally declaring war on a neighbouring country.

There are certain reasons to suppose that a tactical exit can now be found. A variant involving the introduction of a peace-keeping contingent under the banner of the UN or the OSCE, stationed along the new (January) demarcation line would suit Putin because it guarantees:

- Legalisation of the presence of Russian troops in the east

of Ukraine (as participation of Russia in the ‘peace-keeping mission’ would be an obligatory condition).

- No membership by Ukraine of NATO and the EU in the foreseeable future (as publicly confirmed by the NATO General Secretary at a conference in Munich).
- No weapons of any type to be supplied to Ukraine.
- A decisive involvement by Russia in further talks about the status of the Donbas.

The representatives of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic — who do not take part in negotiations with serious people, but do not suffer from any feelings of inadequacy as a result — have already confirmed their readiness to agree to a “peace-keeping” scenario.

The EU would be able to confirm its symbolic role in preserving peace and security in Europe and would become one of the main participants of the closed club of “decision-makers” about the further fate of the Ukrainian state.

The US, however strange it might appear, could also agree to this variant, passing the responsibility for Ukraine to the EU and receiving in exchange the support of Europe (and perhaps even Russia, given that their positions on Syria have begun to move closer together) in its priority concern: the struggle against ISIS.

But however the talks may finish — with a tactical successes or with a tactical failure (with further serious consequences: military ones in the Donbas, and economic ones in Russia because of a new wave of sanctions) — they represent a strategic complete dead end.

A dead end for Putin's domestic politics, and a dead end for the course pursued by Putin in the post-Soviet territories.

A dead end for Ukraine as a state, the sovereignty and independence of which have finally changed into the small change of negotiations between “world players”.

And, of course, a terrible dead end for the inhabitants of the Donbas, whose brightest future prospects are to live the next 20 years akin to life in present-day Bosnia: a divided and impoverished country, created and governed by “peace-keepers”.

- <http://openleft.ru/?p=5425>

NHS: don't let them scrap our terms

By a healthworker

The current government has been attempting to find a way to undermine the Agenda for Change national pay agreement for the NHS for some time.

Agenda for Change is a broad agreement that covers practically all terms and conditions for NHS workers, including basic rates of pay, extra pay for working "unsociable" hours, annual increments on pay scales, annual leave etc.

Originally the top of the pay scales were agreed to be the rate for the job, but initially new starters would be paid less because there was an element of learning in the post. The unsociable hours payments are significant for shift workers, in recognition of the toll it takes to do such work. Studies show that night duties for instance can reduce life expectancy. The NHS needs many workers to put up with the social consequences of working odd days and hours of the week.

The government would like to scrap both of these benefits. The drive to make the NHS a "seven day a week service" is deemed to only be affordable by scrapping or seriously reducing the unsociable hours payments. Hunt has often tried to blur the boundaries between increments and pay rises, claiming that many NHS staff have automatic pay rises every year with the increment system. In theory Foundation Trusts have the power to set their own terms and conditions for staff, but in practice to attract staff they stick to Agenda for Change terms and condi-

tions. If the national agreement is dismantled then workers will most likely to be in an even weaker position.

Every year unions negotiate with the government about how much pay should be increased by. This is a national negotiation. Without a national agreement, the unions would be able to negotiate different settlements locally dependent on their local influence. While this may benefit particularly "militant" pockets of the country, in most places, without the backing of the national union, local negotiators would have to accept worse deals. As in everything else, the sheer weight of numbers results in a better deal for the workers.

In the current round of talks culminating in a dire pay offer that unions misguidedly called of strikes to consider, the unions would have to commit to talks on the "reform of Agenda for Change". For "reform" read "dismantling". Ultimately the drive to weaken our terms and conditions is part of an overall strategy to make the NHS easier to privatise. Many contractors that provide services for the "non clinical" services in the NHS already give no unsociable hours or incremental payments. Private companies don't want to inherit "TUPE" staff who need to be paid extra for working in the middle of the night. They want to be able to pay the lowest wage possible to maximise their profits.

By fighting to keep their terms and conditions, NHS staff are not only defending their standard of living, but also fighting against privatisation and the dismantling of the NHS.



Support London bus strikes

By Gemma Short

London bus drivers will strike again for 24 hours on Friday 13 and Monday 16 February in their dispute to level-up pay between bus companies.

This follows a 24 hour strike on Thursday 5 February, and one on Tuesday 13 January. *Solidarity* visited several picket lines which were lively, confident and staffed throughout the day despite propaganda from Transport for London (TfL) claiming high numbers of services were still running.

Drivers at Hackney Central, an Arriva depot — the lowest payer for starter drivers — told *Solidarity* that 90% of their services were not running. Arriva driver

John told *Solidarity* that "everyone in the depot says that the bus service should be taken back in house", referring to the fact that 18 different private bus companies operate across London, making a combined profit of £171.1 million last year.

As strikes continue, management will try harder to find ways to move buses and some workers will drift back to work. Pickets should find ways to prevent buses being moved to make strikes effective.

Drivers at many depots are incredibly well organised, yet drivers at Hackney Central also told *Solidarity* that "the union needs to tell us more ... they should have meetings with members at depots so we know what is



Bus drivers at Hackney Central on 5 February

going on." A lack of information between strikes will demobilise members who are capable of mounting impressive picket lines and turn outs for strikes.

Public support for the

strike is high. Deliberate public political campaigning by bus drivers and their union combined with strikes can force TfL and bus companies to back down.

National Gallery sacks union rep

By Peggy Carter

PCS union members at the National Gallery struck for five days from 3 to 7 February in a dispute over outsourcing.

On the day before the strike started, PCS union rep Candy Udwin was suspended from her job. The workers are now calling for her reinstatement as part of the demands of the dispute and 6,000 people have signed a petition calling for

her reinstatement.

The National Gallery plans to outsource all of its visitor assistance staff and gallery guards to a private security firm. In what appears to be a trial run of this plan, private security firm CIS have been given one whole wing of the museum to run until the end of this year, without any competitive tender or consultation. CIS have removed chairs gallery assistants use and have bullied and intimidated staff.

Workers claim that the privatisation will lead to them being made to work different and longer hours as well as work on different sites that CIS runs.

On Thursday 5 February, workers and their supporters disrupted a gallery Board of Trustees meeting to hand in a 50,000 strong petition against the privatisation.

Then they marched down Whitehall to hand the same petition to the Department of Culture,

Media and Sport who have approved the plans.

• Sign the petition against the privatisation: bit.ly/Gallery-petition

Workers at Dulwich Picture Gallery, south London, protested on Saturday 7 February against job cuts.

Find out more:
fb.com/SaveJobsAtDPG

ICO workers pay strike

By a PCS member

Members of PCS at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) struck for two days on 3-4 February over low pay at the organisation in comparison to the rest of the civil service.

The strike was solidly supported, with 95% of members (who comprise approximately 60-65% of the workforce) refusing to work.

ICO management tried to coerce staff to accept the pay offer by writing to employees requesting that they give

individual consent to the contractual changes. They also threatened to withdraw any pay increase to those who don't sign. This attempt to divide the workers appears to have backfired, with many employees joining the union after receiving the letter.

PCS members at the ICO will now be doing an eight week work-to-rule and overtime ban.

A vote for further strikes will be held at the branch's AGM unless management moves to meet the union's demands.

Cleaners protests

By Charlotte Zalens

Cleaners and porters at the Royal Opera House staged a noisy picket at the BAFTA awards ceremony on 8 February as part of their strike to gain the London Living Wage.

The Royal Opera House had previously agreed to pay the Living Wage. However cleaners and porters in the IWGB union say this has not been implemented. The BAFTA awards and many of the stars attending were seemingly embarrassed by the protest.

Other IWGB cleaning

members at Burberry clothing's flagship store on Regent Street struck on 6-7 February to gain the London Living Wage.

Cleaners say they are "forced to work extra hours without compensation when the staffing levels fall short due to illness, and that in a time of financial stress, they are instructed to pay for their uniform out of their own pocket rather than it being provided by the contractor, ISS."

• Find out more: fb.com/cleaners.branch

Tube drivers vote to strike

As *Solidarity* went to press on 10 February, the RMT union announced tube drivers voted to strike for the reinstatement of sacked colleague Alex McGuigan by 229 votes to 221.

• Read more about the dispute — bit.ly/tubeworker

Save Lambeth Libraries!

Sign the petition: chn.ge/1uA5wM6

Find out more:

bit.ly/SaveLambethLibraries



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Expropriate the banks!

HSBC: latest in a string of bank scandals

By Martin Thomas

The banks and the other institutions of high finance should be taken over and run as public utilities, not profiteers. The top bankers should be sacked and replaced by accountable officials on ordinary wages.

The new scandal about HSBC which blew on 9 February confirms that conclusion.

At first sight, the bankers got off easily from the crisis in 2008. Their get-rich-quick gambits sent the whole economy into slump; but the British government laid out £1100 billion in cash, loans, and guarantees to stop Britain's big banks going bust, and other governments did similar.

Some banks were nationalised, but with the same sort of people as before in charge, and a mandate to make profits as fast as they could and get themselves privatised again. A few top bankers had to resign, but comfortably: Fred Goodwin of RBS went with a £700,000-a-year pension, now reduced to £340,000-a-year after he took out a £2.7 million tax-free lump sum. A few regulations have been introduced, but nothing scary.

There have been some rows about bonuses, but the banks found ways round them. The banks continue to operate a pile of financial assets which amount to doubled, trebled, and quintupled claims on most of the economy's small-by-comparison physical assets.

According to Bank of England governor Mark Carney, by the end of 2012 the banks' total assets amounted to four

times Britain's annual economic output of about £2 trillion. The material "net capital stock" of the UK is about £3.2 trillion — £1.2 trillion houses and other household assets, £2 trillion fixed assets of corporations and government (£1.2 trillion buildings and structures, £0.1 trillion transport equipment, and £0.5 trillion machinery and equipment).

Put it another way: the banks could buy all the machinery and equipment in Britain 16 times over.

But the ground is shifting under the feet of Giant Finance. Widespread resentment and discredit continues to spill over into one scandal after another.

CACHE

In the latest, the *Guardian* has reported on "a huge cache of leaked secret bank account files", leaked by an HSBC employee in 2007.

These "revealed that HSBC's Swiss banking arm helped wealthy customers conceal millions of dollars of assets, doled out bundles of untraceable cash and advised clients on how to circumvent domestic tax authorities".

HSBC's response is essentially that everyone was doing it, and they've cleaned up since: "the compliance culture... in HSBC's Swiss private bank, as well as the industry in general, [was] significantly lower than today".

Similar scandals have broken again and again since 2009. Several big banks, mostly American but also RBS, have paid billions in fines to settle charges of mis-selling mortgage-backed securities and abusive methods to evict people

falling behind on payments.

Banks have been fined for rigging the interest rate at which banks lend to each other short-term, a rate used as a yardstick for masses of financial transaction.

They have been fined, too, for rigging the rates at which different currencies are exchanged; for evading sanctions against Iran and other countries; for money-laundering; for rigging electricity markets; for manipulating the price of gold; and other misdeeds.

British banks have paid billions for selling "payment protection insurance", mostly to people who wouldn't be able to claim on the insurance policies they were sold.

Over the five years 2009-13, one researcher has found, just 15 big global banks had to pay or set aside £173 billion for fines or settling claims for misbehaviour. That includes £36 billion from just four British banks, HSBC, RBS, Barclays, and Lloyds.

Thirty-six billion! That's the equivalent of £600 for every child, woman, and man in the UK. The bankers think they can go on paying the fines but covering them with new profits from new financial trickery.

But more and more people see, as the conservative *Financial Times* journalist Martin Wolf puts it: "Banks, as presently constituted and managed, cannot be trusted to perform any publicly important function, against the perceived interests of their staff [meaning their top bosses, not the routine staff]."

"Today's banks represent the incarnation of profit-seeking behaviour taken to its logical limits, in which the only question asked by senior staff is not what is their duty or their responsibility, but what can they get away with". (2 July 2012). Expropriate the banks!



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