



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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STOP THE UKIP RACISTS



RIGHTS FOR MIGRANTS! WORKERS' UNITY!

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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View from Syriza's left

By Antonis Davanellos

Syriza's Central Committee met at the end of February to discuss the interim agreement made with European leaders over Greece's debts. An amendment from the Left Platform characterised the agreement as a retreat from Syriza's commitment to reverse austerity. This was defeated by a narrow margin, with a number of people from Tsipras' majority grouping within Syriza supporting the position.

Antonis Davanellos is a member of the International Workers Left (DEA) and a Syriza Central Committee member.

[Syriza] is a broad network of political activists with all of the resistance struggles against austerity of recent years running through it.

It is a party marked by a transitional approach [in a situation that is not revolutionary] that seeks social and political victories. It is a party whose "base," the vast majority of its membership, is committed to achieving its demands for democracy and paving the way for the complete socialist liberation of society.

Such a party must not allow itself to be converted into a tool to carry out austerity policies, under any pretext, even in dire circum-

stances.

During the Eurogroup negotiations in February, the Syriza government encountered a double trap set for it through the conscious actions of the defeated coalition government of [Antonis Samaras' centre-right New Democracy and Evangelos Venizelos' centre-left PASOK] — but especially the European "institutions" of the European Union and the European Central Bank, in tandem with the International Monetary Fund.

It was confronted with two dangerous challenges: On the one hand, the possibility of an immediate collapse of the banks [through a massive outflow of capital]. And on the other, a great difficulty in obtaining funds to finance the repayment of debt, as well as wages for public workers, pensions and minimal social spending.

The government retreated. There is no room for sugarcoating the February agreement and the list of measures that Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis promised to carry out. If the government chooses — or is forced — to honour this agreement, it will have renounced its commitment to overturn austerity. The same thing will happen to Syriza as a party if it is asked to politically defend and justify the bitter con-

tents of this agreement among the people.

As Costas Lapavistas correctly pointed out in his article in the *Guardian*, the trap set for the government in February is not temporary. The "institutions" have structured the agreement so that the government will constantly face the same dilemmas.

The actions of the government clarify a contradiction in the commitments made by Syriza leaders during the election.

UNREALISTIC

On the one hand, there was a sincere commitment to the promise to reverse austerity.

On the other hand, they promised that this could happen smoothly and without instability, within the framework of the eurozone. The second part of the Syriza leadership's election rhetoric now appears unrealistic and even utopian.

It is important to emphasize that the consequences of the government's decisions will not be limited to socio-economic policy — they will directly affect the government and the political system at all levels.

The fundamental question is: Who will exercise authority under this government, and in alliance with what other individuals and political forces? A consolidation of the retreat of

last month and further steps toward a permanent agreement with the "institutions" will inevitably, in more or less short order, pave the way toward a government of national unity in some form. This would be the definitive defeat of the political project, put forward at the founding congress of Syriza, of establishing "government of the left."

The task of preventing this lies, of course, with the party of Syriza, including its members in different areas of the new government. We must find the strength and the means to disobey the requirements of the Eurogroup agreement — to reverse it in practice and implement policies against austerity, finding alternative solutions to the financial questions and all the other restrictions imposed by the European elite.

Answering this difficult problem will require looking to other aspects of the program put forward at Syriza's July 2013 conference — the demand that a majority of the debt be cancelled and that Greece no longer endure any sacrifices for the euro, the commitment to pursue the reversal of austerity by any means necessary.

The task of preventing a further retreat also lies with the left outside Syriza, which still has considerable strength in Greece. It can challenge the government by putting forward demands on wages, retirement pensions, education and health care, but also by showing in practice that there is another option for dealing with the lenders other than capitulation.

This political relationship with the "other left" must be systematically and consciously encouraged by Syriza.

The task also falls on the international left, especially the European left. In Spain, France and Italy, and even in Germany itself, supporters of democracy and justice must take action to prevent the "institutions" from strangling and overthrowing the government in Greece.

These actions, too, should be put forward and supported by Syriza itself, which currently enjoys significant international support.

● Abridged from a translation first published on www.internationalsocialist.org

Release Shilan Ozcelik!

By Michael Johnson

On Friday 12 March, around 50 Kurdish solidarity activists held a demonstration outside Holloway Prison in north London to demand the release of Shilan Ozcelik.

Ozcelik was arrested earlier this year at Stansted Airport, and has recently been charged with a terrorist offence for allegedly trying to join the YPJ's women's protection units in Rojava.

The YPJ are linked to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

According to the *Guardian* "...the charges against Ozcelik are understood to relate to the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK), which is outlawed in Britain and has spent decades fighting the Turkish army in a separatist conflict."

While not being uncritical towards political forces such as the PYD, socialists should give their full support the Kurdish struggle against Islamic State, which is currently being led by its YPG and YPJ militias.

The proscription of the PKK, at the be-



hest of Turkey, is being used to criminalise the Kurdish community in the UK and create, under the bracket of "terrorism", a false equivalence between two sides in this conflict.

There is no moral or political equivalence between travelling to Syria to join the ultra-reactionary Islamic State and fighting for the secular democratic Kurdish forces.

Release Shilan Ozcelik!

What election?

Press
By Harry Davies



It turns out that there's going to be an election soon.

But if you've been reading the *Daily Mail* exclusively over the last couple of weeks you might not know that. They seem to be very disinclined to mentioning it.

This, let us not forget, is quite a big one; we're definitely going to get a new government of some form. Search the *Mail's* online presence as much as you like; there's barely a hint. Why is this? Maybe they're holding back for a big push for Cameron nearer the time? Maybe they're torn between UKIP and the Tories?

The *Guardian* seems to be gloomily and wearily following Nigel Farage about the place, watching him be optimistic and unpleasant.

They're also engaging in loose speculation about Labour's relationship with the SNP, an account of Ed Balls forcing George Osborne into a promise of a live debate, though no-one is quite sure if he's really going to do it, and a report of Nick Clegg telling his party that they won't do as badly as they think they're about to.

Another article focuses on the great non-story that the election is "too close to call".

So there's a definite air of vagueness and uncertainty everywhere, as though neither journalists nor politicians are really sure what's going on at the moment. To a degree, the vagueness mirrors that of the politicians themselves. Commitment to definite policies comes with the territory of coalition politics.

There's not much more to add over at the *Express*, except that it was not-quite-ruling-out a Labour/SNP coalition (before Miliband was forced to do just that), uses the verb "squirm" in reference to Ed Balls and also makes the agreement to a debate sound (a) more likely to actually happen and (b) quite astonishingly macho, given the combatants. "Let's go for it, one to one," they quote. A terrifyingly gladiatorial image.

Martin Townsend lays into Ed Miliband on the grounds that he's using Justine Miliband to defend him in a piece which manages to compare the Labour leader to a guilty schoolboy and (somehow) to the "jihadi brides" in a way that I'm really not sure that I understand.

He also manages to throw in a reference to the Tories as "bullying" and make it sound as though he thinks this is a good thing. Pleasant.



Fascists are reorganising and regrouping

A member of Sheffield anti-fascist network spoke to *Solidarity*

What state are the EDL in and what are they up to?

Attendance at EDL demos has been slowly declining for a few years, apart from a spike in interest after Lee Rigby was killed in Woolwich. They seem to have flatlined at about 300-500 turnout at each demo.

This is probably due to a number of factors including their failure to change tactics from A to B marches, the heavy policing of demos, serious custodial sentences meted out to EDL members, opposition (more in some regions than others) from anti-fascists, and the internal splits that always beset the far right.

Yorkshire EDL is beset by internal feuding, with one member accused by other EDL members of embezzling money collected for charity. Yorkshire EDL are likely to be weakened further by two upcoming court cases, in which some of their members are charged with violent disorder.

Although they are weaker than a few years ago, the EDL are the far right group able to get the biggest numbers on the streets, and the infrastructure and relationships are in place to get bigger turnouts if anything like

the Lee Rigby attack happened again.

What about Pegida? How do they differ from the EDL?

Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) is a German far right group that have been organising regular demonstrations since October 2014. Their biggest turnout was around 10,000 people but numbers have dropped off quite dramatically, since the significant neo-Nazi elements of Pegida were exposed and the leadership were caught up in a number of scandals — such as the leader dressing up as Adolf Hitler.

A group has emerged here using the name Pegida UK. They had their first demo in Newcastle, which attracted about 400 supporters, and they have a couple more planned elsewhere. At the moment they don't have any real beef with other far right groups so can draw on their supporters to a degree, but it's hard to see what they offer that other groups like the EDL or Britain First don't. They're definitely worth keeping an eye on and opposing when they're on the street, but they might turn out to be a flash in the pan.

They had their first UK demo on 28th February; what was that like?

The Pegida demo, which included supporters of the National Front, Golden Dawn, EDL and other far right groups, was outnumbered by about 1000-2000 anti-fascists. There were a lot of police and although the Pegida supporters were giving it the big un behind police lines, they made no serious attempt to confront anti-fascists. The counter-demo had been supported by the UAF — who aren't as active as they were a few years ago — as well as local politicians. So it had a big — if passive — turnout.

Unfortunately, a lot of the same people are encouraging anti-fascists to join the UAF's Stand Up To Racism march on 21 March, rather than confronting National Action in Newcastle.

What about the rest of the far right?

There are a number of small groups similar to the EDL, such as the North East Infidels, North West Infidels and South East Alliance.

These groups tend to be even more openly racist and flirt with white supremacist or neo-Nazi imagery and slogans. They are quite fixated on threatening to attack anti-fascists, and some of them talk a lot of rubbish about imaginary "football

lads" who are going to "give the reds a kicking".

After a lot of threats, some members of the South East Alliance and a few other fascists did try to attack supporters of Clapton FC (a non-league team with an anti-fascist following) but came off a lot worse.

Britain First are another far right group with a fixation on Islam and a penchant for flat caps and matching jackets. They have a popular Facebook page, largely off the back of people sharing their right populist memes without necessarily knowing much about the group. But they've never managed to bring out a significant number of people on the streets. Their national tour last year was announced with a lot of pomp, but at the events that weren't cancelled they never managed to attract more than a handful of supporters.

National Action are an openly Nazi and anti-semitic group, small in number but more confident and ambitious than some of their fellow travellers. So far they haven't done much beyond small unannounced demos, hanging spray-painted banners off bridges and online harassment, but they may grow in size and confidence if they're not decisively confronted or may yet give some far right loner the vali-

dation and ideological justification to carry out a lone wolf racist attack.

Are there any other upcoming events that anti-fascists need to be aware of?

Unfortunately the fascists are quite busy at the moment!

The next big event is the White Man March in Newcastle on Saturday 21 March. It's organised in part by National Action, but is meant to be some sort of extreme right unity event and will likely attract members of groups like the National Front and British Movement, as well as some Nazis from overseas.

The brand of white suprematism and anti-Semitism promoted by these groups is so far to the right that it won't appeal to most normal people, but if there are hundreds of Nazis they won't be afraid to attack people of colour, anti-fascists and anyone else they don't like, so they need to be opposed in decent numbers. North East Anti-Fascists are organising a counter-demonstration, and members of different AFN groups will be going up to support them.

On Saturday 25 April the March For England will take place in Blackpool. Until last year it took place in Brighton, but after being

outnumbered and outgunned every year the organisers seem to have decided that Blackpool would be safer for them. We don't know what the counter-mobilisation will look like yet but we're making plans, and anyone in the North West interested in helping us plan should get in touch.

What is the Anti Fascist Network?

The AFN is a network of independent and grassroots anti-fascist groups in the UK. We are non-hierarchical, will never work with the police and are not affiliated to any political party. We believe in confronting fascists in the streets and keeping them out of our communities, not just attending rallies miles away from where the fascists are marching. We're more than aware that racism isn't only found in the far right, but in the government and border system and all aspects of society, and many of our members are active in different anti-racist groups and campaigns.

If anyone is interested in getting involved with their local group or starting one where there isn't one already, feel free to get in touch for advice!

•antifascistnetwork.org

The schooling of “Jihadi John”

Letters



The revelation that three high-profile Islamist militants, including Mohammed “Jihadi John” Emwazi, attended Quintin Kynaston school in North West London, has prompted Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan to call for an inquiry into the school.

The history — which reads like a socialist parable — will be lost on Morgan, but it is worth retelling.

Mohammed Emwazi, Choukri Ellekhli, and Mohamed Sakr all attended Quintin Kynaston in the early 2000s. 70% of the children at the school were from Muslim background. The head at the time, Jo Shuter, was known as “Blair’s favourite head teacher”.

Within her first year at the school 100 staff left, 70 in the first term. A former staff member described her boasting of getting rid of “dead wood” — i.e. experienced teachers and union activists. In their place were brought a new generation of teachers geared towards turning the school into an exam factory.

In 2006, Tony Blair visited the school to announce the first wave of “trust schools”, an initiative to take schools out of local authority control. The school was closed for half a day and a few handpicked kids were chosen for the media circus.

This visit happened in the midst of the Iraq war and just weeks after the Israel-Lebanon war, in which Blair gave tacit support to Israel. Some students at the school were caught up in that war when visiting family in Lebanon over the summer holidays. Others were refugees from Iraq.

Classroom assistant Robin Sivapalan organised a protest against the visit with the backing of Unison, the NUT, and the Stop the War Coalition. Many children from the school attended the protest and it was featured on the national news.

Sivapalan was sacked for his role in organising the protest and the children were vilified in special assemblies.

Shuter’s attitude is summed up in a statement to the *Morn-*

ing Star:

“I can assure you that this behaviour was not supported by anyone [sic!] at the school. Indeed we were horrified that our children had been exploited and abused by a political organisation.

“Our students were put in serious danger physically and emotionally by the outrageous actions of these political ‘rabble rousers’ who had no concern for them as young people but simply used them as pawns for their own political ends.

“I have today held a staff meeting and will be holding a whole school assembly later to explain to the students how the actions of 50 out of 1500 have been perceived and how it clearly reflects so poorly on the school...

“I personally remain a big supporter of Tony Blair whose policies I value and who I personally feel is a man of integrity and honesty.”

It would be crass to draw any direct causal link between this episode and the eventual fate of these former students. However, this episode shows something rotten at the heart of the neoliberal school, which Jo Shuter’s regime exemplified.

Shuter did not believe that the children at the school could express any political belief. They were only capable of being manipulated by others. She was unable to see that she herself had done what she accused Sivapalan of, “using students” as “fodder for a political campaign”, namely her campaign for self-aggrandisement and warmonger Blair’s campaign for legitimacy. She did not consider her action to be “political” at all.

The limits of democratic discussion and debate were set by the neoliberal agenda. This was a school in which there was “no alternative”. Critical thought, questioning authority and taking action against injustice were met with repression, ridicule and incomprehension.

The students were denied a political voice or space for critical reflection. And the teachers at the school failed to behave as fully functioning adults — critically-minded people seeking to shape the world around them. With only a few exceptions, teachers lined up behind the head in attacking the protest.

The teachers were neoliberal subjects, compliant, passive



Quintin Kynaston school in North West London

consumers who bowed to authority, kept their heads down and followed orders. Their work involved replicating these same qualities in their pupils.

This is a education system geared to passing exams and preparing people for the world of wage slavery. It is an environment where the adults do not act as responsible, thinking, democratic citizens, and where children are not nurtured in ways of critical thought and political action. It is precisely in such an barren neoliberal environment that the most perverse and reactionary rebellions are formed.

The postscript: Jo Shuter was struck off the teaching register after she admitted to pilfering thousands of pounds from the school (including spending £7000 of school money on her own birthday party), and is now being investigated for fraud.

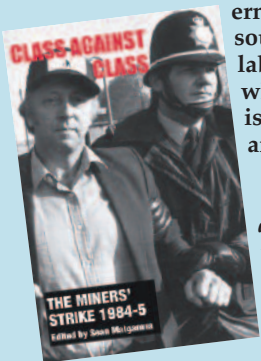
It would be unfair to blame individual teachers for the fate of those three students, but we should all think about the role we all play in shaping an environment where the evolution from London schoolchild to Islamist executioner is possible.

The passive spectators will support calls for further attacks on our civil liberties, hoping Big Brother can save us them from Islamist terror. But real hope lies in us all taking up the fight to democratise our education system and society at large.

Stuart Jordan, South London

BOOKS BY WORKERS' LIBERTY

In 1984-5, mining communities all over Britain fought a year-long battle against Thatcher’s Tory government. Their fight remains a source of inspiration for the labour movement, and for those who want a democratic socialist world free of exploitation and oppression.



This new edition of *Class against class* features an addition on the role of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners during the strike.

A few bold strokes by an artist can convey an idea more vividly and fix it more firmly in the viewer’s mind than an editorial or an article would. The cartoons collected here depict US politics, workers’ struggles, America’s “Jim Crow” racism, Roosevelt’s “New Deal” and Harry Truman’s “Fair Deal”, and Stalinism in its era of greatest prestige and triumph, as revolutionary socialists saw them at the time.



www.workersliberty.org/books

Letters



Len Glover’s response to my article ‘Why I’m not voting Green’ (Solidarity 356) seems to sidestep my argument. I wondered at the time of writing if I was too repetitive in places. Obviously I was not repetitive enough!

Yes Len, I agree, Labour’s programme is inadequate and lacks inspiration, that’s why I explained that we are socialists fighting within Labour for a working class programme. Your letter appears to begin by arguing not against me, but against the Labour front bench, from whom I have already distanced myself when I argued that to socialists, Labour is an arena for our intervention, not for a game of “follow the leader”.

The tone of your letter appears to suffer from defeatism and a deficit of agency. As a socialist do you believe the working class can become capable of revolutionising society? It doesn’t appear that you do if you think it is unlikely that “trade unionism will ever revive”. If it is true as you say that many young people are “uninterested” or “hostile” to trade unions, then again, for us this identifies an area of struggle, not a reason to turn our backs. Furthermore, Len, 6 million plus trade union members is a lot of people, and a reason for hope.

Even if the argument that the Labour Party is a lost cause was granted, it would still remain unexplained how exactly the Green Party can facilitate class struggle. It is not a party founded on principles of workers’ interests in any sense, or connected to the workers’ movement. Despite their many faults it would make more sense to support Left Unity or TUSC in the election.

Defeatism and a deficit of agency

Yes, the “conduit” — the structural relationship by which Labour can be influenced by the ranks of the trade union movement — is impaired and largely in a state of cryogenic sleep, but it has not been severed — yet.

How is the “precariat” represented by this conduit? Well, take Len’s example of zero-hours contracts. They have been campaigned against by unions and a weak reflection of that campaign has got into Labour’s manifesto. We fight for better campaigns, and a better reflection; but the answer to zero-hours contracts must come through the movement, through building solidarity amongst us, looking out for the interests of a class as a whole. That is how migrants, pensioners and so on are represented.

If the unions’ input into Labour amounts to nothing, why are the Blairites so keen to weaken or end the link? There remains a fight for us to have, and the strength which that fight musters and the form it takes will decisively shape the future of the labour movement. A socialist abandoning this critical struggle before it has reached a head is akin to the captain departing a sinking ship before his fellow passengers.

In respect of the Clay Cross rents dispute, I cite it not because I hark back to any “good old days” (indeed, I’m too young to know them) but because it clearly illustrates a struggle that we can learn from. Insofar as the nature of creativity, courage and solidarity and the potential of action centred around the trade union movement.

And finally, yes, politics is also about being “moved, angered and inspired”, but it is also about actually being able to effect change of the kind we both want in the real world. Pinning one’s colours to the mast of any passing ship that appeals will only get us lost. Class struggle remains the key ingredient of change.

Andy Forse, Milton Keynes

Rights for migrants! Workers' unity!

As we go to press on 17 March, up to 300 detainees at the Harmondsworth immigrant removal centre near London are reported on hunger strike.

And detainees at up to seven other centres, out of Britain's eleven holding about 3,000 people at any one time, have joined the protest for shorter or longer spans of time.

Because of the conditions in the centres, it is hard to know exactly what the detainees' demands are, but reports include calls for:

- cancellation of a deportation flight to Pakistan
- a 28-day limit on detention
- immediate release of disabled, elderly, pregnant, or mentally unwell detainees, and those who are victims of torture and trafficking
- an end to the "Detained Fast Track" system, under which asylum-seekers are rushed into deportation
- better conditions within the centres, where detainees say they are sometimes locked in their rooms for 12 hours a day without ventilation.

Just a few days before, on 3 March, a Parliamentary Committee report had stated:

"There should be a time limit of 28 days on the length of time anyone can be held in immigration detention.

"Decisions to detain should be very rare and detention should be for the shortest possible time and only to effect removal."

It also called for detention, when used, to be in livable rather than the prison-like conditions currently used. It condemned the "Detained Fast Track" and recommended that women who are victims of rape and sexual violence, and pregnant women should not be detained.

The report was from the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on refugees and on migration, which are voluntary groups of MPs with no official status. Nevertheless, it was one of the weightiest mainstream, high-profile calls for migrant rights for a while. It was the first ever parliamentary report on the detention system.

As the detainees and the MPs spoke out, much more media-covered voices spoke from the other side.

In a TV interview to be screened on 19 March, but trailed a week in advance, Ukip leader Nigel Farage declared:

"If an employer wishes to choose — or you can use the word 'discriminate' if you want to — but wishes to choose to employ a British-born person, they should be allowed to do so".

The interviewer asked: "In Ukip land there would be no law against discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Would there be a law against discrimination on the grounds of race or colour?"

Farage replied: "No". He has since claimed that he didn't

speak about race, but his reply was no, Ukip would have no law against racial discrimination.

On 16 March, speaking to the *Guardian*, Farage defended a Ukip policy demanding that immigrants pay privately for health care and to school their children for five years after arriving.

"Immigrants must financially support themselves and their dependants for five years. This means private health insurance (except emergency medical care), education and housing — they should pay into the pot before they take out of it".

Labour leader Ed Miliband and Tory leader David Cameron both denounced Farage. But the evidence from their policies is that Cameron and even Miliband like to have Farage as an outlier so that they can present their own anti-migrant policies as moderate and middle of the road.

In the 2010 election the Tories campaigned on a promise to cut net immigration to 100,000 a year. It was obvious at the time that this was impossible without taking Britain out of the European Union, and erecting walls against migrants which even the European states outside the EU, like Norway and Switzerland, do not have.

BAITING

The promise has led to much baiting of migrants, and informed the Tories' nasty 2014 Immigration Act, but not reduced net migration.

The net flow of migrants to the UK in the 12 months to September 2014 was 298,000, higher than it was in the years before 2010.

The Immigration Act 2014 increases surveillance and reduces migrants' rights.

It compels landlords to check tenants' immigration status. It tightens compulsion on employers to check immigration status. It compels banks to check the immigration status of people opening bank accounts.

It empowers the government to impose charges for health care on people in Britain seeking leave to enter.

It removes migrants' right to appeal in many cases and replaces it by administrative review.

Instead of clearly denouncing the basis of the Tories' promise — the false idea that Britain somehow has "too much" immigration — Labour leaders have resorted to cheap shots against the Tories' incompetence and calls for strengthened border controls.

Labour's five-point pledge card for the 7 May election, launched on 14 March, makes "Control Immigration" one of its five points, and on the flipside says: "People who come here won't be able to claim benefits for at least two years and we will introduce fair rules making it illegal for employers to undercut wages by exploiting workers".

Really to limit exploitation, the obvious rules would be: a minimum wage raised to the level of the living wage, without loopholes; a ban on zero-hours contracts; and rights for unions to get into workplaces and force bosses to recognise them. But Labour's leaders present limits on exploitation as a "control immigration" issue.

The truth of the matter is that migrants are a boon for Britain. Educated young adults, keen to work, who have cost the British state nothing for upbringing and education, are a bonus for their new country. Those who need training here can be quickly trained. Detailed surveys suggest that the net effect of more immigration is to raise living standards in the country they come to, not to depress them.

Immigrants from other cultures deepen and enrich the British society to which they come. Britain is a vastly better place as a result of the immigrants who have come here in the past. For every working-class activist, the priority must be to unite workers, British-born and migrant, white and black, atheist and of all religions, for our common interests against the exploiters, who themselves respect no borders as they shift investment and production across the world.

In the run-up to 7 May, *Solidarity* will support the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory in its effort to create a voice for migrant rights and open borders within the campaign by the unions and Labour to oust the Tories.

What will unions do in the election?

The big unions are working on a drive to encourage people to register to vote in time for the general election (by 20 April). And in the last quarter of 2014 Unite, Unison, and GMB each gave the Labour Party £1 million for its election campaign.

Missing, though, is union activity aimed at raising issues and mobilising workers not only to vote but also to put demands on Labour. The only thing like even Unison's anaemic "Million Voices for Change" campaign of 2010 (formally still going, but only formally) is the "Action for Rail" campaign of the rail unions.

One reason is changes in the law. Law professor Keith Ewing explains in a recent article that the "Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning etc Act 2013" says that if a union wants to spend more than £20,000 in the election in England (or £10,000 in Scotland or Wales), it must comply with more detailed disclosure and reporting rules.

The national level each union can only spend up to £390,000 nationally.

This limit applies to any expenditure that can "reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against political parties". And no more than £9,750 can be spent in each constituency.

"Targeted spending", which means spending "on regulated campaign activity that can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for one particular registered political party or any of its candidates" is limited to £40,000.

However, all that has not stopped "Action for Rail". Other unions could do at least as much as that.

And Ewing adds: "One loophole that appears to survive from the law introduced in 2000 is that trade unions are free to contact their members with election messages, including who to vote for messages.

"This expenditure is not regulated. The other major exception is for newspapers...."

Ewing's suggestion on newspapers is that unions fund special issues of the *Morning Star*. But unions need not tie themselves to the neo-Stalinist politics of the *Star*. For 31 years, between 1929 and 1960 the TUC funded the *Daily Herald*.

Why don't a few big unions get together and publish a paper for 31 days up to the general election, pushing union demands as well as a vote for Labour?

* bit.ly/k-ewing



The process of narrowing

This excerpt is taken from a report published in 2014 by critical economics students at Manchester University, and sums up how thought has been narrowed within the lecture halls and seminar rooms.

As little as 15 years ago the Economics Department at Manchester had a considerably wider range of professors who self-identified with different economic paradigms and had very different research agendas.

This led to a far more eclectic undergraduate syllabus with modules such as comparative economic theory, comparative economic systems and alternative perspectives on developing economies being available for students to study. The Economics Department has radically changed in composition in the last 15 years and it is these changes that are the root cause of many of the problems we outlined.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) and academic journals have the power to define what is and isn't economics and within that, what is good economics and bad economics. REF determines how much research funding each university gets and is a label of research prowess.

Every four years a panel of leading academic economists grade departments on the basis of individual publications whose academic quality is inferred from the status and ranking of economics journals. The problem is that there are no recognisably heterodox economists on this panel and that the grading is done behind closed doors with only departmental ratings published.

The outcome of the REF rating process is to elevate the neoclassical framework to the standard by which all economics research is judged. Departments and individual lecturers are forced to respond to the definitions of economics set by these bodies...

Academic economists must work with neoclassical assumptions and methodology if they wish to secure academic tenure and advance within the leading economics departments... As nonmainstream Manchester professors have retired from expanding departments they have been replaced by young recruits [who] represent a narrow range of mainstream economists who had been published, or were more likely to be published, in the mainstream American journals (Big 5: AER, Chicago etc).

This homogeneity puts the Department in the position of not having the capability to teach other schools of thought or history of economic thought.

This narrowing process reinforces itself; now many young lecturers and teaching assistants aren't able to facilitate critical discussions including alternative economic perspectives in tutorials because their economics education has lacked those elements.

This monoculture also makes it easier for professors to believe that their way is the only way to do economics or at least that it is the only valid way, which in turn justifies its status as the only kind of economics taught at our university...

Non-mainstream economists at Manchester have been stripped of their titles as economists and pushed out to peripheral positions in development studies and suchlike while various kinds of heterodox political economy have taken root in the business school, politics, geography and history departments.

• bit.ly/econ-crit



University campuses used to be, relatively speaking, a haven within capitalist society for free debate and criticism.

A high point, for much of the 20th century, was the right which universities in Latin America won to keep the police off their campuses and have university officials elected by staff and students. That began with the University Reform Movement in Córdoba, in northern Argentina, which opposed a focus on learning by rote, inadequate libraries, poor instruction, and restrictive admission criteria, and spread across the subcontinent.

The student radicalism which spread across much of the world in 1968 started, in 1964-5, with a Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. The central avenues through campus had become a lively scene, with street stalls and political gatherings; the university authorities tried to clamp down, and

were eventually defeated.

Today free debate and criticism on campus is under threat from several angles. The government wants universities to ban speakers from their campuses who would be quite legal elsewhere.

University administrations ban meetings, even without government prompting, when they think they might cause trouble or uproar.

Campus space is increasingly commercialised and franchised-out, and university bosses try to stop student poster, leaflet, and campaigning affecting the "commercial space".

Student unions are increasingly run by people who think that a spell as student union president will look good on their CV when they apply for a managerial job.

No truth without f

By Karl Marx

Karl Marx wrote in favour of free speech, free criticism, and free expression in these passages on an article of February 1843, "Comments on the latest Prussian Censorship Instruction"

"According to this law," namely, Article II, "the censorship should not prevent serious and modest investigation of truth, nor impose undue constraint on writers, or hinder the book trade from operating freely."

The investigation of truth which should not be prevented by the censorship is more particularly defined as one which is serious and modest. Both these definitions concern not the content of the investigation, but rather something which lies outside its content. From the outset they draw the investigation away from truth and make it pay attention to an unknown third thing. An investigation which continually has its eyes fixed on this third element, to which the law gives a legitimate capriciousness, will it not lose sight of the truth? Is it not the first duty of the seeker after truth to aim directly at the truth, without looking to the right or left? Will I not forget the essence of the matter, if I am obliged not to forget to state it in the prescribed form?

Truth is as little modest as light, and towards whom should it be so? Towards itself? *Verum index sui et falsi*. Therefore, towards falsehood?

If modesty is the characteristic feature of the investigation, then it is a sign that truth is feared rather than falsehood. It is a means of discouragement at every step forward I take. It is the imposition on the investigation of a fear of reaching a result, a means of guarding against the truth.

Further, truth is general, it does not belong to me alone, it belongs to all, it owns me, I do not own it. My property is the form, which is my spiritual individuality. *Le style c'est l'homme*. Yes, indeed! The law permits me to write, only I must write in a style that is not mine! I may show my spiritual countenance, but I must first set it in the prescribed folds! What man of honour will not blush at this presumption and not prefer to hide his head under the toga? Under the toga at least one has an inkling of a Jupiter's head. The prescribed folds mean nothing but *bonne mine à mauvais jeu*.

You admire the delightful variety, the inexhaustible riches of nature. You do not demand that the rose should smell like the violet, but must the greatest riches of all, the spirit, exist in only one variety? I am humorous, but the law bids me write seriously. I am audacious, but the law commands that my style be modest. Grey, all grey, is the sole, the rightful colour of freedom. Every drop of dew on which the sun shines glistens with an inexhaustible play of colours, but the spiritual sun, however many the persons and whatever the objects in which it is refracted, must produce only the official colour!

The most essential form of the spirit is cheerfulness, light,

but you make shadow the sole manifestation of the spirit; it must be clothed only in black, yet among flowers there are no black ones. The essence of the spirit is always truth itself but what do you make its essence? Modesty. Only the mean wretch is modest, says Goethe, and you want to turn the spirit into such a mean wretch? Or if modesty is to be the modesty of genius of which Schiller speaks, then first of all turn all your citizens and above all your censors into geniuses.

But then the modesty of genius does not consist in what educated speech consists in, the absence of accent and dialect, but rather in speaking with the accent of the matter and in the dialect of its essence. It consists in forgetting modesty and immodesty and getting to the heart of the matter. The universal modesty of the mind is reason, that universal liberality of thought which reacts to each thing according to the latter's essential nature.

Further, if seriousness is not to come under Tristram Shandy's definition according to which it is a hypocritical behaviour of the body in order to conceal defects of the soul, but signifies seriousness in substance, then the entire prescription falls to the ground. For I treat the ludicrous seriously when I treat it ludicrously, and the most serious immodesty of the mind is to be modest in the face of immodesty.

MODEST

Serious and modest! What fluctuating, relative concepts! Where does seriousness cease and jocularity begin?

Where does modesty cease and immodesty begin? We are dependent on the temperament of the censor. It would be as wrong to prescribe temperament for the censor as to prescribe style for the writer. If you want to be consistent in your aesthetic criticism, then forbid also a too serious and too modest investigation of the truth, for too great seriousness is the most ludicrous thing of all, and too great modesty is the bitterest irony.

Finally, the starting point is a completely perverted and abstract view of truth itself. All objects of the writer's activity are comprehended in the one general concept "truth". Even if we leave the, subjective side out of account, viz., that one and the same object is refracted differently as seen by different persons and its different aspects converted into as many different spiritual characters, ought the character of the object to have no influence, not even the slightest, on the investigation? Truth includes not only the result but also the path to it.

The investigation of truth must itself be true; true investigation is developed truth, the dispersed elements of which are brought together in the result. And should not the manner of investigation alter according to the object? If the object is a matter for laughter, the manner has to seem serious, if the object is disagreeable, it has to be modest. Thus you violate the right of the object as you do that of the subject. You conceive truth abstractly and turn the spirit into an examining magistrate, who draws up a dry protocol of it.

University lecturers' careers depend on how many articles they get published in "leading" (i.e., in almost all fields, orthodox) journals. Over generations of academic turnover, this produces university departments filled with staff who have been selected by capacity to get wordage into those journals, and who in turn will go on to run those journals, oblivious to critiques or alternative approaches.

This narrows the range of teaching and debate on courses.

Finally, and paradoxically, the shutting-down of debate is sometimes promoted by student activists who consider themselves left-wing. A chief example is the bans on the Socialist Workers Party imposed by Goldsmiths College and Edinburgh University Student Unions, and attempted elsewhere.

freedom!

Or is there no need of this metaphysical twisting? Is truth to be understood as being simply what the government decrees, so that investigation is added as a superfluous, intrusive element, but which for etiquette's sake is not to be entirely rejected? It almost seems so. For investigation is understood in advance as in contradiction to truth and therefore appears with the suspicious official accompaniment of seriousness and modesty, which of course is fitting for the layman in relation to the priest. The government's understanding is the only state reason. True, in certain circumstances of time, concessions have to be made to a different understanding and its chatter, but this understanding comes on the scene conscious of the concession and of its own lack of right, modest and submissive, serious and tedious.

CURTSEY

If Voltaire says: "Tous les genres sont bons, excepté le genre ennuyeux", in the present case the genre ennuyant becomes the exclusive one, as is already sufficiently proved by the reference to the "proceedings of the Rhine Province Assembly".

Why not rather the good old German curialistic style? You may write freely, but at the same time every word must be a curtsy to the liberal censorship, which allows you to express your equally serious and modest opinions. Indeed, do not



Students during the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in the 1960-70s

lose your feeling of reverence!

The legal emphasis is not on truth but on modesty and seriousness. Hence everything here arouses suspicion: seriousness, modesty and, above all, truth, the indefinite scope of which seems to conceal a very definite but very doubtful kind of truth...

The new censorship instruction... makes the following comment: "Anything aimed in a frivolous, hostile way against the Christian religion in general, or against a particular article of faith, must not be tolerated."

The old censorship decree does not mention the Christian religion at all; on the contrary, it distinguishes between religion and all individual religious parties and sects.

The new censorship instruction does not only convert religion in general into the Christian religion, but adds further a particular article of faith. A delightful product of our Christianised science! Who will still deny that it has forged new fetters for the press?

Religion, it is said, must not be attacked, whether in general or in particular. Or do you perhaps believe that the words frivolous and hostile have made the new fetters into chains of roses?

How adroitly it is written: frivolous, hostile! The adjective frivolous appeals to the citizen's sense of decorum, it is the exoteric word for the world at large, but the adjective hostile is whispered into the censor's ear, it is the legal interpreta-

tion of frivolity. We shall find in this instruction more examples of this subtle tact, which offers the public a subjective word that makes it blush and offers the censor an objective word that makes the author grow pale. In this way even lettres de cachet could be set to music.

And in what a remarkable contradiction the censorship instruction has entangled itself! It is only a half-hearted attack that is frivolous, one which keeps to individual aspects of a phenomenon, without being sufficiently profound and serious to touch the essence of the matter; it is precisely an attack on a merely particular feature as such that is frivolous. If, therefore, an attack on the Christian religion in general is forbidden, it follows that only a frivolous attack on it is permitted. On the other hand, an attack on the general principles of religion, on its essence, on a particular feature insofar as it is a manifestation of the essence, is a hostile attack.

Religion can only be attacked in a hostile or a frivolous way, there is no third way. This inconsistency in which the instruction entangles itself is, of course, only a seeming one, for it depends on the semblance that in general some kind of attack on religion is still permitted. But an unbiased glance suffices to realise that this semblance is only a semblance.

Religion must not be attacked, whether in a hostile or a frivolous way, whether in general or in particular, therefore not at all.

UCL votes for free speech

By Omar Raii

In mid-March University College London students' union students voted (by a close margin) to support freedom of speech and organisation on campus.

The arguments against came not from the right, but from self-defined leftists who argued that it may be necessary from time to time to stop speakers with objectionable views (for example misogynists, supporters of UKIP etc.) from coming on to campus, in order to protect oppressed groups. We replied that freedom of speech is especially important for oppressed groups, who are the most vulnerable when it comes to government censorship.

Already the state and university managements are determined to clamp down on any debate that may lead to rowdiness or controversy. Student unions should not add to the censorious atmosphere by banning speakers or societies.

The motion noted that "there has been a rise in instances of meetings, debates and publications being suppressed on university campuses, whether by campus authorities, the Home Office / police or sometimes by student unions themselves....

"That for freedom of expression to be genuinely established on campus, it must extend to those whose views may be regarded as objectionable....

"That student unions should generally champion free

speech and organisation, and advocate their curtailment only in extreme circumstances, such as when speakers incite violence.

"That fascist organising and presence on campus must be opposed and stopped, not because it leads to offensive speech, but because it contributes to violent, organised attacks on students, especially oppressed groups..."

Keeping campuses "clean" and conformist

By Monty Shields

In November 2014 I was promoting the national demonstration for Free Education at Queen Mary University of London.

The posters I put up around campus kept disappearing within hours. Then I was "caught" outside a student café by a member of senior management, who told me that they had been taking down the posters, they wanted to keep the campus looking "fresh" and "clean", and what I was doing was prohibited.

When poster for a left-wing discussion group, I found that no student is allowed to advertise events anywhere on

campus outside the student union. Then, when campaigning for the union elections, I was confronted by a member of senior staff who told me that I was in a "commercial area" where no posters were allowed. I replied that I was exercising my right to freedom of expression. In response, they took the posters down in front of me.

Within the student union, all posters that have not been approved by the unelected administrative staff at the union reception are removed. And posters can only be placed in "designated areas" — a small selection of boards, each capable of holding one A3 poster, in which it is difficult to find free space. Thus, most student societies cannot use posters to advertise their events without breaking the union's rules.

Earlier this year, I received an email stating that the society I help organise would be punished if we carried on poster in the union café, which is not a designated space.

During the student union elections, the union's unelected administrative staff reportedly told some students that there would be "repercussions" if they published an article for a student newspaper about the accountability of sabbatical officers.

Not so long ago, university campuses were one of the few places where a colourful, lively diversity of views could be advertised.

We must fight against the marketisation of universities and the conformism of student unions which have driven the shutdown on free expression.

The Socialist Workers Party and Syriza

The Left
By Martin Thomas



On 26 February 500 demonstrators marched in Athens denouncing the Syriza-led government's deal with the Eurogroup finance ministers and demanding that Greece repudiate its debt and quit the EU.

Some of the demonstrators — not on the initiative of the organisers, it seems — smashed up shops, set cars on fire, and threw molotov cocktails.

The organisers were Antarsya, the left coalition in Greece in which SEK, by far the most important group outside Britain linked to the SWP here, is a leading force. Antarsya, in coalition with a left-reformist pro-EU-exit group, scored 0.64% in Greece's January election, up from its 0.33% (on its own) in June 2012, but down on its 0.72% (also on its own) in 2014's Euro-election.

The 26 February demonstrators' slogans must have been meant as demands on the Syriza-led government, since Antarsya raised no call for a workers' government, or for any different government.

Repudiating the debt and quitting the EU — i.e. going for a "siege economy" in Greece, plus hoping to negotiate terms for credit with Russia and China, which might be willing to pay cash to win a geopolitical ally — would not make the Syriza-led government revolutionary or working-class. It would certainly crash the Greek economy and pauperise and dismay the workers who voted for Syriza.

SOLIDARITY

The alternative is not to obey eurozone rules at all costs. A workers' government in Greece would almost certainly be forced out of the eurozone unless it could elicit great working-class movements of solidarity and struggle across the zone to bend or change those rules.

Mind you, if conditions existed for a workers' government in Greece, then conditions would probably also exist for those great working-class movements. And if not, with even minimal astuteness and luck, the Greek workers' government could at least extract some concessions from the eurozone as it was forced out.

And the workers in Greece would have come to understand, through a process of struggle, trying out alternatives one by one and going beyond them, and what Lenin in 1917 called "patiently explaining" among themselves, that the economic damage inevitable from euro-expulsion could be worth going through in order to establish their power and their dignity and a bridgehead for a Europe-wide workers' revolution.

The Antarsya demonstration was far from the only way to express opposition to the Syriza-led government's bad deal with the eurozone leaders (or its coalition with the right-wing Anel, or its vote for a right-winger as President of Greece). Revolutionary socialists inside Syriza, like the International-



Antarsya is campaigning for Greece to leave the EU

ist Workers' Left (DEA), have criticised the deal clearly, and emphasised the need for independent working-class struggle, by "patiently explaining" within the Syriza membership and Syriza's wider working-class support.

On 18 November last year, *Socialist Worker* wrote: "The struggle in Greece has made it clear to many workers that Syriza doesn't have the answers. Anti-capitalists [i.e. the SWP's Greek sister group, SEK] relate to this audience partly by standing against Syriza in elections. In Britain the balance of forces is very different. So the Socialist Workers Party wants to unite with left reformists and others to form a left alternative".

In line with that argument, more recently the SWP has presented the TUSC coalition (run by the Socialist Party and the leaders of the RMT rail union) within which the SWP is running a few candidates on 7 May, as the beginning of that desirable left-reformist coalition in Britain. "When you see Syriza win the elections in Greece, the message that needs to go out from all of us is, if they can vote against austerity there, why can't we vote against austerity here?" (Charlie Kimber, 27 January).

Kimber is right that TUSC is about revolutionary socialists pretending to have "broad", minimal, anti-cuts politics (rather than outright calls for a workers' government) in the hope that will win votes. His argument is that in Britain things are not "clear to workers", so that's the correct ploy here; but things are different in Greece.

There (so the SWP argument goes) workers had already (last year) seen through Syriza. So it was right to dismiss the possibilities of arguing within Syriza's structures, even though they are much more open and of course represent vastly more than TUSC's.

The fact that Antarsya chose to run not as a distinct revolutionary pole, but in coalition with Mars (no more revolutionary than Syriza, only anti-EU), and that the Greek workers to whom Syriza's failure was supposedly so "clear"

voted Syriza into office and gave Antarsya only 0.64%, should have made the SWP rethink.

Instead, it has made it dissimulate.

You have to read SW's coverage since the election very closely to gather that in Greece it demands that the Syriza-led government should not even have bothered to try to mobilise workers across Europe to put pressure on eurozone leaders to make concessions, but should instead have sent Brussels a letter: "We quit. We'll do our best with the drachma".

When SW has mentioned the euro issue, it has in fact modified its attitude into something more rational: that the Syriza-led government should be willing to risk expulsion from the eurozone, and use that willingness to force concessions from eurozone leaders worried about domino effects. This is as different from positively demanding EU exit as organising a picket line and being willing to face police attack is different from beating yourself up without troubling the cops.

ELSE

"This [the fact there was no 'or else' in his stance] undermined Varoufakis's negotiating position. The fact that he ruled out 'Grexit' — Greece leaving the euro — in advance meant he had nothing to threaten the Eurogroup with.

"The German government, by contrast, let it be known that they were willing to contemplate 'Grexit'. They may have been bluffing — a forced Greek departure from the euro would have sent shockwaves through the global financial system" (Alex Callinicos, SW, 24 February).

Mostly, SW has limited its critical comments on the Syriza-led government to the general thought that parliamentary victories and diplomatic negotiations cannot, by themselves, without grass-roots working-class mobilisations, win big gains. The casual reader would not guess that this was the same SW which thought months before that Syriza's inadequacy was "clear to workers" in Greece, and whose co-thinkers are even now organising small but strident demonstrations in Athens to demand an immediate siege economy.

"Syriza win means hope has arrived in Greece". "Workers have fought austerity with general strikes, occupations and protests. They feel that Syriza's victory reflects that struggle" (unsigned, 27 January).

"It's hard to overstate the historic significance of the election victory of the radical left party Syriza in Greece last month.... Some 32 general strikes alongside occupations of city squares and mass protests threw Greece into turmoil. Syriza's advance from a relatively marginal party to challenger for government in barely two years was a product of these mass movements... Revolutionary socialists should celebrate the new government's victory and support the progressive measures it takes" (Alex Callinicos, 3 February).

"Syriza's election victory represents a mortal threat to this [Merkel's neo-liberal] project" (Alex Callinicos, 24 February).

The SWP can cope with the tasks of revolutionary socialist politics when all that requires is general shouting about the virtues of militancy and anger. When it requires strategic intelligence and patient political argument, the SWP flops from one pose to another.

SWP shows its hand

By Colin Foster

An easy mistake to make. Paul McGarr, a leading SWP activist in the National Union of Teachers, recently sent an email meant only for a few SWP comrades to a broader e-list.

There was nothing scandalous or shameful about the email. In fact, it's useful because it spells out SWP union strategy more clearly than usual.

Recommending that SWPers back a fringe meeting planned for NUT conference at Easter, McGarr wrote: "It's Alex [Kenny, a key figure in the soft left of the NUT Exec]/Kevin [Courtney, the union's deputy general secretary (DGS)] trying to pull together people from STA, CDFU [the two soft-left groups] and Broadly [the right wing] who they think can be win to "organising agenda" and marginalise those in Broadly — e.g. [Ian] Grayson — who do not share this view — and in process also trying to keep us [SWP] at a bit of arm's length... but best way to deal with that is to pile in and seek to shape it..."

Apologising later, McGarr spelled out his perspective more: "to unify everyone in the union who shares... the organising agenda... while drawing a line against those... who do not share that vision, such as those who challenged Kevin in the recent DGS election..."

The "organising agenda" is the conventional wisdom, by now, of almost every union official. The challengers to Kevin Courtney in the DGS election were, from the right, Ian Grayson — and, from the left, Patrick Murphy of Lanac and AWL.

It's official. The SWP's strategy in the unions is not just to work in broad lefts if that's the best option available, but actively to promote centre-lefts including union leaders. That's what has led them to back the incumbents in the NUT and CWU, defer to the ruling Democratic Alliance in PCS, etc.

Unite is the exception because general secretary Len McCluskey speaks at show events for the SWP's splinter Counterfire rather than for the SWP. So, there, the SWP backs the tiny Grass Roots Left.

The rise of “Islamic state” in Iraq and Syria

Simon Nelson reviews *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* by Patrick Cockburn.

Cockburn’s 160 pages are an introduction to the rapid rise of Islamic State (IS, Daesh) across Iraq and Syria.

Recycling material from articles in the *Independent* and *London Review of Books*, Cockburn charts how Islamists from various groups came to dominate the Syrian rebellion after 2012 and changed it from being predominantly secular and democratic to ultra-conservative. Saudi Wahhabism and Saudi and Gulf state funding played a big role.

Cockburn argues here, as he has in the past, that the invasion of Iraq created a sectarian war between Shia and Sunni. Subsequently a US-backed Awakening Movement drove al Qaeda out of Iraq. In the aftermath the Shia sectarian Government of Maliki excluded Sunni militias from the new Iraqi state.

A disenfranchised Sunni population combined with a deeply corrupt Iraqi army allowed Daesh to move through Iraq like a “serpent through rocks”. Daesh were able to pick off weak areas, encountering a Sunni population which either accepted their takeover or were unwilling to back a sectarian Shia state.

The west has failed to challenge how the Saudi state continues to export its ideology across the Middle East and increasingly into Europe. The Saudis fund mosques and religious organisations, as well as conservative elements of the Pakistani security services.

The US and UK are particularly complicit, maintaining a close relationships to the Saudi royal family. *Solidarity* has previously outlined the roots of Daesh, something which Cockburn does not really expand on. However he correctly traces the group’s ideological leanings back to the Afghan jihadist war against the Soviet Union and the increasing militarisation of Saudi-sponsored groups.

Cockburn believes the fall of Assad was prematurely predicted by the EU, US and Turkey. Because the regime has survived the conflict has spilled over into civil war, with the Salafist opposition the most homogenous, ruthless and best equipped to become the dominant force against the regime.



Pro-Daesh demonstration in Sunni-majority Mosul

Whereas the Free Syrian Army regarded the conflict as one of Syrians fighting Assad, Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), Daesh and others have gathered fighters from across the Arab peninsula and, indeed, the world. Daesh’s break with al-Qaeda allowed it to focus on sectarian destruction and ultimately the establishment of the Islamic State (as they see it), governed from Raqqa.

Daesh started as the official al-Qaeda section of Iraq but soon dropped their affiliation, allowing JAN to take on the franchise. JAN and Daesh share an almost identical hostility to religious minorities, women and LGBT people, but JAN has a slightly less bombastic and bloodthirsty methodology. JAN has engaged in bloody conflict with Daesh and other rebels as well as fighting alongside them, particularly since the start of the US-led bombing.

Unlike al-Qaeda, Daesh have territory, oil production, taxation and infrastructure that supplements ransom, looting and donations from wealthy Arabs. It also has many former Ba’athist military and state functionaries on its payroll. It is much more than just an armed militia.

The book ends with the siege of Kobane, which at the time of publication was still underway. Cockburn sees some hope in the Kurdish forces of the YPG, noting that Daesh have defeated large sections of the Syrian, Iraqi armies and held back the Iraqi Peshmerga. The defeat of Daesh in Kobane is a small step towards the destruction of the group.

It would be a mistake however to view setbacks for Daesh as the ending of the powerful sectarian ideology that drives it forward.

The “precariat” of the 19th century

Cathy Nugent reviews Michael Sheen’s “Valleys Rebellion”, BBC2 (on iplayer)

The Newport rising of November 1839, when a few thousand men from the south Wales valleys, many of them armed, marched in protest at working-conditions and for the right to vote, was the subject of a recent BBC documentary presented by actor Michael Sheen.

Sheen’s brief was to explore the reasons behind political apathy (e.g. very low turnouts in elections) in a place otherwise known for its restlessness and radicalism. Retracing and walking one of the routes taken by the rebels into Newport, Sheen retells the story of the Welsh Chartist which inspired the Rising. It ended in violent repression. 22 rebels were killed and 200 were arrested.

Sheen didn’t have that much to say for himself. He let a mix of local people, politicians (of all stripes), a token lefty of national importance (Owen Jones) and historians do most of the talking.

But even a relatively uninformed programme and partial, uncritical retelling of one of the most important working-class social movements that have ever existed is a good thing. Judging by the number of ordinary people in the film who had heard of the People’s Charter — the Chartists’ set of six points for democratic reform — radical and socialistic views in South Wales are not entirely dead.

From 1838 to 1848 (and a little after) the Chartist movement combined local economic grievances (the brutal and brutalising conditions of newly-industrialising Britain) and a national political campaign to win a political voice for working people (their demand was for universal male suffrage but there were many women Chartists).

Earlier in 1839 delegates from Chartist associations had met at a General Convention in London. The Convention was

highly politically differentiated. Some of the leaders were inspired by the most radical wing of the French Revolution. Others were more moderate. But in general the mood outside the Convention was more militant. In many areas where Chartists were organising, men were arming themselves. (Women were involved in some of the mass demonstrations which ended in repression, but not I think, the Newport Rising). Much of the debate and feeling in the movement at this time was for going beyond the six demands of the Charter.

Sheen’s documentary did not try to reconstruct the political world view of the south Wales Chartists. This is in many ways exemplified by their decision to arm themselves, to organise in a clandestine way (necessary as the local ruling class had many ways intimidate and victimise rebels). The arming and drilling was never going to be a stronger force against soldiers on horseback, but it was a ritualistic means to create a disciplined movement. And that must have been a way to overcome the fear and insecurity of life. The film describes this well.

These were “the precariat” of the 19th century. People who had mostly lived on the land had come to South Wales to work in its many iron works. Most newbies had to wait three months before they were paid, and only to be ripped off at the company store. People who work in extractive industries around the world today lead very similar lives.

In South Wales today, things are not so very different, as people endure in-work and out-of-work poverty. What did Sheen say about the politics of the area? Unfortunately he failed to comment critically on the views of his interviewees. David Davies, the Tory MP for Monmouth, advised the joblessness of South Wales to “get on their bike”. Sheen just listened politely. One very articulate and class-conscious barber opined about how there was very little for the “working man” in South Wales. Hmm, not much for the working



Sheen recently made headlines for making a speech in defence of the NHS in Tredegar, South Wales, on 1 March.

woman either? Owen Jones repeated the words of Tony Benn, “people need hope”. Yes, but how to get that?

Sheen, who seems like a decent leftish person, could have talked a little more about those organisations which rest on the legacy of the Chartist movement — the trade unions. In the first place the people who are voted in to lead those unions could get off their collective backsides and fight for higher wages. They could challenge the economic order of joblessness and poverty benefits.

But even if the unions just lend their weight to the many community projects that the people of south Wales are organising for themselves, step-by-step hope can be rebuilt.

Why the banks should be confiscated

By Colin Foster

The HSBC scandal rumbles on, and it's only the latest of many scandals about the big banks to break since 2008.

Yet the mainstream debate never considers taking the banks under public ownership and democratic control, and radically transforming them. One or two top bankers caught particularly red-handed may be eased out, with lavish pay-offs and pensions. Some banks are nationalised, and handed to the same sort of managers as before, to be run as before, and privatised as soon as state aid can make them profitable again. That's all.

All the mainstream debates assume that we need banks run pretty much like they are now.

77% of all wages are paid automatically into bank accounts these days; 96% of adults have a bank account. So most of us know banks as places which keep our monthly wages safer than they would be in our pockets or purses, and manage our payments.

All that could be done just as well by a public utility which kept count of our balances, managed payments by transfers between accounts, and ran a network of ATMs.

Done by a network of private-profit banks, it serves other purposes. As late as 2005, UK banks were boosting their profits by £30 million a year by taking several days to clear cheques and electronic payments.

Finland abolished cheques as long ago as 1993 — the technology was available back then — but in the UK, until the Faster Payments system began in 2008, transfers between banks by phone or internet meant a delay of a few days when you no longer had the money, but the person you were paying didn't have it either.

Now the banks say they will probably soon introduce fixed charges (per month, or per transaction) on current accounts. For the time being, they improvise by levying disproportionate fees or fines for failed payments, unintentional overdrafts, currency exchanges, and so on.

All that is secondary. The fundamental thing banks do under capitalism is scoop up relatively small amounts of money from across the economy, transform them from being just money into being *money-capital*, and trade in that money-capital, especially by dealings with government debt.

If you have £10, it is just £10. It is not capital. You got it, probably, by selling an hour's labour-power (a commodity), and with it you'll buy other commodities: 12kg of potatoes, or 60 apples, or whatever.

If you have £10 million, it is different. You can use it as capital. You can buy machinery, supplies, the use of buildings, and labour-power, set production coming, and draw profits.

Or you can lend the £10 million to someone who will give you a portion of their profits under the title of interest, or dividends.

The banks can collect together a million £10s, and make £10 million. And then they can draw a portion of the profits created in production by lending that £10 million to an industrial capitalist.

There are many additional twists. In the first place, the banks not only collect money. They create it.

Your £1000 monthly wages go into the bank. But the bank doesn't keep a hundred ten-pound notes in its vaults in case you demand them. Overall, banks don't need to hold in cash more than a tiny fraction of what is deposited with them. The bank can blithely lend your £1000 to someone else, and, short of a meltdown where no-one trusts banks and everyone wants to get hard cash, they'll cover your demand to withdraw the £1000 from another flow, maybe from someone who withdrew £1000 the day before and paid it to a shop which holds an account with the bank.

The UK's official figures for the total of "money" circulating in the economy (including bank deposits) is £2100 billion. Of that, only £62 billion is notes and coin. The rest is essentially created by the banks.

LEND

Despite the banks' great ability to lend, by far the biggest part of sizeable industrial corporations' investment is not financed by bank lending.

It is financed by the corporations' profits, and secondarily by them issuing bonds or shares (essentially, types of IOUs). Banks mostly lend not to big industrial corporations, but to smaller capitalist concerns, to households, to the government, and to each other.

For a bank, getting your account is important as a hook to get you to pay for "financial services". These may be just swindles, like Payment Protection Insurance, but the main form is mortgages. The direct exploitation by which the capitalist class extracts surplus labour from you at work is supplemented by another exploitation siphoning off mortgage interest and fees.

The banks hold about £1300 billion of claims on households for mortgages. But their total assets — around the same as their total liabilities — are much bigger.

Banks hold around £20,000 billion in financial assets — enough to buy up all the country's physical assets three times over — or the equivalent of about £800,000 for each household in the UK.

The biggest holders of government debt (bonds) are insurance companies and pension funds, but the banks act as in-

termediaries in the bond trade and hold some.

As Karl Marx wrote: "[With the] national debt... a negative quantity appears as capital — just as interest-bearing capital, in general, is the fountainhead of all manner of insane forms, so that debts, for instance, can appear to the banker as commodities..."

"The system of public credit, i.e., of national debts, whose origin we discover in Genoa and Venice as early as the Middle Ages, took possession of Europe generally during the [17th century] ... National debt, i.e., the alienation of the state — whether despotic, constitutional or republican — marked with its stamp the capitalistic era..."

"Apart from the class of lazy annuitants thus created, and from the improvised wealth of the financiers, middlemen between the government and the nation... the national debt has given rise to... stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy..."

Banks deal in a wide range of forms of what Marx called "fictitious capital". Shares and bonds appear as forms of capital "doubling" the tangible capital they represent on paper, and then financial derivatives double the doubling. All this whirl of paper increases the opportunities for banks to draw profits from fees (an increasing part of their revenues) and from differentials between interest rates here and interest rates there.

The more "financialised" capitalism becomes, the more surplus value is swirled round the financial world, and the bigger the cut of surplus value taken by banks and other financial operators. The share of total UK profits taken by financial sector firms increased from about one per cent in the 1950s and 1960s to around 15 per cent in the years 2008 to 2010; in the USA, the financial sector's share is 30% or more.

A public utility managing accounts and payments could also organise the supply of credit, allocating it according to socially-decided goals. Banks as they are now do not do that: mostly, they siphon off revenue as intermediaries in the flows of credit.

Some of what they do is just gambling, but gambling with a twist. If they win, they pocket the gains; if they lose, the taxpayer bails them out.

The British government laid out £1100 billion in cash, loans, and guarantees to save the banks in 2008. And since then the New Economics Foundation estimates that in Britain QE and similar policies have subsidised bankers by over £30 billion a year, by the Bank of England essentially lending them money for free (bit.ly/nef-qe).

The financiers can extract these gains because they are the most centralised, compact, well-connected section of the capitalist class.

Pay still hasn't caught up with inflation

By Rhodri Evans

According to the Tories, pay is now, at last, inching ahead of inflation again.

Probably not even that is true, on average. Analysis by the Resolution Foundation found that the median (middling) increase in real pay (pay compared to price inflation) in 2014 was zero, after being negative ever since 2010.

The conservative Institute for Fiscal Studies reckons average real income, adjusted for household composition, at £461 in 2014-5 compared to £473 in 2009-10.

Official statistics show the net rate of profit for manufacturing companies in late 2013 as the highest since 2002, and for service companies the highest since 1997.

The real earnings of chief executives of the top 100 companies have gone up 26% since 2010, or by £700,000 a year on average.

University bosses' packages have risen recently to an average of £260,000, and some get more than £400,000 a year.

Meanwhile, between 2008 and 2014, consumption per head of basics (food, fuel, etc.) went down 3.8%. In other recent economic downturns in relatively-rich Britain, it went down much less — people cut back mostly on less-basic spending — and recovered quickly.

The luxury-goods trade of firms like LVMH and Burberry

sagged in the first gales of the 2008 crisis, but has recovered nicely since.

Despite that, the IFS reckons that overall, changes in real incomes between 2007-8 and 2014-5 look similar across most of the income distribution. In other words, inequality has not risen overall.

That result seems to come from two factors. As is typical in the first fevers of any capitalist crisis, the very richest did lose more, proportionately, at first, since they had further to fall. Some of them lost fortunes. A swathe of high-paid jobs disappeared. The rest of us, as long as we still had jobs, suffered more, but showed a lower percentage fall. Until the Tory-led government took office in mid-2010, benefits rose a bit more than pay, helping the worse-off.

Also, the modestly well-off, as distinct from the top bosses, have had their pay frozen about as much as everyone else's — and the very top incomes often elude statistical summaries.

Incomes have been squeezed more in London and the South East, where they were on average higher, than in poorer areas.

There is no doubt, however, about some other inequitable changes.

If pensioners are excluded, then the impact of tax and benefit changes has been as follows:

- The top ten per cent of income earners have lost around

4% through changes in tax bands, national insurance and pension relief rules.

- Of working-age families, the poorest 10% lost the most — 6% of their income. All households with children have lost out but those in the bottom half of incomes have lost most — between 3% and 6%.

- Households without children who do not receive out-of-work or in-work benefits have gained a little.

- Disabled people have lost out most.

The young have lost out much more than older people. The IFS's calculated medians show, between 2007-8 and 2014-5, an increase of 1.8% for over-60s and a drop of 7.6% for people aged 22-30. Other calculations show even bigger losses for young workers. Older people vote more than younger people do, so the Tories are more inhibited about cuts which hit older people.

This blocks social mobility, too — the availability of paths for individuals to move from poor backgrounds to become well-off, within an unequal structure — since it means that the 22-30 year olds who get (even modest) economic help from their families will be able to pay for housing where jobs are available, take up internships, and so on, and crowd out the young people with no help.

Oddly, on Resolution Foundation figures, men's median real pay has fallen more in 2009 to 2014, 10.7%, than women's, 7.4%.

Cleaners ballot over pay offer

Pat Hutton, GMB rep at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where workers have been on strike to win the same terms and conditions as in-house workers, spoke to *Solidarity*.

Since our last strikes at Christmas, GMB has been going round hospitals where they recruited scabs — in Liverpool, Coventry, Westminster, Chelsea, Kingston — organising to stop it.

A lot of the scabs were casuals and didn't know what was going on. With the help of GMB in those places we put a stop to it.

Here at QEH we've been pushing on with recruiting new members — we have over 250 now — and geeing people up.

We had a plan for the whole week of strikes this week. Picket lines 6am to 6pm Monday. A demonstration in Woolwich Tuesday. Lobbying Parliament Wednesday, and a protest at the ISS head office in Woking on Thursday, before more picketing Friday.

Then last Wednesday ISS contacted our regional secretary asking for urgent talks on the Thursday, and we got an offer, so we suspended the strikes.

What they offered will take Band 1, which is porters, domestics and ward hostesses, up from £7.10 to £7.72. Band 2, security and switchboard workers, up from £7.32 to £9.10. Before they were offering Band 1 21p and Band 2 nothing. Next April Band 1 should get another 14p on top.

We didn't get the increase in unsocial hours pay we were demanding, and we didn't get London weighting for duty managers like me. But overall I think it's a pretty good



deal.

Over the next few weeks we'll be meeting and balloting. We're recommending a yes vote.

The GMB is stronger at QEH now. ISS know that we are more organised, and can't go round bullying us any more. Members have got a feeling of solidarity, after the experience of coming out together, particular since we've won concessions.

I want to say that we couldn't have done this without our GMB full-timer, who has been great. I've been in the union 18 years, and she's pretty unusual. I thought it might be because she's a new generation, but actually she's more old school. This is trade unionism where workers don't mess around, like the miners.

If workers at Lewisham hospital, which is the other side of our trust, want a similar campaign, we can help and would be happy to. We're in touch with Unite, which is stronger over there.

Beyond that what I'd like to see is a national campaign from the GMB and the other unions to bring all NHS workers and services back in house, across the country.

National Gallery strikes continue

By Charlotte Zalens

Staff at the National Gallery started their next seven days of strikes on 14-15 March.

The strikes will continue between the 24-28 March in an ongoing dispute over the outsourcing of 400 gallery assistant jobs to security firm CIS. When given an exhibition to run as a trial last year, CIS, removed gallery assistants chairs and intimidated staff.

CIS has contracts in many industries, but not art galleries. Staff fear they could be transferred to other workplaces or have their terms and conditions undermined by CIS employing any new staff on worse conditions.

In February, union PCS submitted formal proposals



to National Gallery director Nicholas Penny and chair of trustees Mark Getty for changes to rotas and flexible working that would avoid the planned sell-off of all the gallery's visitor services. PCS says gallery bosses have refused to allow their proposal to form part of ongoing negotiations.

PCS rep at the gallery,

Candy Udwin, was suspended on the eve of the first strike and has not yet been reinstated.

On Saturday 14 March strikers and supporters took part in a conference about "the future of arts and culture", as well as organising direct action outside the gallery.

Strikers are asking for support:

- Sign the petition:
- Sign the petition for Candy's reinstatement
- Join picket lines between 24-28 March from 7am
- Ask your MP to support Early Day Motions 300 and 796
- More information: bit.ly/Nat-Gal

Essex FBU extend strike to nine days

By Gemma Short

999 fire control operators in Essex have extended their strike to nine days.

Originally a 72 hour strike over an imposed radically different shift system the strike was extended to eight days before another day was announced on 11 March. The strike will now finish at 7am on 19 March.

The operators' union, the FBU, says the new shift pat-



tern will see many being forced to work 12 hour long shifts resulting many workers with caring responsibilities in the majority women workforce being forced to leave their job or reduce their hours.

Emma Turnidge, an Essex control operator and FBU rep, said the extension demonstrated the strength of feeling between members: "Control operators in Essex cannot accept the new shift patterns which have forced

a number of professionals out of work, and led to many of us having to reduce our hours or job share.

"No one here wants to strike, but the local fire service have left us no option. We will lose more than a week's wages but the working shift pattern is untenable and we are united in our stand against it."

Messages of support to: essexfbu@live.co.uk

Defend all jobs on the tube

Reps and activists from Tube union RMT met on 16 March to discuss the next steps in the union's fightback against the effects of London Underground's plan for £4.2 billion austerity cuts.

Supporters of the *Tubeworker* bulletin argued for strikes to be reinstated as soon as possible, but some reps and officials were more cautious.

Anger amongst many Tube workers is running high at the moment, with proposed new rosters for

station staff set to wreck work/life balance. An insulting 0.5% pay offer from the company has added to discontent.

RMT has a live ballot mandate in its "Every Job Matters" dispute, having struck twice in 2014 and imposed overtime bans throughout last year, most recently in September-October. To strike over pay, the union would have to re-ballet.

Tubeworker argues that the "Every Job Matters" cam-

paign must be seen as a fight against the effects of the cuts on jobs in all grades, rather than a narrower campaign against station staffing cuts, or against roster changes.

Re-emphasising the initial all-grades focus of the dispute, and naming strikes as soon as possible, is the only way to reinvigorate the campaign.

Tubeworker blog: bit.ly/tubeworker

No academies in Lewisham

After their successful strike against academisation at four schools in Lewisham, Lewisham NUT is organising a demonstration on Saturday 21 March.

The demonstration meets at 12 noon at the clock tower on Lewisham High Street

and will march to Hilly Fields school, one of those faced with academisation.

Activists have also launched a new petition calling for a parental ballot on whether Prendergast Federation schools (three of the four schools

facing academisation) should convert to academy status.

Sign the petition: chn.ge/1BPKfj7
• Join Workers' Liberty members on the march, meet 11am at Lewisham DLR



Unite members at drinks maker Refresco Gerber have been on strike over an attempt to worsen terms and conditions. Find out more — bit.ly/drinks-strike

80% jobs to be outsourced

Unison is balloting local government members in the London borough of Barnet over plans to outsource up to 80% of jobs.

On the 3 March Barnet council approved a plan to explore "other options" for delivering council services including: Libraries, Adult and Communities services, Children's centres, Street Scene services and Education, Skills and School meals service.

Unison claims this will be up to 80% of jobs being outsourced as Barnet Council has rejected the "in-house" option in 11 out of 12 commissioning bids in the last three years.

The strike ballot will run from 18 March to 8 April.



Bangladesh left slams Islamist murder

Badrul Alam from the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) spoke to Solidarity about the murder on the streets of Dhaka of the US writer of Bangladeshi background, Avijit Roy.

It is clear that Roy was killed by fundamentalists because there were similar cases in 2004, when a professor from Dhaka University, Humayun Azad, was murdered.

Extremist groups admitted killing Azad, because they held him to be an atheist.

Roy came from a rationalist family. His father was a teacher of physics at Dhaka university; it was a family tradition to be scientific-minded.

Roy was considered by the extremists to be an atheist because on his blog he posted articles about atheism. Extremist groups followed his blog and targeted him for a long time.

People who are rationalists and free thinkers attend book fairs in Bangladesh. The extremists target these book fair as well.

Secular people think that Roy should have had a right to write anything and publish any books he likes, and should not have been treated like this. As a human being, he has a life to lead, whether he is an atheist or religious-minded or whatever. What the extremists did is completely illegal and it is an expression of their extremist mentality.

Students at Dhaka Uni-

versity, where the incident took place, protested on the streets.

There are some people who think that it is not rational to prod religious-minded people. Better, they think, to approach the matter more carefully. There are a lot of fundamentalist groups in the country who can block radical progress. There is only a small minority which is atheist. So, better to go slow.

On the other hand many people in the country are criticising the religious fundamentalist group for their actions. On the whole it is against the fundamentalists.

Things are moving for the free thinkers in this country, but progress is very slow. Although there is a strong secular culture in

Bangladesh, there are millions in the rural areas who are religious-minded. They love religion. But they are not fundamentalist-minded.

Fanatics are few in number. But they are on the rise because of promotional efforts, such as madrasa education or mosque education. The increase in fundamentalist attitudes in this country is alarming.

The CPB-ML are against the murder. Atheists should not be killed by extremists. They have a right to live and express their opinions. After this incident we strongly criticised religious extremists.

We also asked the government to take action against the murderers. We didn't get much hostility.

Reverse, not slow, the cuts!

By Gerry Bates

Solidarity went to press before George Osborne's pre-election Budget on 18 March.

His autumn statement on 3 December projected further social cuts estimated by the conservative Institute for Fiscal Studies to total £55 billion over the next five years, more than the £35 billion slashed since 2010. Osborne may ease that target from the impossible to the horrific.

Osborne has already said he wants £12 billion further welfare cuts.

He has already trailed a plan (not as a Budget measure, but as an election promise) to exempt many well-off people from inheritance tax.

In the Budget he will give five million better-off pensioners the right to cash in their pension funds. He will announce plans to cut business rates, and probably an increase in the threshold at which income tax becomes payable.

So far Labour's leaders are only promising slower, milder cuts. The unions should use their clout in the Labour Party to demand taxes on the rich and reversal of cuts.

Political change in Israel?

By Rosalind Robson

As we go to press Israel's current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his party Likud, are neck-and-neck with the opposition in exit polls from Israel's 17 March election.

The election was turned into a dramatic national referendum on the future of Israel when Netanyahu ruled out the establishment of a Palestinian state, saying: "I think that anyone who moves to establish a Palestinian state and evacuate territory gives territory away to radical Islamist attacks against Israel." He also promised to build more settlements in occupied east Jerusalem.

The US will not be happy with Netanyahu's stance, but if he wins the election, the US, as in the last few years, is unlikely to challenge him decisively.

An alternative coalition government would be built around the Zionist Union, formed two months ago from a merger between the Labor party and former peace negotiator Tzipi

Livni's Hatnua party. Labor's Isaac Herzog has campaigned on social and economic issues, but the Zionist Union are far from being left.

Nonetheless the election has shifted political debate in Israel. On 7 March tens of thousands attended an anti-Netanyahu rally, under the banner "Israel wants a Change". A speech by spokesperson for the movement, Meir Dagan, gives a flavour of the mood — of war weariness, general social dissatisfaction and commitment to "two states".

"For an entire summer Israel's civilians huddled in air raid shelters under thousands of rockets, while the soldiers suffered heavy losses. And it ended with nil results — zero deterrence, zero political achievement.

"I do not want to get to a binational state. I do not want an Apartheid state. I do not want to rule over three million Arabs.

"I do not want us to remain hostages to fear, despair and stagnation. I think it is time to wake up."

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