



# Put workers first! Global workers' solidarity!

On the "Put People First" demonstration Workers' Liberty is backing the "Internationalist, Anti-Capitalist, and Feminist" contingent sponsored by groups including Feminist Fightback and No Sweat.

Everywhere on the demonstration we will be arguing for it to be used to rally workers for battle against the bankers and the bosses responsible for the crisis and job cuts, rather than for vague appeals to people in general to plead with the G20 governments for gentler policies.

We will also be arguing for workers' unity in the crisis, across borders, and across differences of origin and skin colour. In a global crisis, to let the bosses set one group of workers against another is poison.

The policy platform for "Put People First" demands a "new system that seeks to make the economy work for people and the planet".

The old system, the system we live under, is capitalism. It "works for" the private profits of the owners of business and finance, not for "people and the planet". Partial reforms can be imposed on it by struggle — keeping or making public services public, rather than profit-driven, for example — but within the system those can never be more than precarious (though important) exceptions.

The capitalist drive for profits, not "failed policies", creates exploitation, poverty and ecological disaster. Now capitalist governments are attempting to manage the crisis by bailing out the banks at the expense of workers. The outcome depends on struggle between one set of people — the capitalist class and its supporters — and another set of people, the working class.

The G20 leaders will never "put people first"! A system that "puts people first" can only be socialism — running the economy under public ownership, for the common good, under workers' control — and it can be won only by "putting workers first", that is, by mobilising workers to assert their own class interests (those of the great majority) against those of the profiteers, rather than seeking an imaginary cross-class consensus. Yet the official "Put People First" platform does not even mention the working class.

The recent walk outs in the engineering construction industry, the Dundee factory occupied by its workers when the bosses closed it, and the approaching strikes for pay and against job losses

in the rail industry, show the way to fight back.

France has seen two general strikes in the last two months. Ireland has a general strike on 30 March. The 28 March demonstration should be used to help rally workers in Britain for that sort of fightback.

Part of the aim of the governments at this G20 summit is to head off a collapse of globalisation into protectionism. Each capitalist government wants every other capitalist government to keep its borders open for capital and trade flows. But already 17 of the G20 governments have broken the pledge they made at the previous G20 meeting, last November, not to introduce any new protectionist measures within six months.

There will be pressure in the labour movement, too, for protectionist and nationalist response to the crisis. These are even more destructive for the working class than for capitalism. They can only serve to set workers against another — and, in today's economy, to do that within every large workplace and city as well as across borders — rather than uniting us against the ruling class.

In the recent engineering construction industry walk-outs, workers rightly took action — illegal, mass direct action, successfully breaking the anti-union laws — to defend jobs and union agreements. But the dispute also saw workers displaying placards with nationalist slogans — "British jobs for British workers", "British workers first". Even after the engineering construction strikers and demonstrators had mostly dropped those slogans, Amicus-Unite union leader Derek Simpson posed for a publicity picture for the right-wing, migrant-bashing rag the Daily Star, with a Daily Star placard reading "British jobs for British workers".



Such nationalism can only divide the working class, strengthen the bosses and aid the growth of the far right. Workers' Liberty appeals to trade-union activists to speak up for an internationalist response to the current crisis by endorsing our appeal for a fight for jobs for all workers: [www.workersliberty.org/j4aw](http://www.workersliberty.org/j4aw)

Instead of the demand for public ownership and democratic control of the banks and financial sector, the Put People First platform demands a bit more capitalist regulation. The platform does not call for a public takeover under workers' control of enterprises declaring mass job cuts, and public ownership and democratic control of all public services and utilities (including Royal Mail); instead it advocates a bit more investment in public services and a few inadequate measures to protect the environment. Demands such as cutting the working week without loss of pay to create jobs are not included.

The "Put People First" proposals are all put as pleas to the Brown government and its like to be a bit nicer, rather than rallying calls for rank and file action. The big unions involved in "Put People First" and still affiliated to the Labour Party should use that affiliation to rally pressure on the government — demanding the 2009 Labour Party conference restore the right for unions and local Labour Parties to put current political motions to conference, and demanding the Labour government carries out the conference decisions. But the Labour Party National Policy Forum in Bristol recently gave no indication of the unions doing that.

The unions should speak out politically, and mobilise industrially — to demand decent jobs, homes and services for everyone and win a workers' government capable of making such demands a reality. Read, and discuss in your union branch, our proposals for how to make that happen: [www.workersliberty.org/workersplan](http://www.workersliberty.org/workersplan).

#### **INTERNATIONALIST, ANTI-CAPITALIST, AND FEMINIST CONTINGENT**

Meet at the corner of Blackfriars Bridge and Victoria Embankment at 11.30am.  
People of all genders welcome.  
Supported by Feminist Fightback and No Sweat.

#### **COME TO THE FEMINIST FIGHTBACK STRATEGY DAY**

Sunday 29th March, 11.30pm-5pm, The Arbour Community Centre, 100 Shandy St., (nearest tube Stepney Green)

For more info email:  
[feministfightback@googlemail.com](mailto:feministfightback@googlemail.com)

#### **PICKET SUBWAY!**

Join a picket of Subway in London on 4th April in solidarity with Natalia Szymanska, a migrant worker employed by a Subway in Belfast, who was sacked on highly dubious grounds after becoming pregnant. Meet 9.30 at 358 Oxford St for a rolling picket of 3 Subways and then go along to the No Sweat picket of Primark. Open to all genders.

#### **SPEAK OUT**

Workers in the sex industry and their allies are speaking out against the Policing and Crime Bill on Tuesday 31 March at 2pm at the Eros Fountain, Piccadilly Circus. The Bill will make it less, not more, safe for sex workers, whether strippers, escorts, working girls, maids or models. It is crucial that the current climate of fear, raids, deportation and arrests be met with solidarity and a demand for justice. It is time to make sure our voices are heard.

This Speak Out has been initiated by x:talk. To add your name to the Speak Out please email: [xtalk.classes@gmail.com](mailto:xtalk.classes@gmail.com)

#### **INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY ACTIVISM**

Bored of the official speeches? Come and find out about ongoing international solidarity activism. Meet underneath Marble Arch from 3pm onwards. From garment workers struggles in Dhaka to fast food workers in Belfast, No Sweat are organising against the bosses.

#### **PRIMARK ACTION**

Primark is one of the worst exploiters of sweatshop labour on the high street. They don't treat their own workers very well either. Join the No Sweat FASHION PARADE OF SHAME. (Provisionally) 10:30am Saturday 4 April outside Primark on Oxford Street (nearest tube Bond Street). Check out [www.nosweat.org.uk](http://www.nosweat.org.uk)

**Workers' Liberty. P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA, 020 7207 3997. 28 March 2009.**