On Tuesday 12 January junior doctors across England and Wales struck in defence of their contracts. Junior doctors have huge support from the public. Polls on the strike day showed 66% of the public support the strikes. Doctors argue that this is a fight to save the NHS, and it is being seen that way by the public.

Aya, a GP trainee from London, told Solidarity that she was on strike because, working in a poor area, she has seen directly how “all of the welfare cuts have really affected people’s health.”

Labour: call a national demonstration for NHS

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Housing bill: Fight to save social housing!

By Jim Fraser

With the Housing Bill, and various associated ancillary legislation, the Tories have launched an all-out offensive to destroy social housing, especially council housing, once and for all.

There are a number of provisions put forward including the ending of security of tenure and the ruling that all council tenants must submit to a review of their tenancy every two to five years. The Tories do not specify how long their housing status is reviewed, but George Osborne and several senior cabinet ministers have given every indication they “will be required” to move into private rented accommodation.

Indeed Osborne and several senior Tories have talked privately of “forcing” tenants into the private sector.

In the House of Commons on Tuesday 12 January Tories even voted against an amendment to the Bill which would have required landlords to make their housing safe.

Local authorities will be compelled to sell off all their “high value” housing as soon as it becomes available. All new council housing currently being built must be immediately sold off on completion. As soon as tenants move from any council property, that property must then also be sold off. This is supposedly to subsidise the sale of housing association housing, but there is a total disconnect between the two. The real reasons are to reduce council housing stock and to enable private landlords to more easily acquire that stock.

George Osborne has talked repeatedly of the unfairness of “those who can well afford it” paying less rent than those in private housing. The Tories are introducing the “pay to stay” tax which means anyone, or any family, with a combined income of £40,000 or more (£20,000 outside London) will have to pay the local market rent. This will mean massive rent increases for huge numbers of people. In some parts of London the increase could be £200-600 a week.

All of the money raised will go to the government, none to the local authority.

Great fanfare has been given to the new “starter homes” programme. These will be built by private developers and sold at 80% market prices. In London that means £400,000 to £900,000 each, which puts them beyond the pocket not only of the low waged but also of those on “average income”. Even outside London they will not exactly be “affordable” to most people.

The Tories have created the greatest housing crisis since 1945. This will make it dramatically worse and will be a disaster for millions of people. Housing is the most crucial issue of the moment.

If the Labour and trade union movement and the tenants movement unite against this vicious bill, the Tories can be defeated.

Nursing students defend bursaries

Danielle, a student nurse at Kings College London, spoke to Solidarity about the campaign to stop the government scrapping bursaries for nursing students

How did the campaign get started?

I was in the library one day and found myself getting annoyed about the bursary cuts, and the wider picture of the NHS — I was really furious. I started an event for a protest and 300 people said they were coming within an hour. It escalated from there. I needed some help, so I put out a message for a meeting in the uni, and we set up a committee. We’ve set up a national committee from there. So that’s how it started — being angry!

What do you think about what is happening to the NHS?

I think it’s really bad — look at what they’ve done to the doctors, I find that really sad. They’re pushing the NHS to destruction.

Equality in July: I know I’m coming in at the worst possible time — the government aren’t going to stop.

I did a six week placement in A&E before Christmas. I’d do nights, get no breaks, I’d watch nurses doing no breaks because of all the A&E closures in West London, it’s jam-packed. It’s horrible. All healthcare professionals come into this to help people, and they’re treated appallingly.

What’s been the response so far?

It’s been incredible! People are really getting behind us. We had 5,000 people on our demonstration on 9 January. It wasn’t just students; there were qualified staff, doctors. We’ve been leafleting in hospitals in London. The wider public has been great. I’ll stop in a shop and tell people what’s been going on. Student nurses work so hard, and everyone is behind us.

We’re going to do a one hour walkout on the 10 February. They’re going to have a consultation in parliament — they’re still going to do it, of course — but we need to demand demos all over the UK. We need to be outside parliament making as much noise as we can.

I’ve planned a debate and I’ve asked Ben Gummer (Health Minister) if he’ll come; he’s said he’ll send someone. I’ve asked someone for the students, and then they’re coming for the nurses and midwives. If we don’t unite now and stand against this, in the bigger picture we are going to lose everything.

I think nursing students haven’t been active before for years. I think the junior doctors thing is bringing them up. They’re doing with the doctors, it fits in with the bigger picture. People are figuring out what’s going on. I think at my uni previously people thought some of us, the activists were a bit mad, but they’re coming on board now.

We’re looking at a bigger combined march on different aspects of austerity. We need to keep the pressure on. If this walkout is a success we’ll do more in the future.

Sure on. If this walkout is a success we’ll do more in the future.

Austerity. We need to keep the pressure on. They’re trying to privatise everything — they’re privatising the NHS.

What do you think about what is happening to the NHS?

I think it would be amazing. The NHS would fall apart without the nurses joining unions and taking action in parliament — they’re still being active before for years. I think previously people thought some of us, the activists were a bit mad, but they’re coming on board now.

Lambeth libraries will strike to save libraries

Lambeth Libraries staff have voted overwhelmingly for strike action to save jobs and keep all ten Lambeth libraries open.

Staff voted 98% against plans to close libraries and cut jobs. Unison will now be discussing extended strike action with the library workers in the borough. This strike vote follows a community campaign to keep the libraries open, as well as a walk out by staff in December when news circulated that books were already being taken out of one of the libraries.

Several Labour Party wards have passed motions criticising the council’s library closure programme and supporting the library staff and local community in their efforts to keep the library service open.

Stop the Saudis’ bloody war in Yemen!

By Dan Katz

The squalid Saudi-led — and Western backed — war on Yemen continues.

The Saudis are attempting to impose their own man — Abdurabbuh Mansour Hadi — on the country. Hadi has little support in Yemen and is currently in exile in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis face a movement led by Houthi militias. The Houthis are a minority strand of Shia Islam, whose heartland is in north Yemen. The Houthis have support from forces loyal to former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The Saudis fear that the Houthis are instruments of Shia Iran.

Around 3000 civilians have died since the Saudis started bombing in March 2015. In the latest outrage four died on Sunday in a Saudi rocket strike which hit a Medecins Sans Frontieres run hospital.

Despite their formidable military machine Saudi Arabia has been unable to defeat the Houthis, or even remove them from the capital, Sanaa.

The war and naval blockade of Yemen mean that over 20 million Yemen people — or over 80% of the population — now need food and other aid. Two million, including 1.3 million children, are considered “acutely malnourished”.

The UK government is complicit in this war by providing immense support to the Saudis.

The Houthis have been accused by Human Rights Watch of political violence against opponents — particularly an Islamist Sunni political movement, Islah — in Sanaa.

Sanaa. Islah has received Saudi money in the past. This conflict is an aspect of the hardening sectarian divisions across the Middle East.

The UK should stop providing political and military support for the Saudi regime. The UK government must immediately end arms sales to the Saudis.
**Solidarity with refugees! Open the borders!**

By Vicki Morris

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported shortly before Christmas that more than one million migrants had made their way into the European Union, Germany in particular, in 2015.

The overwhelming majority of these migrants made risky sea crossings, mainly from Turkey to Greece. Nearly 4,000 drowned.

The EU’s statistical office Eurostat reported that 942,400 people have claimed asylum. The number of migrants in 2014 was a quarter of this figure.

The figures sound high — from a certain vantage point, that of UKIP perhaps, who don’t want any more migrants; or from the point of view of a bourgeois politician anxious about public opinion turned hostile to the migrants by the right-wing media. But from the viewpoint of the refugees themselves the statistics are irrelevant: these are individuals and families fleeing war, hunger, and political persecution, in countries across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. They are right to seek refuge and asylum. And for the labour movement and socialists in the West, it should be irrelevant too, except inasmuch as they must inspire us to respond more urgently to the needs of our fellow humans.

The population of the EU is 503 million, and its member states together can easily cope with this influx of people — if they have the will. The EU is a large enough area to take many times more than the number arriving; there is not a problem of Europe being overcrowded. The EU is rich enough to settle the incomers: depending on the measure used, it is the largest or second largest economy in the world, with a GDP in 2014 of around £9.5 trillion, or £20,500 per person. The rich should pay to rebuild our public services so that everyone, settled or migrant, can have a decent life. Moreover, migrants, who are generally younger than the settled population, contribute to the economy. The Tories won’t readily admit it, but they were able to announce a slightly less austere spending review than feared in November 2015 because of the boost to the economy from... increased immigration.

We should argue that EU governments have a duty to provide the resources to cope with this crisis.

Yet an EU summit in Brussels in December hardened their hearts to the need for humanitarian help and could only agree to “regain control over their external frontier through stricter checks and other border management actions next year” (Independent). After making some humane gestures throughout the summer and autumn, their emphasis now is on keeping people out. For example, on 11 January Sweden reintroduced border checks for people arriving from Denmark, sandwiched between Germany and Sweden. Denmark is responding by starting to check people entering Denmark from Germany. The response of the EU governments to the refugee crisis now threatens freedom of movement.

The weather has been unusually mild so far this winter across much of Europe, but the snows are falling now in the Balkans which most of the refugees pass through on their way to Northern and Western Europe.

Conditions at the Calais migrant camp dubbed the Jungle are dire. The numbers there have swelled, and now 6,000 people, including hundreds of unaccompanied children, are living in tents in insanitary conditions. Relations with the French police have deteriorated as their attempts to slow down lorries across the Channel become more frenzied and desperate. Migrants regularly die attempting this journey: just before the New Year, 15-year-old Masud from Afghanistan died in a lorry — he was trying to reach his sister in the UK, where he would have been able to make an asylum claim. Farmer gangs are attacking the camp.

The days of the Jungle may be numbered, as the French authorities want to reduce it to a settlement for 2000, and disperse the remainder of the migrants, but they are not offering them the decent life they need instead.

Calais Migrant Solidarity reported on 11 January 2016: “In Dunkerque, MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres) had planned to make a better camp. They were stopped by the French government who required the camp to be closed; MSF refused to build a closed camp. Negotiations are pending but the message is clear.”

Labour’s Shadow human rights minister Andy Slaughter visited the Jungle at the start of January. He said: “This is not in truth a refugee camp, so much does it lack the basics of life.”

“It is a stain on the French state, but it is not a problem of which we can wash our hands.”

“Our Government has contributed nothing but the money to build a razor-wire fence between the camp and the Eurotunnel entrance. That is to their shame.”

Socialists have a duty to demand an open border and feed the refugees, and offer them a decent and safe future.


**Syria: token and real wars**

By Simon Nelson

At the start of December David Cameron called Labour MPs who were voting against British bombing in Syria “a bunch of terrorist sympathisers” who should have had a “moral duty” to bomb.

“Mostly Assad has not regained lost terrain. His regime is brutal, widely discredited, and now naked sectarian. A palace coup to replace Assad by another leader from the Ba’ath party itself is possible, but as yet there are no alternative leaders that the US or even Russia could agree to back.”
Be bold, change opinion

By Gemma Short

As Clive Lewis says (Solidarity 388) there are many definitions of socialism. That makes it all the more important for socialists to debate ideas. Lewis says a shift from austerity and neoliberal capitalism to (or a return to) welfare-state capitalism would be a gain for the working class. Indeed, taxing the rich, free education, a NHS, well-funded schools, social housing, higher wages, public services would be real and important improvements, for the working class as opposed to the Tories’ dark, dystopian future.

In either of these things can only be won, or re-won, as a result of class struggle, by workers fighting against capitalism. In fact some were concessions by the capitalists attempting to prevent workers struggles against capitalism developing further. Workers’ interests are fundamentally incompatible with capitalism, which is a system that exploits the working class to maintain it.

Workers’ interests are fundamentally in contradiction with those of their bosses. Sometimes the balance of forces in that battle is tipped in our favour when workers win higher wages or increased taxation to fund public services. Even the much-lauded 1945 Labour government did not erase our inherent conflict with the bosses. As well as important advances in the working class, that government also kept anti-trade union laws in place, imposed a wage freeze, kept private managers in place in nationalised industries. The guiding principle remained capitalist profit.

We do not have to look far to see evidence of what lengths capitalists will go to defend the principle of profit against even a mildly reformist government. The way Corbyn is treated by the press is not simply a case of journalists being mean. British army generals openly considered a coup against the not-at-all-left-wing Wilson government; in 1975 the Queensland Government in Australia deposed a reforming Labour prime minister. You may wish to be a pragmatist, as Lewis is, to have an honest assessment of public opinion and recognise that there are not millions of workers on the streets ready to take over their workplaces and run them for themselves. However to take that as a measure of what is possible (and indeed right) is to forget that public opinion has been different at different points in history, and misunderstands how people’s ideas are formed. Ideas can be changed, but won’t change without agitators who argue for a different world and a different way of looking at the world. In the run up to the general election polls indicated a big majority of people thought budget deficits needed to be reduced, and had right-wing views of benefits, migrants and other issues.

The Socialist Party returns?

By Phil Grimm

The Socialist Party is a bit of a pickle. In 1991, most of what had been the Militant tendency left the Labour Party, reconstituting itself firstly as Militant Labour and then as the Socialist Party (SP). And to justify their exit, they argued that the party had changed completely, transforming from what Lenin called a “bourgeois workers’ party” (which socialists should support) into a straightforward “bourgeois party.”

This idea of Labour’s irretrievable degeneration has functioned as something like an origin myth for the SP, serving not only to explain past history, but also to justify present practice. It used this perspective as a way of marking it out as different from other socialist groups, including Workers’ Liberty. Don’t waste your time pushing for socialist politics in Labour, they argued. Come and build the new workers’ party.

Jeremy Corbyn’s election as Labour leader therefore must be really awkward for them. For years, opposition to austerity and anger at social injustice has been bubbling away in British society, but it never quite broke through into party politics. Now it has, spectacularly, and in the one place that the SP has spent decades telling people it wouldn’t. Consequently, the SP’s attitude to the Corbyn Labour Party has been contradictory. Their newspaper has welcomed the creation of Momentum, and in many areas SP members have attended Momentum meetings.

In my own area much of what the SP has done in the Momentum group has been constructive. But because they can’t bring themselves to see that Labour itself, no matter how much the SP has done in the Momentum group has been constructive. But because they can’t bring themselves to see that Labour itself, no matter how much they hate it, it can’t be reformed.

The Socialist Party argues against unions like the RMT re-affiliating to the Labour Party. They say the Corbyn leadership might be toppled by the right, and therefore the unions shouldn’t commit themselves to a party might revert to Blairism.

But the unions abstaining from internal Labour Party struggles makes the victory of the right more likely! The SP line is like refusing to help a friend in a fistfight on the grounds that he might lose, but wishing him well from the sidelines. However there are indications that the SP is quietly preparing the ground for a return to Labour. We know that at least some SP members have taken out membership cards. There is muffled talk of “investigatory work.” The Socialist Party has already made attempts to salvage the old “Labour is dead” theory from its disgrace by claiming that Corbyn’s Labour represents “in effect, the formation of a new party.”

There is no shame in having been wrong, so long as the error is honestly accounted for and rectified. If the Socialist Party has now really come up with the idea that perhaps the Labour Party has some life in it, then good. But it should carry out Labour work properly, and not halfheartedly, and stop muddying the political water with bizarre, confused positions designed to cover up their own mistakes.
Call a demonstration to defend the NHS!

Labour and the TUC should call a big demonstration for reinstatement of the NHS as an adequately-funded public service, and to support the junior doctors and the student nurses.

The whole of the labour movement, including trade unionists who have industrial needs just because of their strategic place in the capitalist economy, should mobilise for our health, for our future, for a society which cares.

The junior doctors are right to strike, and the student nurses are right to demonstrate and to discuss planning walk-outs. The damage done to health care by their strikes is tiny compared to the damage that would be done by them complying with Tory plans.

Better than a strike by junior doctors alone would be strikes and demonstrations across the whole working class, to win quickly and decisively.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, other workers struck several times in support of health workers. Read this for example.

BBC News, 16 June 1983: "As South Wales coalfield has come to a standstill after about 24,000 miners went on strike in support of health service workers, who are demanding a 12% pay rise.... More than 15,000 people marched through the streets of Cardiff, in the biggest demonstration of support for the miners seen so far.

"Some of the striking miners joined health workers on picket lines outside Welsh hospitals, which were reduced to emergency cover only. In Cardiff hospital pickets were backed up by members of the National Union of Seamen.

"Other unions also declared their support for the health service workers' pay claim. Demonstrators were joined by building workers, local authority workers, civil servants and delegates from the gas, electricity and water industries".

The mobilisation then was not enough to defeat Thatcher, but it was enough to limit Thatcher's damage to the NHS. After the Tories felt forced to dump Thatcher in 1990, they also felt forced to raise NHS spending sharply in the 1990s.

The Tories' anti-union laws of the 1980s defined working-class solidarity of that sort as a criminal act. Scared by those laws, the British Medical Association forced Dr Yannis Gourtsoyannis from the BMA junior doctors' committee to retract after he published an appeal for trade unionists to show support on the 12 January picket lines. NHS employers threatened the BMA with legal action.

The Tory Sunday Times damned all public solidarity with the junior doctors. Trying to smear solidarity as something "ordered" and "instructed", it screedeed on 10 January: "Jeremy Corbyn's hard-left supporters have been ordered on to hospital picket lines in support of a nationwide strike by junior doctors this week... Momentum, the organisation founded out of Corbyn's Labour leadership campaign, has instructed activists to turn out alongside the medics on Tuesday. "Last night, the Labour leader's spokesman failed to condemn the call and said that "corporations will feel strongly about backing the strikers".

For the Sunday Times, all human solidarity, any sentiment other than "I'm out to grab what I can in the bank" is "Leftist nonsense". For the Sunday Times, people who will help others just deserves to be "trampled", is damnable.

We must not let this government, made up of people who feel like the Sunday Times and share the same class interests as the media billionaires, destroy the NHS.

Together, we can show our strength with a big national demonstration, supplemented and built up to by local mobilisations to support every picket line and protest.

The stakes are high

By Pete Campbell

Junior doctors have taken a courageous step.

Attempted bullying by the media, government and certain sections of hospital management has been convincingly fought off. Industrial action has been a huge success.

I never thought I would be part of a strike. Industrial action is not just about a day away from work. It is a collective agreement by the workers that their conditions are so bad that they must break the contract and refuse to work.

For junior doctors this is an incredibly big deal. Yet the stakes are higher still, and this is why our action has been so successful. If doctors are forced to work unsafe shifts above and beyond the staggering amount of work they already provide this will become the new normal.

Overstretched and overworked nurses and allied healthcare professionals will quickly be made to follow suit. An NHS already at breaking point will snap.

The potential ramifications for victory in this dispute go much further. Right to the heart of the NHS and the government's attempts to break it.

Dr Ruth Watson told Solidarity that "the government's proposal to staff hospitals at weekends to the ends of the week makes no clinical sense as the biggest bed blockers, elderly people, could not be discharged to social services at weekends".

Many cars beeping support and not one patient or relative of a patient was heard. The hospital complained about the strike. Momentum supporters and members of Broxtowe Labour Party visited. Dr Roma Patel, who helped organise the rallies, thanked Solidarity for its support.

At Trafford General Hospital, Manchester, doctors were on the picket line, and anyone who makes mistakes", highlighting how increasing doctors' already long working hours is going to harm patient safety.
Michel Husson, a French Marxist economist and author of books including *Un pur capitalisme*, analyses the growing elements of a new crisis in a world economy only patchily recovered from the crash of 2008.

**By Michel Husson**

World growth is slowing, mainly in the emerging economies with the exception of India.

This tendency is self-reinforcing, with a fall in prices of raw materials, and it is being transmitted to the advanced countries. International trade is also slowing down, at the same rate as world GDP, as if productive globalisation had reached a ceiling.

In the “financial sphere”, quantitative easing is feeding stock-market bubbles rather than productive investment, which is stagnating. And the mere prospect — held back so far — of a renewed rise in Fed interest rates hangs like the sword of Damocles and is destabilising the currencies and markets of many countries. In short, “Uncertainty, Complex Forces Weigh on Global Growth”, to quote the IMF’s formula in its latest survey.

Quantitative easing means a central bank buying securities. In this way, the bank creates money which, injected into the economy, is supposed to kick-start it. We can even concede that this worked for a time in the USA. But this injection of money is blind and nothing guarantees that the liquidity will be used in a manner that is favourable to investment. On the contrary, it will feed speculation and provoke an increase in asset prices which will benefit only the richest and which will lead to the creation of a bubble.

Quantitative easing simultaneously leads to a reduction in interest rates. This could contribute to re-starting investment in housing and productive investment in general. A recovery in investment is in any case the key issue for an overall recovery. But that recovery has not taken place, because businesses are not investing. They restore their margins, make money, increase mergers and acquisitions, pay out dividends, but their investment is flattening.

**INTEREST RATES**

The injection of money leads to an inflation in financial asset prices, but not to inflation in prices of current goods and services.

Low interest rates and weak inflation together mean that real interest rates (discounting inflation) cannot become strongly negative. Lawrence Summers is right when he expresses a fear that “If a recession were to occur, monetary policymakers would lack the tools to respond. There is essentially no room left for [monetary] easing…”

The result is a huge accumulation of private and public debt. According to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute, this debt represents almost 200,000 billion dollars at the world level, or 286% of global GDP, up on 269% in 2007, before the crisis struck. The increase is particularly clear for state debt, but also for businesses (figure 2).

In particular, the debts of non-financial businesses in emerging economies have quadrupled between 2004 and 2014. The IMF warns: “as advanced economies normalize monetary policy, emerging markets should prepare for an increase in corporate failures and, where needed, reform corporate insolvency regimes”.

This panorama thus leads us to two scenarios which could unleash the next crisis. The first has been described by François Morin in his latest book. His point of departure is the existence of financial bubbles. The trigger element could be the failure of a systemically important bank, with a chain reaction on other big banks.

The second scenario would be an increase in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve Bank and the hardening of conditions for financing business which the IMF refers to. It would lead to a bursting of bubbles, starting with the emerging economies, with repercussions for the rest of global finance.

**FICTITIOUS CAPITAL**

The period preceding the crisis was characterised by an enormous accumulation of fictitious capital, in other words, of drawing rights on future surplus value to be produced by the exploitation of wage labour.

For capitalism to start anew on a healthy basis, it would have been necessary to destroy this fictitious capital (and surely also a part of the productive capital). There have been losses, but around the world policies were guided by an essential principle: preserve the fictitious capital and the drawing rights that it represents. That was done in two ways: on the one hand, by converting private debts into public debts and, through austerity measures, drawing on surplus value; on the other hand, by massive injections of liquidity. In the first instance, we can say that capitalism respected the law of value, because it tried to adjust the ratio of fictitious capital/surplus value by increasing surplus value. In the second instance, on the contrary, it tried to deny or subvert the law of value by acting on the numerator. At the most fundamental level, the next crisis could be interpreted as being a severe re-assertion of the law of value.

Before the crisis, the world economy was structured around a China-US axis, often called “Chinamerica”. This axis is starting to unravel, and without a doubt that is one of the key elements of the remodelling of the global economy.

The disintegration is symmetrical: on the one hand, the American model is departing from its pre-crisis operation — growth on credit — because of a renewed increase in the rate of saving and a reduced dependence on energy imports. These two factors reduce the motor role in the global economy which the...
China is currently in a transition phase, fraught and difficult to be sure, towards a model centred on domestic demand. It is clearly moving away in any case from export-based growth: exports’ portion of Chinese GDP went from 36% in 2006 to 26% today. The complementarity between the two biggest economies is declining and this move, with its collateral effects on developing economies and Europe, is unbalancing the whole world economy.

This reorientation of the Chinese economy is manifested by a change in the structure of its external trade, but also contributes to a slowdown in world trade. All the evidence is that the organisation of production across two different zones of the global economy characteristic of contemporary globalisation is reaching its limits, and, with it, the fast growth of global trade than of world GDP which it drove.

Underlying this configuration, there is the exhaustion of gains in productivity. This tendency is not new, as it was set in motion in the 1980s, with strong fluctuations in the case of the USA. But, in the end, the emerging economies took up the baton and the productivity gains they made could in large part be captured by the “old” capitalist countries. At the start of the crisis, the emerging economies kept up world growth. But the great dislocation in the world economy could have reached an inflection point: the most recent data from the Conference Board show that growth in hourly labour productivity has clearly fallen in the emerging economies since the start of the crisis (figure 3).

**ALTERNATIVE**

There is no alternative for capitalism, other than getting the neoliberal model back on track, while trying to reduce destabilising factors. In this quest for a way out of the crisis, the key question is clearly the restoration of the rate of profit, which can only be achieved in the first instance by an increase in the rate of exploitation. However, a striking fact is the disparity of performances. Among the advanced countries we can see differentiation in rates of profit, in the first place between the USA and the Eurozone, and then again within the latter (figure 4). This phenomenon implies a sharpening of competition between multinationals, which would tend to lead to a general downturn in the rate of profit. This is, in any case, the finding announced by the McKinsey Institute which foresees that global corporate profit should move from 9.8% of GDP in 2013 to 7.9% in 2025, more or less back to its 1980 level. This divergence can be illustrated by means of a more detailed analysis of the confluence within the Eurozone. The exercise has been undertaken recently by the European Commission: it compares the timid current “recovery” with others. The results of this study are illustrated by figure 5 which compares the cycle 2002-2015 with the previous (1986-1999). In the two cases, the reference year is the year preceding the lowest point (respectively 1992 and 2008). Two key variables in the dynamic of capitalism are examined: investment and wage share. The profile are comparable in terms of the phase in the cycle preceding the recession. But what happens next tells two very different stories.

After the 1993 recession, investment fell, but revived progressively and after six years regained its pre-crisis level. The wage share, which had risen slightly from its 1989 low point, returned to its inexorable downward tendency and fell by almost 4% of GDP between 1992 and 1999. It was a good way out of the crisis for capitalism, with an improve-ment in profitability and a recovery in accumulation.

**CYCLE**

But what has happened after the latest crisis is not a classic cycle.

Wage share increased strongly in 2009, then fell, but now it has stabilised at 2% of GDP higher than its pre-crisis level. In other words, the return on capital has not revived. And we see the effects on investment: it started to revive in 2011, following the pattern of the previous recession. Then the sharpening of austerity policies created a double dip in growth and investment fell again before starting to recover from 2014. Today it remains more than 1.5% of GDP lower than its pre-crisis level.

Understanding how finance and production interact is an essential but difficult task. A recent study by BIS economists sheds some light on this question by proposing a model which links “financial causes” to their “real consequences.” How can they construct an index measuring the contribution of labour reallocation across sectors to aggregate productivity growth? Then they show that this index is significantly correlated (negatively) to financial booms. In other words, when credit grows faster than GDP, employment moves to sectors with lower productivity. They also show that the value of this index before the financial crisis determines the subsequent trajectory of productivity. And this mechanism is self-perpetuating, because the recourse to credit feeds what it is supposed to compensate for, i.e. the slowdown in productivity. This modelling of links between productive efficiency and financial movements seems particularly pertinent to an analysis of the Eurozone.

**“CHAOTIC REGULATION”**

One conclusion follows from this (too) swift review: the “great recession” has opened a period of “chaotic regulation” at the global level.

A new crisis seems today to be more or less inevitable. It is difficult to tell where the point of rupture will be (stock exchange, bank, debt, exchange rate?), but this episode will in any case be evidence of deep structural contradictions.

Global capitalism is currently subject to a fundamental tension. On the one hand, the crisis which opened in 2008 was dealt with according to two essential principles: don’t clear the accounts (the “legacies”); reconstitute the pre-crisis neoliberal model, while seeking to control the most deleterious effects. In practice, this means guaranteeing the rights to draw on future surplus value acquired by the “1%” and the freedom of action of the banks and the multinationals. But the fundamental mainspring of capitalism’s dynamism, that is, productivity gains, is currently heading towards exhaustion.

* Abridged from in A L’Encontre, October 2015, Translation: Ed Maltby.
* Full article online: www.workersliberty.org/hussongcv
A failure; and a crime

Janine Booth continues describing the history of what took place at Gallipoli. Part one was in Solidarity 388.

Guy Dawnay, one of Hamilton’s staff officers, went to London to tell the truth about what was happening. On 14 October Britain’s Dardanelles commission sacked Hamilton, replacing him with Sir Charles Monro. By this time, the Allies were evacuating 600 men per day due to sickness and injury.

Monro studied the situation, and recommended abandoning the campaign and evacuating Gallipoli by the end of October. Churchill denounced Monro with the words “He came, he saw, he capitulated”. Despite everything that had happened, Churchill was still prepared to sacrifice more blood on the altar of his political ambition.

The War Council sent Kitchener to investigate. He pondered the situation while men continued to suffer and die. On 22 November, he recommended a partial evacuation, of Anzac and Suvla bays, but not of Helles. Five days later, a three-day storm set in, killing hundreds and causing frostbite to thousands more — men whose own leaders had said that they should not have been there any more; they had no prospect of ‘winning’ anything, who just needed to get out.

Still the Cabinet could not make its mind up, and Kitchener changed his view. Eventually, on 7 December, he recommended the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac. The evacuation was achieved without any casualties, managed with greater competence than the campaign ever had been.

The NEW TURKEY

Turkey had won. It was defending its territory, and was not the aggressor in this particular campaign. But the “big picture” saw it not just supporting Germany’s imperial ambitions, but also fighting for its national power from the ashes of the Ottoman empire.

As the same time as it was winning in the Dardanelles (known as the Çanakkale), Turkey was also massacring the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman empire. It killed up to 1.5 million in a genocide that began with rounding up 250 Armenians in Constantinople on the same day that the Allies set out to land on Gallipoli’s beaches. Last year, Turkey’s brutal and unpopular Erdogan government moved to evacuate Constantinople commemorating its annual Çanakkale centenary from its usual date of 18 March to 24 April. Many suspect that one hundred years on from both, Erdogan wanted the Çanakkale centenary to obscure that of the Armenian massacre.

After Ottoman’s defeat in World War I, in the 1920s the Young Turks waged a war of independence led by Mustafa Kemal, who became the first President of Turkey, known as Kemal Ataturk, “father of the Turks”.

In the following years, Kemal Atatürk, “father of the Turks”, and his Labor challenger (and soon-to-be supporter) Mr Erdogan wanted the Çanakkale centenary to be an attempted military conquest. But the “big picture” saw it not just supporting Germany’s imperial ambitions, but also fighting for its national power from the ashes of the Ottoman empire.

The first, and longest, essay in this book investigates the interaction between Gramsci and Trotsky.

The Prison Notebooks contains some sharp and, even the mild-mannered Rosengarten puts it, “unfair” attacks on Trotsky’s ideas. Yet, as Rosengarten documents, Gramsci had a warm appreciation of the interaction between Trotsky and Trotsky. In jail he made efforts to get some of Trotsky’s writings.

Both Gramsci and Trotsky were “associated with a philosophy of Marxist praxis that provides alternatives to the Stalinist model...”. Both “had contempt for compromises that sacrifice principle for expediency”, although “Gramsci was more willing than Trotsky to accept live with the bureaucratised structures created by the Soviet leaders”.

In contrast to many books on Gramsci, Rosengarten’s is a sympathetic portrayal. As the title indicates, it knows that the Gramsci of the Prison Notebooks was the same Gramsci as the Bolshevik communist of Gramsci’s years of public activity up to his jailing by Mussolini’s fascist regime in 1926. Rosengarten, who died in 2014, was one of many who identified with the “Eurocommunist” version of Gramsci — Gramsci as a democratic alternative to Stalinism. Unlike the “Eurocommunists” most influential in the Communist Party of the 1970s, he remained a socialist.

Rosengarten accepts, I think wrongly, that the famous passages in the Prison Notebooks about “war of position” and winning “victory” in civil society before political revolution are coherent and represent the gist of Gramsci’s praxis. Thus he sees Gramsci as moving in prison as moving towards a sort of populist, which in one essay he compares to the populist of C. R James after his return to Trinidad in 1958.

The book tells us about John Cammett, author of the first serious English-language book on Gramsci. Published in 1967, Cammett’s book gave an informative account of Gramsci’s time as a revolutionaryactivist, but implicitly accepted that the Italian Communist Party of the 1960s was a loyal continuation of Gramsci’s ideas. Rosengarten tells us that Cammett joined the PCI, but remained open to other ideas: in the mid 60s he helped organise broad Socialist Scholars’ Conferences in New York.

Oddly, Cammett’s academic post was at John Jay College, a college which was founded to provide courses for police officers and which retains strong police connections.

To the Warlords

By William Kean Seymour

A slaughterous and wanton year is past, Yet Carnage, not glorified, still stands. Upon red horror piled declares your will, And moans no stricken soul “I am the last.”

Yea, at this feast of Him your lips profess Terror is weared, and its echoes shrill Moloch is sickened with his long excess,

And loth your impious folly to fulfill; Terror is weared, and its echoes shrill Moloch is sickened with his long excess;

To the W arlords

To the W arlords.

And loth your impious folly to fulfil;

Terror is weared, and its echoes shrill

Moloch is sickened with his long excess,

To the W arlords.

And loth your impious folly to fulfil;

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Moloch is sickened with his long excess,

To the W arlords.
An awe-inspiring, real-life hero

Kelly Rogers reviews The Danish Girl, in cinemas now.

The Danish Girl, starring Eddie Redmayne as Lili Elbe and Alicia Vikander as Gerda Wegener, offers an emotional and inspiring depiction of a trans woman’s struggle to claim her identity in the early 20th century.

The film follows the real-life story of Lili Elbe, a trans artist and one of the first people in the world to undergo gender reassignment surgery. Born Einar Wegener in Denmark in 1882, she became a successful landscape painter under this name.

When studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, she met Gerda Gottlieb, who she married in 1904. Gerda was also a very successful artist, in part as a result of her paintings and illustrations of Lili.

The Danish Girl picks up the story with the pair already married, and very close. It is Gerda who asks her husband (at this point, called Einar), to wear stockings and women’s shoes and sit for a painting. This first tentative exploration of women’s clothes triggers the beginning of a great transformation, where Einar, with increasing frequency, presents as Lili. She goes to parties as Lili, and hosts people in her home as Lili – introducing herself as Einar’s cousin.

The film sensitively weaves together both the pleasure and pain of the process of the transition, first and foremost through some very intimate scenes with Redmayne depicting Lili’s difficult relationship with her body. In The Danish Girl, Vikander’s Gerda is very strong, and so deeply in love with her partner that despite her own, growing unhappiness she is prepared to support Lili through her transition. Importantly, when doctors declare Lili either a homosexual man or insane, Gerda ultimately believes Lili when she says that she is in fact a woman, trapped in a man’s body.

The development of their relationship is incredibly moving to watch. While their marriage ends up breaking on the shoals of Lili’s transition and her choice to discard everything that was “Einar’s”, including both his painting career and marriage, they continue to trust each deeply.

The Danish Girl does make some changes to Gerda’s character, however. She is a tragic figure in the film. She is portrayed as a heterosexual woman, who loses her husband when he transitions. In reality, though, rather than their marriage immediately cracking under pressure, Lili and Gerda remained in a relationship for many years following her transition. Many historical sources also suggest that Gerda was bisexual.

The choice to strip Gerda of these aspects of her character could have been made in order to focus on the heroine of the film, Lili, and her struggle. In any case, Gerda is a fascinating and inspiring figure too, whose compassion adds a lot of depth to the story of The Danish Girl.

Lili becomes one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery, which involved a number of dangerous operations over the course of two years. The final of these led to her death, as a result of post-operative complications, shortly before her 50th birthday.

The Danish Girl is a very moving portrayal of a subject that is very obviously still relevant today. Many are applauding Redmayne’s performance, while others are criticising the film for casting a cisgender actor to play a trans character.

Lili Elbe is an awe-inspiring, real-life hero to many trans people, propelled to greater fame by The Danish Girl. This film is absolutely worth going to see.

Benedict Anderson, 1936 – 2015

By Michael Johnson

Influential historian Benedict Richard O’Gorman Anderson died on 13 December in Java, the Indonesian island that did much to form his outlook as a scholar of south-east Asia and theories of nationalism.

Anderson was born on 26 August 1936 in Kunning, China, to an Anglo-Irish father and an English mother. His father was a commissioner in the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, and the family moved to California in 1941 to avoid the Japanese invasion during the Second Sino-Japanese War. From there they moved to Ireland in 1945, and Anderson studied at Cambridge, before receiving his PhD in Cornell in 1967, and teaching there until his retirement in 2002.

According to the New Republic: “As Perry Anderson, Benedict’s younger brother and himself a distinguished historian, once noted, their father’s experience fighting corruption in the colonial management of China left a lasting mark on the children. In 1956, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, Benedict Anderson was radicalised by the protests over the Suez crisis, where he found himself taking sides with anti-imperialist students — many of them born, like him, in the formerly colonised world — against British nationalisers who supported the Anglo-French attempt to seize the Suez Canal. Out of his Cambridge experience, Anderson started on the path to becoming a Marxist and an anti-colonialist scholar.”

As Anderson focused on Indonesia as a graduate student, the country suffered a wave of anti-communist violence, as the US-backed dictator Suharto seized power in a coup and massacred between 600,000 and a million Indonesians, many of them supporters of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

Along with Ruth T. McVey, Anderson wrote the so-called “Cornell Paper” discounting the Indonesian government’s official account of the coup. It was widely circulated in dissident circles, and for his efforts Anderson was banned from Indonesia, able to return only in 1998 after the overthrow of the Suharto regime.

NATIONALISM

Though he came from a highly cosmopolitan background, it was the study of nationalism which made Anderson’s name.

His 1983 study Imagined Communities was provoked in the immediate term by the national wars fought between the Stalinist states of Vietnam, Cambodia and China in 1978-79.

Coming at the beginning of a wave of studies in the following decade which obliterated the traditional literature on nationalism (including Ernest Gellner’s Nations and Nationalism in 1983 and Eric Hobsbawm’s 1990 book of the same title), Anderson held that nationalism was a modern, socially-constructed, phenomenon despite nationalist claims that nations are ancient or even eternal.

Unlike Gellner or Hobsbawm, however, Anderson did not take a wholly dim view of nationalism, writing that “it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love…”

For Anderson, nations were “imagined communities”. They are imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their community.”

And nations are “communities” because “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is in this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.”

Anderson’s focus was international, stretching far beyond the usual focus on Europe. As one summary put it: “While the preconditions were set in Europe, Dr. Anderson argued, the development of national consciousness began in the Western Hemisphere — in the United States, Brazil and the former Spanish colonies — in the late 18th century. From there, it spread to Europe and then to former colonies of Europe, in Africa and Asia.”

Essential to his study was what Anderson called the “the revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism”. Print capitalism, he argued, facilitated nationalism in filling the void left by the collapse of feudal societies. The “standardization of national calendars, clocks and language…embodied in books and the publication of daily newspapers” allowed people to overcome the squalor, enabling them to identify with and form themselves around national communities.

Anderson’s death deprives us of a bold, highly original thinker who has done much to enrich our understanding of nationalism, colonialism, Indonesian history and much else besides.
Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists’ control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth 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 must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers’ Liberty wants 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 trade unions and the Labour Party to break with “social partnership” with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers’ movement, 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 domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children.
- 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.
- 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!

Debating council cuts

By Jean Lane

Labour Party Momentum members in Sheffield held a meeting with some of the Labour Councillors on Tuesday 5 January.

The purpose was to start, and hopefully continue, a dialogue about how to fight the next round of cuts that will be carried out by the council in March. The meeting was very well attended with about 60 people from different wards and constituencies.

It was clear from the councillors present that there was not an appetite for voting against a cuts budget. Their responses ranged from “please help us to find a better way to say to people that we are on your side but we have no choice” to “I’m fed up of hearing people debating about what the council are having to do”.

To be fair, that was a lone voice and the response from everyone else in the room focussed on importance of siding with anti-cuts campaigns and campaigning actively against Tony austerity measures.

The idea of using reserves to avoid cuts while a campaign is being built was raised. There are £11m in reserves, according to one of the councillors, which would be wiped out with one flood. Even if he is not being entirely honest about how many reserves there are, such a tactic is just delaying the inevitable choice of cut or fight.

There have been £30bn worth of cuts so far in Sheffield and £30bn still to come this year. Councillors described how they are trying to ensure the safety of services for the most vulnerable, to which one man, new to Labour and to Momentum, gave the impassioned response that “we are all vulnerable”, citing the loss of jobs, of evictions and cuts in pay and pensions. 2,500 jobs have been lost from the council in recent years.

Although there were differences of opinion about how the council should handle the budget, it was a very important meeting for galvanising people who want to move out of meeting rooms and onto streets, workplaces and communities to start a fightback.

As a first step towards this, a motion was passed in support of the junior doctors’ strike. A model resolution is being circulated round wards and constituencies to this effect.

By Ellie Clarke

London Young Labour’s AGM happened on 9-10 January.

The weekend was mixed, but overall it was a success for the left.

Although the left slate did poorly in elections, conference successfully set lots of left-wing policy.

One motion had been ruled out of order by the regional Labour Party. This was a full motion that called for the mandatory re-selection of MPs. Although we didn’t get to hear the motion, we did get to have a lively debate about democracy in Young Labour, the purpose of it, and what role, if any, London Region should play.

As Solidarity goes to press results are yet to be announced for the committee election but most people are fairly confident at least a few of the established Labour Left will be elected.

Victory in the motions debate is heartening for the left and we now have much more left wing and progressive policies than any other section of the Labour Party.

This can only serve to strengthen the fight both inside and outside of the Labour Party.

Some left gains at London Young Labour

By Sacha Ismail and Jill Mountford

As previously reported in Solidarity, Labour Party supporting NHS activists have launched Momentum NHS to build links between Labour, the wider labour movement and NHS campaigns — and build pressure for Labour to take the lead in the fight to save the Health Service.

We had our first planning meeting on Saturday 16 January, the weekend was mixed, but overall it was a success for the left. Although the left slate did poorly in elections, conference successfully set lots of left-wing policy.

This included a motion calling for the reinstatement of all those members of the Labour Party who have been expelled. The motion specifically named comrades who have been expelled for being associated with Workers’ Liberty.

The AGM also passed a motion calling for solidarity with the Syrian people both at home and as refugees in Europe, as well as an amendment that called for mandatory re-selection of MPs.

Stop Trident National Conference going to press results

Next organising meeting

Tuesday 19 January, 6.30pm, UAL, London, WC1V 7EY

Over the Christmas period and in early January, the campaign against expulsions received support from the Bakers’ Union and from London Young Labour. It also saw a number of people reinstated following appeals and protests. There are many more still excluded — we need to step up the pressure.

stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com

Stop the Labour Purge!

Momentum NHS organising

By Sacha Ismail and Jill Mountford

As previously reported in Solidarity, Labour Party supporting NHS activists have launched Momentum NHS to build links between Labour, the wider labour movement and NHS campaigns — and build pressure for Labour to take the lead in the fight to save the Health Service.

We had our first planning meeting after the Save Lewisham Hospital conference on 5 December, been getting social media in place and drawing more people in, and are now holding an organising meeting on Saturday 16 January.

Sat 16 Jan

Sheffield Momentum Trident renewal debate
2pm, Central United Reform Church, S1 2BJ
bit.ly/tridentdebate

Sat 23 Jan

Health Campaigns Together conference
10.30am, London Welsh Centre, WC1X 8UE
bit.ly/NHSconf

Sat 30 Jan

Oppose Nazis in Dover
12 noon, Dover town square
bit.ly/nonnazis Dover

Sat 30 Jan

March against the housing bill
1pm, Kennington Road / Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ
bit.ly/housing demo

Sat 27 Feb

Stop Trident National Demonstration
12 noon, London
bit.ly/stoptrident

Sun 28 Feb

Stop Harrow Cuts — Take Action!
1pm, Harrow Youth Centre
bit.ly/harrowcuthappypetty
Tube unions call new strikes

By Ollie Moore

Tube unions Aslef, RMT, and Unite have named strikes for 26-27 January, 15-16 February, and 17-18 February.

Each of the nation-wide strikes is for 24 hours, commencing on the evening of the first day and continuing until the following evening. TSSA’s leadership is meeting as Solidarity goes to press, and may decide to join the action.

The strikes are part of an ongoing dispute over pay, terms and conditions, and staffing arrangements for 24-hour running (“Night Tube”).

Rank-and-file socialist bulletin Tubeworker said: “That three unions have returned to battle stations after months of quiet is a hugely positive and welcome development. We have to make these strikes count: the shutdown of the network needs to be total, picket lines need to be well supported and vibrant, engaging with the public to explain that, contrary to tabloid myths, we’re not simply striking for more money but for a decent settlement on terms and conditions that protects our work/life balance.

RMT also has a live ballot mandate for action involving station staff, in a dispute against the “Fit for the Future” scheme, a job cuts and restructuring programme that will see hundreds of frontline jobs go, and all station workers forced into a new grading system under new contracts.”

Scottish teachers protesting last year

struck against proposed academisation and are fighting for the reinstatement of their NUT rep Simon O’Hara.

• Reinstate Simon petition: bit.ly/reinstatesimon

Teachers struggle against cuts

By Gemma Short

Secondary school teachers in Scotland have voted by 93% in favour of industrial action in a consultative ballot over excessive workloads.

Their union, EIS, says teachers are facing mounting workload as a result of a new qualifications system. EIS will now formally ballot its members over organising boycotts of the qualifications.

Teachers in West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, struck on Tuesday 12 January, in a dispute over cuts. The teachers, also organised by EIS, say the cuts will mean subjects as diverse as English and Geography being managed under one faculty, losing specialist teachers and losing pastoral roles.

Struggles in schools across England continue. More strikes are expected at Listerdale school in Rotherham (see Solidarity 382) after talks broke down with academy sponsor the Children’s Trust. Teachers at Trinity academy in Listerdale school in Rotherham are demanding that the “fit for the future” scheme is stopped and begin refusing to vote for staff or for service users.

Teachers at Small Heath School in Birmingham have 20,000 jobs losses, 1,200 more to go

By Michael Tron

Over the past 15 years 20,000 local authority jobs have been lost in Birmingham. 1,200 more job losses are planned in the next two years.

New leader Cllr John Clancy was a former soft-oppositionist to previous leader Cllr Bore. Cllr Clancy, for whom the term “Clancyonomics” was coined, had run for, and lost, the Birmingham Labour leadership multiple times over the last few years. His opposition economic program was notably “anti cuts”, but rather he challenged Bore on his lack of progress in dealing with overspend on outsourced contracts such as the Service Birmingham Capita contract, whose costs have spiralled from £55 million a year to £120 million.

Bore’s city council repeatedly failed to do anything about the contract and were criticised heavily in the press as a result. This year Birmingham Labour has managed to find £2.5m worth of savings in this IT contract. Despite this the council is still making huge cuts to much more crucial spending areas, including the 1,200 jobs they are planning to axe.

Corbyn has personally intervened, telling the press that Birmingham is being “uniquely attacked” and is receiving the biggest central government funding cuts in the country.

Despite small moves away from the private sector lighting of the public purse, Bore’s replacement, and Birmingham Labour moving (at a glacial pace) towards greater opposition to austerity, Birmingham is still facing vast cuts.

So what next? With more cuts coming next year and every year for the next five years there is increasingly little option for small anti-cuts gestures.

The only remaining option is for councils to disobey Tory rule and begin refusing to vote through cuts budgets at all.

FE college pay strike planned

Unison members in Further Education colleges are being balloted to join UCU action over an imposed pay freeze.

UCU members struck against the pay freeze on 10 November, but were not joined by Unison members, despite the union saying it was planning on balloting its members. UCU has submitted a pay claim for a £1 pay rise, but the Association of Colleges rejected the claim and instead imposed at 0% pay rise.

UCU’s Further Education committee met in December and agreed to propose to Unison a date for joint strikes on 2 March, the day that the Association of Colleges is due to hold its conference.

Fighting for fair 16-19 funding

The National Union of Teachers (NU) is conducting a consultative ballot of its members in Sixth Form Colleges over funding cuts.

Funding for 16-19 education fell by 14% between 2010 and 2015, and Sixth Form Colleges have been hit hardest by these funding cuts. By August 2015, 72% of colleges had dropped courses and 81% of them had increased class sizes.

It is estimated that sixth form colleges have lost more than £100 million of funding since 2010. In contrast, the Government agreed to spend £45 million in 2014 to establish just one 16-19 free school in Westminster at a cost of about £20,000 for each student.

The NU plans to move to a formal ballot, and will hold a national demonstration which will hopefully coincide with a national strike.
RESPONDING TO COLOGNE ATTACKS

By Cathy Nugent

“We have to stand against sexual violence and sexual abuse against women, no matter who is the perpetrator”. According to a German reader, the numbers involved in attacks on New Year’s Eve have been exaggerated. Nothing like 1,000 men were involved in the attacks. It is also true that all the assaults were sexual in nature, and the police are not just investigating migrants.

That all said, very bad sexual assaults, including rape, took place. We need a very clear defence of women. That stand whatever disgusting racist propaganda follows.

RACISM

Musa Okwonga made this point well in the New Statesman (6 January), writing from the perspective of someone who has experienced racism living in Berlin:

“As far as being a black man of African descent goes, the racists in German are at least as bad in that respect as elsewhere in Europe. The thought that we as persons are not careful with our public dress because we are considered a part of a racial group is not new.”

In return, I don’t care about them... I am most concerned, by far, with the safety of the women who may now be more frightened than ever to enter public spaces. I don’t think that women have ever felt particularly comfortable walking through crowds of drunk and aggressive men at night, regardless of the race of those men. But some of young men of North African and Arab origin, whatever their intentions, will most likely endure more precipitation from women than before... Why don’t we just start with the premise that it is a woman’s fundamental right, wherever she is in the world, to walk the streets and not be groped?”

This same author notes that the although sexual violence against women, and the harassment of women in public spaces, is endemic (100% of women in Paris said in a recent survey that they had been harassed on trains and the Metro), these assaults were particularly severe. That too is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The assaults in Cologne seem to illustrate the necessity of defending women at the Coordinated Women’s Day of Action on 8 March 2012.

INSTITUTIONALISED

Women who were attacked in Cologne and Hamburg...

“We are forced to wear our nightgowns because we can’t walk the streets and not be groped.” — Cathy Nugent.

As Musa Okwonga puts it, “Why don’t we see this as a perfect moment for men, regardless of our ethnic backgrounds, to get genuinely angry about the treatment of women in public spaces; to reject the fable; to make ourselves a neutral bystander in the struggle to end violence against women.”

The answer to sexist attitudes is to challenge them and fight them wherever you are. To fail to do that is to make yourself a neutral bystander in the struggle of women to be out of the domestic sphere, to have an education, to work, to be independent and safe.

As Musa Okwonga puts it, “Why don’t we see this as a perfect moment for men, regardless of our ethnic backgrounds, to get genuinely angry about the treatment of women in public spaces; to reject the fable; to make ourselves a neutral bystander in the struggle to end violence against women.”

The assaults in Cologne seem to illustrate the necessity of defending women at the Coordinated Women’s Day of Action on 8 March 2012.

Against racist attacks! Defend migrants and refugees!

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