EGYPT: A NEW WORKERS’ MOVEMENT IS BORN

See pages 5-8

Workers’ demonstration against unemployment, poverty and Mubarak in Helwan on 25 January, organised by the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers’ Services, which has become a key organisation in the struggle.

Volume 3 No 192 9 February 2011 30p/80p For a workers’ government

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By James Bloodworth

On 12 January 2010, Haiti was rocked by an earthquake which killed at least 230,000 people. One year on, in the capital Port-au-Prince, between 1.3 and 1.7 million people continue to live in quilts and tents with little hope of moving.

Despite the huge sums of money charities and aid organisations received in a show of international solidarity following the quake, less than 30,000 of those displaced have found permanent homes. A recent cholera outbreak killed more than 3,000 more and 822,000 have registered for food aid.

Already the poorest country in the Western hemisphere before the earthquake, Haiti has now fallen five points in the world’s poverty league — from 140 to 145 out of 182.

Out of $5.7 billion earmarked for Haiti by governments and aid organisations, only $473 million dollars has actually reached the country. Moreover, the “international community” which pledged to “send humanitarian aid” to the country in the aftermath of the disaster is the same “international community” responsible for the squallor and suffering that it now aims to reduce.

Today, even the US invaded and occupied the country in 1915, every attempt to allow Haiti’s people to move “from absolute misery to a dignified poverty” (in the words of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide) has been violently and deliberately blocked by the US government and some of its allies. As the Guardian noted: “The US… government… was somehow empowered to use the earthquake as an opportunity to impose their will on the country.”

CORPORATE

In fact Haiti’s tragedy has served as an opportunity for further enrich corporate interests.

For example, Lucie, a 27-year veteran of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), was named special US coordinator for relief and reconstruction after the earthquake. She worked this job for a short period, then moved to the private sector, where she would seek to control their organisations.

The process of reconstruction has had positive consequences for grass-roots independent political organisations in South Sudan.

People had to come together to demands for political reform by building and supporting independent political movements. Even when specific forms of association have also sprung up to fill the political gap

Southern Sudan Youth Forum for Referendum is a key example of a new generation of people,” said Paul, a young activist. “It was only after the referendum that we were able to organise a national campaign organisation in opposition to the South Sudan Referendum Commission.”

Most of the people who grew up in these kinds of organisations are the same people who have been forced to change their jobs for a short period, then moved to the private sector, where he would seek to control their organisations.
Sheridan should not be in jail

By Charlie Salmon and Gayle Langdon

With the aid of an overwhelming police operation and in the absence of recent coherent mobilisation, the anti-Muslim groups of the English Defence League marched and rallied through Luton on Saturday 5 May. Anywhere between 1,500 to 3,000 EDL supporters and media (and police estimates vary) massed across the country for what the organisation called a “homecoming” event.

Over 1,000 local people — mainly from Muslim, Pakistani backgrounds — took part in the Bury Park district to protest and defend the most vulnerable areas of Luton. In the city centre a UAF-organised rally was “kettled” by a massive police operation. Despite the best efforts of the demonstrators many were able to break through police lines to join the defence of Bury Park.

From the very start of the day police effectively controlled and managed rival groups of protesters. They stopped coaches, vans, and cars, sometimes searching and then escorting them to different parts of the city.

Supporters of Unite Against Fascism (UAF) at Luton blockaded the train from London blacked the train station to stop the EDL for a short period; but racists and anti-racists were kept apart by barriers and police lines for the remainder of the day.

A number of anti-racists — including members of the AWL — made it through police lines to Bury Park, and there was one large-scale breakout attempt, eventually blocked by the police.

**ABYSMAL DEMO**

The official demonstration inside the kettle was abnormal. It amounted to nothing more than several hundred anti-fascists shuffling around the Love Music Hate Racism stage lining up (to sometimes rather ill-chosen) music.

Speakers would then encourage you to “go out and organise with the main targets of the EDL: the local Muslim community”. They would then have needed a short but unsuccessful leafletting and door-knocking in the area, meetings and discussions.

These activities should have been possible given that UAF and the Socialist Workers Party have organisation on the ground in Luton. Perhaps such efforts were made, but rebuffed — possibly — but not likely given the character of those massing on Dunstable Road.

The hundreds of mainly middle-aged, best ostentatiously religious Muslims who assembled were very few. They ignored and rebuffed demands of “stewards” and reacted quickly to murmurs of sightings of the EDL.

There was no religious chanting whatsoever until the closing minutes of the demonstration. When earlier on in the day a small number of people stopped to pray, the majority stood by.

The majority were ordinarily working-class Muslims out to defend their community from attack.

**Sheridan was stupid but three years is a crime**

By Sacha Ismail

The “People’s Convention” against cuts called by SWP and LRFC on 12 February should be a chance to make good the damage done by the SNP coup in the National Shop Stewards’ Network (creating a new SNP-line “anti-cuts movement”) and the Coalition of Resistance campaigning as an exercise in listening to lots of people’s concerns.

To take that chance, all the SNP needed was good sense, telling them to make the convention practically-focused, open for serious debate, and unity-oriented.

But four days before the conference there is no agenda — just an ever-lengthening list of speakers and celebrity speakers, many of them not very good.

The minority caucus after the SNP event decided to take up an offer from SWP to run a workshop on 12 February. The SNP has apparently been taciturn enough to put them off.

The conference should:

1. Propose specific united actions with the other national anti-cuts campaigns; support the LRFC; generate secretariat Matt Wrack’s call on the unions to organise a unity conference.
2. Tell the SWP to stop setting up local Right to Work groups as fronts for the SNP, often in competition with broad-based anti-cuts committees. (In Lambeth, for example, the SNP has still not recognised itself to fully working in the Save Our Services campaign.)
3. Orient towards struggles that are happening now, and generalising them. Tell the SWP to give up demagogy calls for a general strike. (Will the SWP be putting this demand on the union bureaucrats speaking at the conference?)
4. Create a space for real debate among activists, not just set-piece, and create a properly-functioning open and democratic space.
5. Anti-cuts activists should attend the conference to push these ideas.

Jon Lansman is the secretary of the Labour Party Democracy Task Force. He spoke to Martin Thomas

**Labour Party needs real conferences**

MT: In recent months, over 40,000 people have joined the Labour Party. That’s quite a big figure in terms of today’s politics. What’s your assessment?

JL: We don’t really know the demography of those numbers. Some may well be disappointed Lib Dems. However, it’s pretty clear that some of them are people who’ve previously signed from the party in disgust at previous shifts to the right and are now returning. That’s good news. We need to get more turnouts, and we also want to recruit people who’ve previously been members and are attracted to the prospect of the party shifting to the left. In particular that means young people, who’ve been seen to be far more politically active than for some time.

MT: In 2010 only 65% of Cuts Sacked, Seniors Saved Labour Party conference, the lowest figure for what the organisation had been operations to 3000 near to 8000 sent delegates. JL: Yes, even in the early Blair period constituencies continued to send deeply protest and defend the real death knell seems to have been the abolition of contemporary motions. Although they were reinstated this year, we think people can be forgiven for not believing this was going to happen until it actually happened. It’s going to take time to rebuild the credibility of conference with activists within the party, never mind people outside the party. There’s a deep cynicism about it. It’s only when the changes are seen not only to have happened but to be working that people are really going to be taken seriously. JL: It’s going to happen overnight.

**Milliband’s ‘organising agenda’**

Beat the ultra-Blairites in the Labour leadership contest, then do pretty much what the ultra-Blairites demand in order to stop them condemning you as Ed or “the prisoner of the unions”… that seems to be Ed Miliband’s line.

He has let it be known that next month, jointly with his brother David, he will relaunch the “Movement for Change” set up as a would-be opposition airport base for David Miliband in the leadership contest. Lord Sainsbury has put in £250,000 to fund the training of a cadre of “grassroots organisers” for the Labour Party — selected and controlled, as with trade unions’ in-company corps of full-time organisers, and outside any process of election by the rank and file. The aim is another top-down scheme to circumvent the democratic processes of the party.
Visceral Islamists

Barry Finger

There are two competing economic narratives in the American economics and business press explaining why, with recovery of the stock market and the purchasing power of the consumer, the economy is failing to produce job-generating expansion. The Keynesians — for lack of a better description — worry that the government induced demand is insufficient to offset the overall decline in private sector spending. Consequently, they argue, the economy is poised on the precipice of a deflationary spiral. Businesses are therefore hesitant to add to productive capacity or use more of their existing capacity for fear that additional output will bring a lower rate of return in the context of declining prices. This eventually is less feared by conservative monetarists, who look to the “wealth” effect of declining prices as a stimulus to renewed spending. As prices decline, the purchasing power of the dollar would increasingly make it less useful to hold idle balances. But this scenario, conservatives would argue, is currently beside the point. The downward fragility of the near zero percent unemployment rate of government manipulated statistics that conservatives have — correctly, in my view — labeled “jobless” in which Keynesians such as Paul Krugman or J.Kalbfleisch built their case for public sector expansion on.

GREENSPAN

It has evidently disappeared down the memory hole that, under arch-conservative Alan Greenspan, the government long ago departed from the fixed-basket of goods approach in measuring changes in living costs. The Fed chairman, after substituting other means of low-balling increases in the cost of living ultimately embrace what he labeled the “core” inflation rate, which conveniently eliminated energy and food prices from official calculations. Obviously, this was and remains politically useful in cutting living adjustments to public pensions and Social Security.

On the other hand, to admit to an underlying positive pressure on prices, as Greenspan’s rate has diminished, would have been to undercut the immediate of the Keynesian argument. A modest rate of inflation, even in the absence of additional government induced demand, should provide a sufficient incentive to expand production, insofar as price increases can be expected to outstrip that of money wages. And since this is manifestly the case, the question remains: why haven’t increased profits led to economic recovery?

Conservatives have a ready answer. They argue that corporations have, in effect, staged — though they would be loath to admit it frankly — an investment strike and are, in their opinion, fully justified in doing so. In their view, corporatising the “inevitability” of a recession is an effective way of directly raising from the need to address budget deficits, comply with cap and trade antipollution measures or fulfill new health care mandates.

The increased public sector spending that liberals call for is therefore a nonstarter. It would exacerbate all the underlying problems that currently threaten future profitability. Corporations will, as it now stands — or so it argued — only do so if there are ramifications that propose an abnormally high compensatory pretax profit rate. Clearly such “exceptional” opportunities cannot be expected to be the engine of a broad recovery. This is the right-wing free market position — the tax structures can be dramatically overhauled to reduce the overhead costs of government, cozing businesses to renew investment with secured prospects for higher post-tax profit rates.

Debt

The sovereign debt crisis that Greece, Ireland, Latvia, and others are facing has its American counterpart in the fiscal crisis of state and local governments. Many — such as California — have economies as large as these nation states themselves. They cannot by law run deficits. So, either the federal government can’t agree on cuts of the right kind and share its revenues with the states — and, in the process, modestly increase the rate of inflation, thereby gradually diminishing the real burden of government debt — or the state economies will eventually implode dragging the entire economy into a deflationary abyss. It is highly probable that the Keynesians would seem to have the upper hand.

But capitalism, unlike socialism, is not a system of demand induced production, even if it is ideologically sold as if it were. It is a system in which markets expand in the course of capital accumulation. Consequently, they argue, the economy is poised on the precipice of a deflationary spiral. Businesses are therefore hesitant to add to productive capacity or use more of their existing capacity for fear that additional output will bring a lower rate of return in the context of declining prices. This eventually is less feared by conservative monetarists, who look to the “wealth” effect of declining prices as a stimulus to renewed spending. As prices decline, the purchasing power of the dollar would increasingly make it less useful to hold idle balances. But this scenario, conservatives would argue, is currently beside the point. The downward fragility of the near zero percent unemployment rate of government manipulated statistics that conservatives have — correctly, in my view — labeled “jobless” in which Keynesians such as Paul Krugman or J.Kalbfleisch built their case for public sector expansion on.

LabourStart has just completed the first ever large-scale, global survey of trade union use of the net.

More than 1,300 union members participated in the survey, nearly all of them from English speaking countries (the survey was in English). Much of what we learned will surprise no one. But some of the results were important and in some cases unexpected. Here is some of what we learned:

Nearly everybody uses Facebook. If you’re on Facebook, you probably already know this. But those who aren’t may think that Facebook is some kind of passing fad, or something used by students only. The survey revealed that 88% were Facebook users and 60% said their unions had a presence on that social network. The next most popular social network used by the trade unionists who responded was LinkedIn, followed by MySpace. Less than a third said they used Twitter.

Second life, the virtual world that was the subject of considerable interest by (among others) the TUC in recent years, has almost no union members involved in it. In spite of well-funded advertising and a “Union Island” in Second Life, on only two percent of those who responded admitted to being part of this virtual world. We learned that trade unionists are largely satisfied with their national union’s websites, but somewhat dissatisfied with (or unaware of) local union websites. Over 91% of those who responded said they visited their national union websites daily or sometimes. Only 73% said they used local union websites. And while almost 65% rated their national union websites as “excellent” or “good”, only 45% said the same about local union sites. Four times as many rated their local union website as “poor” as compared to the national union website.

Unions are apparently making no use at all of the possibilities offered by smartphones and tablet computers (such as iPads). Even though almost 65% of respondents said they accessed the net using smartphones and tablets, less than 5% believed that their union had an “app” for such devices. We asked people where unions should be investing in these technologies and the most popular answers were email, video and online recruitment of new members. The least popular choices were Internet radio broadcasts and creating apps for smartphones and tablets.

Unions need to invest in creating new high-quality local union sites. In its current state, the site is too slow to respond well to many fads such as Second Life and instead invest in the social networks where trade unionists actually spend their time. While there are still a few bells and whistles left, increasingly, they need to focus on practical applications such as recruiting new members and using tried and tested technology such as email and SMS.

But one word of caution: the wisdom of crowds isn’t always right. For example, someone who uses only smart phones and tablets — or of which there are many — don’t see a need for their unions to maximise their presence by having apps of their own. They may change their minds.
To the Barricade!

School students use it to start debates about politics in school — banning it out in class has been known to derail whole lessons and turn them into debates about class politics and the cuts. The presence of Barricade as a national public-ation gives political back-up to often isolated socialist activists who have to argue their politics alone.

In many colleges, school students are setting up activist groups — moving from meeting up informally with mates to having formal, regular meetings to discuss politics and plan actions.

Barricade supporters have pulled off various actions — sending “class struggle Christmas cards”, sending solidarity greetings to local strikers, organising debates on issues from cuts to class to Israel-Palestine, putting on a “reception” for Tory MPs visiting their school, and campaigning against punishments for students who took part in walkouts.

Workers’ Liberty wants to help school and college students organise local, democratic groups that can link up with the workers’ movement, keep the anti-cuts struggle going, and provide a political education in socialist ideas for young activists.

We hope that Barricade can be a useful tool for this. Unlike some sectarian groups, we don’t want to muscle school stu-dent groups into a front project or come along to give them their marching orders. We want to facilitate the work that the groups do, and hopefully along the way convince many activists to join Workers’ Liberty.

Labour struggles have increased in recent years

Social provision, and “opening” up the economy to privati-sation which has enriched a wealthy elite at the top and a relatively small middle-class.

In the last two weeks Egypt’s workers, who have never before in history had a large independent trade union move-ment, have formed a new trade union federation.

The street revolt’s ability to break the spell of the fear on which the dictatorship relied opens the way for workers to organise and fight to improve their conditions. With work-ers organising and fighting comes the possibility of a new labour movement which will combine answers to economic exploitation with answers to political unfreedom.

The same in Tunisia. It is out of the headlines now. But underneath the attempts of the transitional government to restore quiet, workers there are striking, organising, and ag-itating to throw out old-regime authorities at local level.

We do not know how far and how fast the upheavals in the Arab world will spread. A demonstration had been called in Syria for 5 February, but that country’s political pol-ice, even more rigid and ruthless than those of Egypt and Tunisia, forestalled it. A rally has been called in Algeria for 12 February, and banned by the government. The organisers say they will go ahead.

All these regimes — Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, and others — have sat on their countries since the 1950s or 60s, allowing no room for democratic change, altering faces at the top only to install a chosen successor when the previous leader dies or becomes incapable.

Now politics is thrown open for the first time in many decades. The outcome will be shaped not only by the raw force of the people’s revolt, but also by the political battles between the different political forces now emerging.

There is the new workers’ movement. There are small groups of socialists, especially in Algeria.

There is the army. There are the old-regime figures trying to recycle themselves as democrats, like Suleiman in Egypt and Ghannouchi in Tunisia.

There are people like al-Ba’adie in Egypt, dissenters from the old regime but of a mild sort, tied in to international cap-italist networks and interests.

And — the chief rival to the socialists and the labour move-ments at grassroots level — there are the Islamist move-ments, the movements whose fundamental political programme is to give (their interpretation) of ancient reli-gious law force of compulsion over their societies, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Harking back to a mythical Islamic past, before capital-ism, these Islamist movements have no answers to the social questions, but can win support. There is a danger that they will confiscate the revolutions and turn them into counter-revolutions on the model of Iran in 1979-8.

The Islamists, the old-regime figures, the upper-class dis-senters, will all get help from rich and powerful people on an international level. The socialists and the labour move-ments will have to rely on our support. Let’s organise!

• Activists with the Middle East Workers’ Solidarity net-work are seeking contacts for an initiative in solidarity with the new Egyptian workers’ movement. Contact them via http://middle-east-workers.blogspot.com/ or meworkers@gmail.com.

Solidarity rally with Egyptians and others in North Africa and the Middle East fighting for democracy

Saturday 12 February,
12 noon to 2pm, Trafalgar Square,
London
Organised by Amnesty International and supported by major trade unions
Tunisia: new government tries to calm revolt

By Ed Malbby

In Tunisia, strikes are continuing, notably in transport, the national airline and among agency workers. Work- ers at the national radio station are protesting against the appointment of new management without any kind of negotiation or consultation.

There are reports that during the height of the revolution, many enterprises came under effective workers’ control, with managers being sent on “holiday” by workers. The fall of the Ben Ali dictatorship has created a breathing space for Tunisian politics. Political forces can operate more or less openly. Meetings can be held and political discussions can take place in public, in the streets, and in the newspapers. The transitional government is trying to restore normal economic functioning and promising elections. The pages of the country’s newspapers are carrying debate between prominent intellectuals about how the new-style Tunisian parliamentary democracy should look. In cities and towns, grassroots organisations like the neighbourhood “committees for the defence of the revolution” and local trade union (UGTT) organisations are organ- ising demonstrations to root out the remnants of the power of the RCD. Ben Ali’s former ruling party, now formally dissolved.

Last week in the mining town of Gafsa, the site of the last big strike wave in 2008, demonstrations forced out the newly-appointed, RCD-linked governor, Mohammed Goundi, who had to leave in an armoured car while demonstrators demanded “total rupture…with the old regime”. The Guardian reports similar demonstrations in Sfax and other cities. The UGTT national executive, previously dominated by RCD-aligned bureaucrats, has come under huge grassroots pressure and is demanding “a government that breaks completely with the old regime.”

Thugs, paid by the RCD in cash and alcohol, have been sent to rampage through towns like Kasserine, where 1,000 destroyed public buildings in a not last week.

In an interview in the Tunis newspaper Le Temps, Rachid Ghannouchi (no relation to ex-RCD member Muhammad Ghannouchi, the new Prime Minister) says that his Islamist Ennahda Party is planning to re-group, holding its congress later this year, and launching a newspaper and a radio sta- tion. The party is currently taking a legalistic, moderate tack, emphasising its commitment to “democratic salafism”. But “democratic salafism” is a sort of contradiction in terms: “salafism” means taking the words of Muhammad and his two generations of Muslims after him, in the 7th and 8th centuries, as eternal and literal prescriptions for soci- ety today.

Ennahda is a threat. The revived workers’ movement has the potential to dispel that threat, and take Tunisia forward, if it organises politically in an independent way.

By Olve Bradley

In Egypt, Tahrir Square has become a symbol for grass- roots democratic organisation, with mass movements holding daily protests on it during the progroms against Westerners with an unquenchable thirst for political discussion, and a vibrant sense of the power of ordinary people when they lose their fear. Local communities, in the absence of the police, have organised their own defence.

There have also been some instances of workers taking over their workplaces and beginning self-management. Left- wing Egyptian blogger Hossam el Hamalawy (who is close to the British SWP) told an interviewer: “I received a report about a textile mill owned by a company called Ghazl M eit Ghamr in Daqahlya, which is a province in the Nile Delta. The workers there have kicked out the CEO, they have occupi- pied the factory and are self-managing. This type of action has also been repeated in a printing house south of Cairo called Dar El Ta’avor. There as well the workers have kicked out the CEO and are self-managing the company.”

“Tunisia has essentially run Egypt since the “Revolution” — in fact a coup — of 1952, and continues to do so. Now, under increased pressure from the Obama administration (Egypt gets more military aid from the USA than any other country bar Israel), the army and the regime know they must try to negotiate an “orderly transition” and string along the uprising so that it runs out of steam.

USA MOVES

The Muslim Brotherhood has always been more or less agreed to meet the gov- ernment only to hear what it had to say, not to negotiate anything. It quickly withdrew. That the talks with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood were even happening is significant: the United States is significant: Washington has moved from a policy of supporting the dic- tatorship in order to keep Islamism at bay to one of trying to draw in and tame the Brotherhood.

For the moment, there is stalemate. Suleiman, the former head of the security services (who led the near-destruction of the most extremist Islamist movements in the 1990s), is very unlikely to turn towards wholesale repression. Al-Jazeera calls him “the CIA’s man in Cairo”; and at least for now such a policy would be unacceptable in Washington. If Suleiman can’t find a way to manage the transition Obama wants, pre- sumably there will be pressure for a further shift at the top of the regime.

Underlying everything that has happened in Egypt and across the Middle East in recent weeks is the economic crisis and its economic effects, and highly symptomatic. Mubarak is hated also for the “crony capitalism” which is endemic and blatant. “Experts estimate the net worth of Mr. Mubarak and his family at between $4 billion and $70 bil- lion,” according to the Voice of America. “They say the Egyptian president has much of his wealth in Swiss banks or tied up in real estate in New York, Los Angeles and Lon- don. Mubarak’s wife, Susan, and their two sons, Gamal and Alaa, are also reported to be billionaires.”

The Brotherhood has no answers to the social inequality. The workers’ movement has the power to create answers. We must lend it every support we can.

SHIFT

As we go to press on 8 February, the uprising in Egypt is entering its fifteenth day. Thousands of people continue to occupy Tahrir Square every day there are demonstra- tions across the country.

Although there are reports of some return to normality, Egypt remains paralysed, and in particular paralysed politi- cally. Breakdown has come in attempts by the regime — now in effect run by Vice-President Omar Suleiman, al- though Husni Mubarak still refuses to step down — to estab- lish formal negotiations with the opposition, including the still-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Even the attempt to discuss the dictatorship’s pol- icy. Less than a week ago it attempted to break the protest movement’s will by sending its thugs — some of them, sur- realistically, on camels — into Tahrir Square. Cops caught by pro- testers had police ID on them. There were two days of fighting. In the end the pro-regime forces had to withdraw, and something of the previous carnvaleque air returned to downtown Cairo.

The pro-government thugs had to be permitted access to the Square by the army. The army’s alleged sympathy for “the people” was in danger of being destroyed. It moved quickly to recapture its previous image as the nation’s “most respected institution.”

The army has essentially run Egypt since the “Revolution” — in fact a coup — of 1952, and continues to do so. Now, under increased pressure from the Obama administration (Egypt gets more military aid from the USA than any other country bar Israel), the army and the regime know they must try to negotiate an “orderly transition” and string along the uprising so that it runs out of steam.

None of the principal leaders of the revolt — the various youth movements which have mainly co-ordinated action, or high-profile liberal figures such as Mohamed al-Baradei — participated in the talks this week. On the contrary, they criticised the negotiations both for not representing the pro- testers, and for selling short of the genuine demand that the President must step down immediately.

Suleiman has given no indication, yet, that he will improve on Mubarak’s current promise not to stand for re-election, and guarantee that his unpopular son will not be a candi- date. Talks were intended to “discuss” elections, which is not the same as holding them.

Algeria: “link democratic and social demands”

By Vicki Morris

President Bouteflika announced some liberalisation measures after riots over the price of food in January in which five people died. But protests have continued. A man tried to set himself alight during a protest outside the presidential palace. The National Co-ordinating Committee for Change and Democracy (CNCD) has called for trade unions around the world to join a day of action to dispel that threat, and take Tunisia forward, if it organises politically in an independent way.

CNCND also includes a grouping of independent unions in the form of the Syndicate National des agents de l’administration publique (SNAPAP), set up in the 1990s. SNAPAP is under constant pressure from the authorit- ies and a number of its leading figures were recently de- tained. The Algerian Socialist Workers Party (PST), not an offshoot of the British SWP but an affiliate of the Fourth International, participated at the meeting that set up the CNCD but, like the more left-wing mainly-Irber-based opposition party, FFS, PST has not joined CNCND and is not formally supporting the demonstration on 12 February. They complain that CNCND does not want to raise social demands.

“The social question, that of jobs, housing and the high cost of living, is a focal point of people’s fears. It is once again priori- tised by the desperate young people who try to burn them- selves alive. Action must be taken to join the democratic dimension and the social question.”

The two independent trade unions in Israel — WAC- MAAN and Power to The Workers — were due to hold a solidarity demonstration in Tel Aviv to support the Egyptian workers and people struggling on 8 Feb- ruary.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) called for trade unions around the world to join a day of action for democracy and social justice in Egypt on 8 Feb- ruary.

http://www.wac-maan.org.il

6 SOLIDARITY
Tamir Fathy, International Relations Secretary of the Centre for Trade Union and Workers’ Services, spoke to Solidarity about the new union federation in Egypt.

On 30 January, union leaders and worker activists met to form a new federation. It adopted the broader demands of the revolutionary movement, but its main focus is the creation of new independent unions that are responsive to the workers. To give you a taste of the official unions — the leaders of these unions were quoted in the newspapers saying that no workers would go on these demos, but also calling for union officials to monitor workers and report if they did demonstrate! We also received reports that the official unions were trying to mobilise people to take part in the pro-Mubarak gangs that attacked demonstrators. They even offered people money… So the need for an alternative union federation was obvious.

The new federation involves tax collectors, health technicians and many others from the public sector, as well as the most important sections of private industry — textiles, metals, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, auto workers… I’d say the main issues facing us, beyond the broader political demands of the revolutionary movement, are the minimum wage and unemployment benefits. But beyond specific demands, the key thing is for workers to form democratic committees in the factories and enterprises, to get organised, to get more power. They can cooperate with the neighbourhood committees which people have organised since the police withdrew. The most important thing is for workers to get organised.

What is CTUWS?
We are an NGO, established in 1990. Our aim is to defend the right of workers to strike and form independent unions. The official union federation [which is controlled by the state] was not representing workers, and the law stated that all unions must come under the umbrella of this federation. Plus, with changes in the labour market and moves towards a more neo-liberal economic model, workers had no rights. There was no right to strike; even when permitted, it was limited by all sorts of conditions. So we were responding to an obvious need.

The Centre was founded by workers’ leaders, mostly from a leftist background. One of them was our General Coordinator, Kamal Abbas, who led the famous strike of iron and steel workers in 1989. He was arrested and fined because of his activities, and formed this association as the next step.

What have been the most important struggles in recent years?
Strike movements at the end of the 1980s were violently suppressed. A new wave of struggles began in 2006, when workers at the Mahalla textile company organised an uprising over working conditions. This was a huge strike, with huge protests, and inspired workers in many other sectors. Since then the movement has grown and grown. In the last four years, every day we’ve seen new struggles, strikes, all forms of protest.

In 2008, the struggle spread into the public sector, when real estate tax collectors went on strike. They protested in front of the cabinet, and stayed in the street for fifteen days. Their main demand was for parity with their colleagues in the income tax collection department. In 1973 the real estate tax department came under the control of local councils, and since then they have lost out a lot. Their demand was therefore to remain the Ministry of Finance. In the end, they won all their demands. In addition, the general committee created to run their strike developed into an independent union — the first to be recognised by this regime. This inspired other, similar struggles, for instance by the health technicians, who won in December last year. These struggles were the sparks that eventually lit the fire of a mass movement this year.

Now, people are getting more determined and their demands stronger every day. At first people just wanted Mubarak to go. Now they demand the dissolution of the current parliament, and the removal of the whole regime. I honestly don’t know what will happen next. No one imagined before 25 January that the revolution would begin, or imagined after that we would succeed in continuing the protests against attacks by Mubarak’s thugs, or that the police would simply collapse. Victory against Mubarak is still possible. But, whatever happens, the most important thing is that ordinary people on the streets now feel they have the power to change their lives and their society. It’s quite amazing.

What international links do you have?
We have links with unions across the region — in Tunisia, yes, but also Algeria, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq — and with unions in many European countries too. During the Mahal- lah struggle we had some support from your TUC, but otherwise our links in Britain are very limited. It would be great to change that.
REGULARS

Can fascists turn social-democrat?  
By Dave Osler

There is no historical precedent for the transformation of a fascist movement into something akin to a mass social-democratic organisation. Yet although the Socialist Workers Party would never state things as explicitly as the Mueller Brotherhood as a force which could confiscate the revolution in Egypt and turn it into an Islamist counter-revolution. In this paper we have warned against the Muslim Brotherhood of a fascist movement which would not be able to rule against, for example, the Islam Channel, run by the former leader of the Tunisian Islamic Front (who never had been got himself invited to speak at a number of British Left events). Hussein is a “kitchen anti-imperialist”, who thinks that the Mueller Brotherhood should automatically be supported because it is anti-Israel and anti-American. Far from it. He is now a member of the US foreign policy establishment, working for the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Washington.

In fact Hussein is mostly talking to bereaved “hawks” in the US ruling class, trying to convince them that the Mueller Brotherhood is not an openly bourgeois force, and even functionally equivalent to a reformist workers' party. It would be presumptuous of me to second guess an interview with an Egyptiansocialist—previously. Of course, Islamism has changed markedly since. It is now a member of the US foreign policy establishment, working for the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Washington. It does not want to throw itself into a Holy War. He is telling the US establishment that Egyptians are in the streets for “universal values of freedom, of dignity, of human equality”, and that most of those on the streets are not Mueller Brotherhood supporters.  

But the backstop argument is that Hussein’s argument cuts against what we say. He asserts that the Mueller Brotherhood has changed so that it no longer seeks an Islamic state.

SCOFFED

He thinks it possible that US diplomats could get the Mueller Brotherhood to sign up for a “secular, liberal, democratic constitution” and recognition of “Israel’s Jewish democratic status as a neighbour”, and it would not be dismissed by it.

Mohammed Badie, the Brotherhood’s leader, comes from its conservative wing. But he recently scoffed at the idea of an Islamic state, saying his aim was to part of a civil administration.

Another relative hardliner (and my former teacher) Kamal El Helbawi said ‘Islamists would not be able to rule without us’, and that they would not be able to rule against, for example, the Islam Channel, run by the former leader of the Tunisian Islamic Front (who never had been got himself invited to speak at a number of British Left events).

But an element of Hussein’s argument cuts against what we say. He asserts that the Mueller Brotherhood has changed so that it no longer seeks an Islamic state.

The opposition “14 January Front” in Tunisia has a 14 point programme, mostly centred round demands for democracy, a constituent assembly, freedom of speech and association, and social welfare. One of the 14 points is, the only substantive point about international issues, and it calls for: “Resistance to normalisation with the Zionist entity, its penalisation, and the support for the national liberation movements in the Arab world and the whole world.”

Whether it was the (small, so we understand) Nasserist or Ba’athist groups in the Front who pushed this, or the (larger) Hoca-Stalinist group, we don’t know.

But it is particularly diversionary and demagogic in Tunisia to try to define “national liberation” as the desire to pitch the Palestinians (who mostly support “two states”) into a “no compromise” attempt to wipe out “the Zionist entity” (codename for Israel among people who refuse to recognise that the Israeli Jews are a nation). Israel does not oppose distant Turia. On the other hand, the shrinking of the Jewish population in Tunisia from 110,000 in 1948 to 1,710 in 2011 reflects anti-Jewish pressure within Tunisia.

The main enemy for Tunisian workers is at home. The main external enemy is the world capitalist market, not Israel.


By Martin Thomas

In this paper we have warned against the Mueller Brotherhood as a force which could confiscate the revolution in Egypt and turn it into an Islamist counter-revolution. In the Financial Times of 1 February Ed Husain presented a reasoned argument against our assessment.

Husain is not a “cultural relativist” who thinks that the Mueller Brotherhood is not an exciting new model not yet tried, but something tainted by association with decades of stifling bureaucratic demagogy. Although very many Egyptians are secular, the trend for decades now has been to more “Islamisation” of society rather than less.

The Brotherhood’s activists have had to operate in illegal and often in prisons. That makes them cautious: but do not encourage them to think they should forget their final goal and stop at tokens and sops. If the Egyptian workers’ movement can organise itself politically, it can quickly win over great slabs of the Brotherhood’s base and shatter its confidence.

But if not... Husain himself sees dark possibilities, though his hope of avoiding them rests on deft US diplomacy rather than working-class action: “Egypt could all too easily go the way of Iran, or Gaza”.

That can happen without the majority ever wanting it, or doing more than becoming reconciled to it once the new tyranny is in place. It can be avoided only by the construction of strong-enough political alternatives to the Brotherhood.

The main enemy is at home!

Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood demonstration in running local authorities and parliamentary contests within stable and prosperous parliamentary democracies where there is no need for more and more unattractive even to Communist Party activists.

It is not like that with the Brotherhood. Its “final goal”, a state in which religion is law against all workers’, women’s, and democratic rights, still enjoys prestige and a huge emotional charge given to it by religious conviction. Secularism, in Egypt, is not an exciting new model not yet tried, but something tainted by association with decades of stifling bureaucratic demagogy.

The Stalinist parties eventually “bio-degraded” in Western Europe, but only after decades of everyday absorption of their leaders in the streets for “national liberation”, and which people?
How to organise to change the world

On 27 January Ed Malby of Workers’ Liberty ideated journalist and activist Laurie Penny at an AWL London forum. This is an abridged version of Ed’s speech.

Our starting point is that revolution is possible. If you think that the working class is incapable of giving a revolution, or that capitalism is the best form of society possible, then none of what I am about to say will make sense.

The working class, the class which has its hands on the levers of production, the class which is taught by the capitalist system how to co-operate on a global scale in order to operate the machinery of capitalist society, can overthrow this system, re-organise society on the basis of common ownership, and social need, not profit.

The only way for a mass of people to own anything collectively is through mass democracy. And that means that the working class must take power consciously. Millions of workers must understand the process of revolution, and choose it, and debate it. A cadre of experts cannot do it on their behalf.

In order to do this, the working class needs a way of coming together, to debate, to consider the experience of struggle, to educate itself and develop revolutionary ideas. Under a bourgeois and capitalist state and pressures, these ideas cannot be developed individually. It needs to be a collective effort.

Administrations don’t only talk about what they need to organise, teaching through struggle to increase the confidence and self-activity of the workers around the organisation. This is the core of revolutionary workers’ organisation need to break down the division between leaders and led, and create a struggling collective of equals. This is a minority – but a minority trying to raise the rest of the workers to its own level, through struggle.

Sometimes, during a great upsurge, miracles happen. In a small way, we have seen this with the student movement. Suddenly, thousands of people were thrown into activity and self-activity. They inspired an impressive movement. But an understanding of capitalism and the history of working-class struggle can’t be improvised at the last minute.

You can’t expect these educational experiences to be re- newed regularly. After a defeat, there can follow a long lull, during which lessons from the last upsurge can be forgotten, or their meaning corrupted. This current movement will require its lessons to be forgotten – unless they are pre- served by through conscious effort.

A lot of people are disgusted by the idea of a Leninist party. In many organisations decisions are made as if they are Trotskyist when they have inherited their ways of organising from Stalinism. I don’t intend to defend these organisations. I think people are right to mistrust them. In Workers’ Liberty, we want to clean this crap off the left.

WHAT ARE YOU FOR?

The common sense of the uk left is to support Hamas and Hezbollah, “against Israel”; the iranian regime “must change”; we need a world “free of terrorism”.

Tropically, we have started to see some leftists in the UK cheerlead for Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia.

You come to these dreadful conclusions when you forget the central thing — working-class democracy and working-class self-emancipation.

Some people, including a tendency in the movement that Laurie is aligned with, have turned to alternative organisational models. Their urge to turn away from Stalinism and find an atmosphere where activists can breathe more easily is correct. But from the point of view of making a revolution, these strategies are not adequate.

Look at UK Uncut. It’s an impressive tool for organising one thing — protests outside of tax-dodging businesses. It provides a template, and call-outs for action, which allow a lot of people to perform one kind of action well. Taken on its own, this is good — it raises awareness of a given issue, knocks the authority of the rich, and gives people a guy experience when they take part in these protests. But it can’t go further than that. There is no way to collectively debate the next step, or, indeed, to consolidate the existing one.

You can see already, in the ludicrous actions promoting John Lewis as an alternative model for the economy, how much difficulty the network has in elaborating an alternative vision for society. Followers of UK Uncut on Twitter are reliant on the elite group at the centre of the network coming up with better ideas.

There is also a feeling among the “new”, loosely net- worked movements, that debate over ideas is unnecessarily confrontational and that it disrupts unity — that the ideas will sort themselves out over the course of the struggle. Now, this is true of UK Uncut — an ideologically loose movement can coalesce around one idea, without nitpicking about it, and pull off great actions.

But it’s only one idea, not a full programme. Also, the idea that the banks should pay tax is a very easy sell. If you want to pull off actions around one idea that it’s hard to disagree with, then you can make do without ideological debate.

In the twist and turns of a long and sometimes rapid class struggle, you will need to examine your ideas and those of your comrades to make sure you are on the right track. You — and not just you, but thousands of revolution ary class-fighters — need to learn, be trained, and train oth ers, make sacrifices for an idea you constantly question, face existential pressures, and make a long-term commitment.

You can’t do that alone. You need people around you who you can rely on, every day. You can’t use Twitter for that. It means a democratic party, a revolutionary organisation. And if I have convinced you of that, then join Workers’ Liberty, and help us create one.

• Full text: http://bit.ly/4VIVZB.
REVIEW

Religion, race and class in Israel

Two Workers' Liberty activities — Louise Gold and Rosie Huzzard — who were on a recent delegation to Israel and Palestine reflect on Louis Theroux: Ultra Zionists, shown on BBiC in early February, and the first episode of The Promise, a drama based in 1940s Palestine and modern day Israel and the West Bank, Channel 4, Sundays.

Louis Theroux is well known for his “fuzz-nail” and “hands-off” journalistic approach, and this continues to be the case in this most controversial of settings — time spent in Jerusalem and the West Bank with the ultra right-wing Jewish settlers, and those who support them.

The documentary opens with a snippet from an interview with a worn-looking Israeli man in the olive groves. Regarding the Palestinians, he proclaims, “they want to annihilate us... They want the whole thing.” This sense of victim status is reiterated throughout the documentary and is, of course, not completely groundsless, but is also reinforced with profound myth making.

 theroux spends a significant amount of the documentary with Daniel Luria, spokesperson for the group Ateret Cohanim, who facilitate the settlement of Jews in Arab areas, mainly in East Jerusalem and the Old City. Luria’s argument for this, as well as a religious righteousness, is that the Jews can either expand into Palestinian areas or “pack our bags and go back to the shores of Australia.” He forewarns them theoretically by saying “or I go back to the shores of Australia.”

Families are often placed in deliberately contentious situations, both to drive out Palestinians and to stake a claim to the land. Rent doesn’t drive people to live in this area, “what drives him is ideology.”

DISPOSSESSING PALESTINIANS

During our trip we were shown Palestinian houses that had been possessed by the IDF as military outposts. This exposes the cavalier attitude of both the state, and extremists, towards Palestinian property and livelihoods, and as such the continued trend of displacement.

Luria explains to Theroux that international Jewish donors buy up buildings in the old city. At the same time, a Palestinian family’s belongings are still in the building. A Palestinian neighbour shouts that the house being filmed was taken by the IDF as military outposts.

The argument moves from religious supremacy to race. He also explains that it is the Israeli police and army who are called out, whether it is Jews or Arabs tossing stones in Hebron. When asked whether he sees how the police and army might favour the settlers, he says, “No. That’s not democracy... They have their own government in their own municipalities.”

If the Palestinian Authority had any real control of the area to rival Israeli, they would have their own police force. The IDF has control over a small section of the land in the West Bank where there is a dense Arab population only, and Israel has control of the rest, including the borders. It is a very partial democracy. While driving around with settlers, Theroux doesn’t seem to notice that there are two separate road systems for settlers and for Palestinians.

The first in the series The Promise was shown on C4 on Sunday 5 February. In many ways it was what Theroux’s effort was not: thoroughly well researched. It was also highly dramatic in a very different way to that of “Ultra-Zionists’” hard-hitting realism. Shown through the eyes of the (at the times) almost unimaginably naïve British teenager Erin, the show uses high production values and the virtues of the landscape to full effect. It revealed through harrowing footage of Bergen-Belsen being liberated in 1945 before cutting to Jewish immigrants arriving on Palestinian shores, greeted by the British army. It took us into a bourgeois slice of glamorous modern day Israel and the more flatly oppressed occupied West Bank, before flashing back to scenes of Palestine under British mandate.

The scenes contained in them some of the most central issues to the region: immigration now and then; occupation and all that entails, including checkpoint harassment, the debate about the security wall, and methods of protest; IDF-conscription; soldiers breaking the silence; conciliatory discussion between ex-fighters from both sides; and suicide bombing. We enjoyed the episode, but in spite of the focus on the extraordinarily privileged family of Eliza in Israel and the lack, as yet, of political diversity or real engagement with the Palestinian story.

CLASS IN ISRAEL

At the Workers’ Advice Centre in Tel Aviv, they explained how the militarisation of Israel since the 1970s has pushed the Jewish working class down, into a position that left the majority in as much need of unionisation as Arab workers in the country. There is hope for militancy and solidarity beyond ex-combatants, a dynamic that is missing in “The Promise” because the central family are so horribly middle class. We doubt the drama has room in it to explore fights for workers’ rights and women’s rights in the West Bank either.

The plot touches on groups of ex-IDF soldiers who now speak out against the occupation, such as Breaking the Silence (http://www.shovrimshitika.org/index_e.asp), represented in the rebellious young son of the central family. There were many other interesting touches. Erin and Eliza’s reaction to seeing young IDF soldiers sitting in a cafe with their rifles, and the humiliation for a young Arab-Israeli citizen at the border are familiar and common reminders of the daily life in this part of the world.

Another problem was the sensational final scene which depicted a terrorist bomb exploding in an Israeli cafe. This sort of attack hasn’t happened for five years. It was the only moment that felt over the top and delivered for dramatic effect over and above authenticity. It was a shame in an otherwise more or less historically accurate and politically reasonable portrayal of the conflict.
Organising at work: “we have to take action ourselves.”

By Graeme Park, Unite shop steward

I’m an electrician and work for a company in the north-west. There are 40 of us working here and we travel all over the area. Three years ago we had no union rep and only a handful of people in the union. This was when the way the previous shop steward was treated was evt. He eventually left the company.

With no rep or any kind of organising it became a workplace were everybody just looked after themselves, laughing at the managers and fearful of the consequences of turning a blind eye when people seemed to lose control with no good explanation.

People in the workplace were those who’d been there a long time and felt they had too much to lose and also a number of young people and agency workers who didn’t feel they had enough experience or job security to take on the role of a shop steward.

Having no union meant that we couldn’t express our concerns with the fear of repercussions. Management could tell us that any changes in work conditions without any consultation. We finally decided that we’d had enough. We contacted the union and told them we were going to elect two reps. We then held a meeting with all the workers present. We spoke about how badly manage
dy and inefficient our work was treated over the previous couple of years and said that this time we were going to stand up and fight. Everybody joined the union that day.

I had a meeting with the manager in which he told me he “could do anything he wanted, it might cost him money in court but it “would probably be worth it”. I realised we would have to learn difficult and fast work hard. We attended union courses where it was made clear we had to protect each other, learn your proced
dures and have the courage to stand up for what you believe in.

TACKLING INTIMIDATION

Management tried vari
ous ways to intimidate us. The disciplinary ac
tions came thick and fast. But because of the hard work we put in, we were able to stop them. We benefited from refus
ing to accept unfair deci
dions and involving all the members in deciding what action we should take whenever possible. Good results gave us the inspira
tion to keep fighting when the intimidation started to heat up.

I was threatened and told I’d be sacked if carried on down this road.

When this didn’t work I was told I needed to think of my family and that we were wasting our time be
cause the workers would let us down. After this they asked the union to remove me from my role, as I ap
parently “only see things from the workers’ point of view”.

But the regional officer fought our corner, telling the company that when we could choose their man
agers then they could choose union reps. He then went on to watch my back.

After I returned from holidays, management again tried to set me up. I was pulled in for damaging company property and fail
ing to report it. The man
ager I had informed about the damage said he “didn’t remember” me reporting it. Luckily I was able to pro
duce dated photographs showing I had.

Recently when new workers have started they have been told not to get involved with the union or myself and that they will be “looked after” if they don’t comply. But be
cause we have told the truth about the conditions at work they have worked anyway.

We have had many highs and lows but when the union showed it was prepared to fight the workers would be “looked after” if they don’t comply. But be
cause we have told the truth about the conditions at work they have worked anyway.

Instead of saying what they can’t do they should show us what they can do. If they don’t then we will have to<br>

Save Norfolk’s Unthanked Centre!

By Jacky Offord

Norwich AWL comrades joined the Save Norfolk Coalition Against the Cuts city centre stall on Saturday 4 February bringing with them representatives from the Southwark speech therapists strike against job cuts

By Duncan Morrison

On Thursday 3 February in protest at cuts, jobs and services that are being proposed.

The therapists provide critical support to children and their families who have language and communic
ation difficulties.

Under the proposed cuts 11 out of 35 staff will lose their jobs in March. This will almost certainly be fol
lowed by more job losses when the Primary Care Trust which employs the therapists is abolished.

The strike was well-supported with over 20 thera
pissts on the picket line on Thursday morning. The strike was preceded by a rally on Wednesday evening where the strikers received support from other speech therapists in Lambeth and Islington.

There are no plans for fur
ther action at the moment.

University of Glasgow

By John Coan

On Tuesday 1 February, students at the University of Glasgow went into oc
cupation in order to save the Hetherington Re
opening under the university manage
ment from converting it into office space.

The club, which was closed in February last year, catered for mature stu
dents, post-graduates, in
ternational students and local people in the wider com
munity. The club’s closure was a bitter blow to the students societies and a
number of popular club rights.

The club also regularly hosted meetings of various student societies and a
number of popular club
rights. The Hetherington, which first opened its doors in 1954, was the only estab
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By Edward Maltby

From September 2012, universities in England will be allowed to start charging higher fees to undergraduates. The upper limit on university fees will be raised from £3,290 to £9,000.

In an attempt to sweeten the pill of the fees increase, the government had said that the top rate of £9,000 fees would only be charged “in exceptional circumstances”. However, the BBC reports that education experts, NUS President Aaron Porter, and Cambridge University management all expect most universities to charge the full amount.

It is likely that Vice-Chancellors of English universities will announce new levels of fees they plan to charge over the next few weeks. The government has set a deadline of 31 March for university managers to submit their plans for new funding and access schemes.

The student movement needs to put pressure on Vice-Chancellors not to raise tuition fees in this period — and if VCs announce increased fees, they should keep up the pressure through the next academic year to prevent their implementation.

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts has called a national day of mobilisation on 24 February, to coincide with the Universities UK Conference, a get-together for Vice-Chancellors. There will be a demonstration outside the conference on Woburn Place, London, and universities outside London will take action on their campuses.

Hull fights back

On Monday 7 February, students from Hull Students Against Fees and Cuts started an occupation of Staff House, used by Hull Uni management to host dinners.

The occupation is backed by the university UCU branch and the Students’ Union. The occupiers are holding open meetings, educational and other events, including a meeting by Workers’ Liberty activists from our Israeli-Palestine delegation.

The demands of the occupiers include: open the books on university finances; VC to refuse to raise fees; no redundancies; VC to uphold current pensions agreements with UCU; security staff should be employed in-house.

The student revolt, class struggle, and socialism: an event for young activists, Saturday 26 February

11am-6pm, Highgate Newtown Community Centre, 25 Bertram Street, London N19 5DQ

Sessions include: “Young people — our role in the class war”, with Ed Maltby (AWL and NCAFC activist) and Becky Crocker (RMT activist on London Underground) £5 waged, £4 unwaged, uni students, £3 school/college students

For more information email students@workersliberty.org or ring 07961 040 618

Peter Hartshorn reinstated: is the tide turning?

By Darren Bedford

Peter Hartshorn, vicarised RMT Industrial Rep from the Green Park group on London Underground, has been reinstated on appeal with his dismissal suspended for 52 weeks.

Peter was dismissed after he was accused of swearing at a manager, despite witnesses stating otherwise. Peter’s sacking was part of a spate of victimisations which also saw drivers’ reps Arwyn Thomas and Eamonn Lynch lose their jobs.

Speaking on the victimisations, RMT’s General Grades Committee said “Following other victimisations on London Underground, it is obvious that LU has become a ruthless anti-union employer, prepared to defy all notions of justice in its efforts to disarm this union by removing our reps. It is imperative that we take all necessary action to defend our reps, and to explain to our members the importance of doing so.”

activists hope that Peter’s reinstatement is a turn of the tide in terms of management’s attacks, and union reps. Workers have taken strike action against the sackings of Thomas and Lynch, both of whom have won interim relief appeals. The union will hold a public meeting on 17 February to continue the campaign against victimisations. For details, see tinyurl.com/defenddrops.