New battles for students and education workers

UNI CUTS HUNDREDS OF COURSES

See pages 3 and 5
**The dead end of “dissonant republicanism”**

By Liam McInulty

The murder of Constable Ronan Kerr in Omagh by dissident republicans at the beginning of May was just the latest deadly instalment in their increasingly dangerous campaign.

The Continuity IRA, with roots in a 1986 split in the Provisional movement, was the first major group to challenge Sinn Féin’s gradual abandonment of armed struggle. The most “traditional” of the armed groups, it claims the direct lineage of the Provisional Government of 1916. In the past it has dibbled with para-Celtic nationalism and “third way” distribution theories derived from Catholic social teachings. However, by all accounts it is now a newer group spearheading the latest up-surge in violence.

The Real IRA emerged in the months leading up to the Good Friday Agreement and, although it was once delibitated by others and informers, it claimed the Massereene Barracks shoot-out (March 2009) and is believed to be behind a spate of mortars and car bombs in Derry.

Since 2009 a group called Oglaigh na hEireann, a spin-off from the IRA, has been responsible for critically injuring another Catholic police officer and the scale of its operations indicate a level of expertise probably attributable to the presence of former Provisional IRA members in its ranks.

The Kerr murder was claimed by a “new” IRA also believed to be comprised of former Provisional IRA. These defections and re-groupings reflect a growing awareness that the Sinn Féin political strategy is unlikely to lead to a united Ireland.

In the last decade, Sinn Féin has subtly shifted its emphasis from “Brits Out” to the more re-formalist demand of equality for Catholics within Northern Ireland.

Although the flagrant civil injustices of the Stormont state have been redressed, as Sinn Féin spokespeople are keen to point out, the Orange State is gone, the pursuit of the civil rights agenda remains and Sinn Féin want to prove it. In a sense, the pursuit of the civil rights agenda, Sinn Féin has reaped electoral dividends. But it has also led to defections to rival groups advocating armed struggle. Although Martin McGuinness can point to the large trade union demonstrations against the last murder as evidence that the dissidents have little mass support, he is well aware that physical force republicanism has now sought a democratic mandate. It derives its legitimacy elsewhere from a particular reading of the 1916 Easter Rising and a one-sided narrative of Irish history. Talk of democratic mandates or mass support misses the point when we are dealing with armed groups.

Despite some political manoeuvres, the dissident groups all share a fetishism of physical force and state mid-70s Provisional rhetoric. As such, their ideas about their differences and geographical rather than ideological factors are probably more important in distinguishing them.

They are characterised either by ideological eclec- ticism or an almost apoliti- cal militarism.

When in the summer of 2010 the IRA opportuni- ties deepened the electoral posture on the Irish financial crisis, their solution— damaging a branch of Ul- ster Bank in Derry — was indicative of a lack of any wider political perspective.

It is probably true to say you can fill the vessel of physical force republicanism with any suitable pro- gramme, and even radical or “socialist” programs are perceived as instruments to build support for the national struggle rather than using elements of the national struggle to build support for socialism.

Nevertheless, these groups are dangerous and should be stopped before abandoning their future campaign.

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**Something old, something borrowed, something blue...**

By Dave Kirk

According to the Ob- server (24 April) leader Ed Miliband “is set to make two speeches informed by the ideas of Blue Labour over the summer, al- though inside the party he is also listening to con- tributors to a soon-to-be-published Purple Book”.

The Times (19 April) re- ports that the “Purple Book” will be diethard- Blairite — “Purple was the colour of new Labour. It’s what you got if you com- bined red and blue. It sym- bolises the need to stay on the centre ground” — and will come out about the time of Labour Party con- vention in September.

So Miliband is “listening to” — two strands of very right-wing Labour thought. The 50,000 new members who have joined the Labour Party to fight the Tories and Lib Dems, and the old Labour loyal- ists who stuck it out through the Blair years, need to organise to make some “red” Labour audible.

Blue Labour is an osten- tatiously conservative (small c) counter to “Red Toryism”, the scheme by writer Philip Blom to reframe the Tories as a party of communities rather than just of markets. Blair’s chief cham- pion, Maurice Glasman, describes it as “a com- plete agitational idea to provoke a conversation that was wrong with the Blair project”. His critique of New Labour is both very limited and reactionary.

He says Labour needs “to build a party that bro- kers a common good, that involves those people who support the EDL [the racist, Muslim-hating, street-fighting English De- fence League] within our party. Not dominant in the party, not setting the tone of the party, but just a re- search with those people that we can represent a better life for them, be- cause that’s what they want”.

He would “involve” those people not by point- ing a better way — work- class struggle — but by making them to defend and im- prove living standards in the Blair-Brown years, but by mov- ing Labour in the direction of the EDL.

He says immigration and multiculturalism, which has become “the big monster that we don’t like to talk about”, that immi- gration under Labour, he believes, served “to act as an unofficial welfare policy”. He said Labour occu- pied a “weird space where we thought that a real as- sault on the wage levelsof those people who was a positive good”.

He blames the “real as- sault” on migrant workers, not on racapacous capital- ism and New Labour’s de- cision to keep the crippling Tory anti-union laws, on the assault of the right.

On the other hand, he is the Lord Blunkett, backed by David Miliband for leader, and former Blairite minis- ter James Purnell, was seen as key supporters of Glasman.

The Labour Party in is the middle of a period of flux when a genuine work- class socialist voice is needed against cuts and the assault of the right. Unfortunately the left in the party is not yet in a state to take the field, let alone win the battle of ideas.

Workers’ Liberty will continue to fight inside the party and without organisations to left around the fight for a workers’ government.
London Met cuts: attack on working-class students

By Ed Maltby

London Metropolitan University has announced a massive wave of course closures. The proposals will see courses cut down to 160 from 577. The main targets of these cuts will be the Fine Art and Performing Arts. The only degree programme in Caribbean studies in the UK will also be shut down.

The university has been facing a severe deficit after a crisis in 2009 saw it lose £36 million of government funding (which it had falsely claimed from HJ IE before providing inflated figures for student numbers).

By Darren Bedford

Nearly 75% of universities who have declared their fees for 2012 have opted to charge the maximum £6,000. Universities would be allowed to charge up to £9,000, which had previously indicated that £6,000 would be the effective maximum that universities would be allowed to charge and £9,000 only in “exceptional circumstances”. As recently as March 2011, Nick Clegg stated that universities “can’t charge £9,000 unless they’ve given permission to do so.” However, the OfS for Fair Access (OFSA), tasked with scrutinising universities over their fees and expected by some to intervene to stop some institutions from charging the maximum figure, has said it does not expect to exercise its powers to intervene if universities from charging over £6,000 without a detailed plan to increase intake of poorer students.

By Claire Locke, London Met SU President (personal capacity)

The people who will be affected by these cuts are students from working-class backgrounds, parents, people who wouldn’t have had the opportunity to come to university if it wasn’t for London Met. London Met management is dictating to working-class people what they should be allowed to study, and that is completely obscene. This university changes lives.

It seems that senior management are trying to strip the university of academic subjects and the humanities, and I think they’re trying to turn London Met into a business school.

London Met — vulnerable groups being attacked, people only being allowed to study subjects that management deems to be of value — is a representation of all the bad things happening in wider society. A class division is being created.

They want education for working-class people to be commercialised, controlled by industries and large corporations. So, for example, rather than making services function and sustain themselves, instead they’re selling them off in bits and pieces to make private providers rich.

What’s happening at London Met is definitely of national significance. Look across the whole sector — they’re doing it to A-levels too, reducing the range of A-levels that can be provided. People in working-class areas only get only a certain service, but people who live in middle-class areas get a first-class service, access to libraries and so on. Couple this with the fact that working-class people are being cleared out of certain areas due to cutbacks in benefits, it’s almost class cleansing.

The campaign is going to lobby the people who make decisions at the university. This isn’t just London Met, so we’re going to lobby the government.

We’re composing a letter that’s going to be sent out to state our position, saying we will take action and the unions will take industrial action. Students will take direct action. We will do whatever is necessary to stop this attack on our society.

This isn’t just an attack on our education, it’s not just about London Met, it’s about everybody. Everybody needs to stand up because together we can make a difference.

Having burst of action among students is a good thing, but united action can help, united action can make a difference. I suppose what I’m saying is, we need solidarity!
Anarchism is the direct action, class-struggle way

Who is the violent perpetrator? The student who refuses to be bullied and stands shoulder to shoulder with everyone fighting for the same cause; or the armoured policeman who clubs children and hospitalises people refusing to accept injustice? Who is the threat? The masked student, or the police; hard hats, shields, batons, cuffs? 

Who retails "policemen are just workers in uniform" or "they’re just doing their job"? Contemplate this. 


The police have proven time and again, they do not protect us. They protect the richest, whitest politicians of the world and breed murderers rarely brought to trial. Do not swallow the lies of the papers declaring the police to be innocent containing a violent mob.

If you don’t believe us, join us on a demonstration and when you find yourself nose to nose with a baton; you may stop opposing.

One need only look closer at those who condemn us. Careerist, Labour wannabes who slip through the crowds... we are the majority, and working together, we can become ungovernable.

A fighter for Celtic fans? In his first electoral outing after being expelled from the Labour Party (Respect, 2004) George Galloway promoted himself as ‘a fighter for Muslims’.

Treading on Scilly (Isles of Scilly, 2008) a。 Galloway was investigated for himself as a ‘fighter for Muslims’. Trying again in Scotland on 5 May, he now pitches himself as the champion of... illustrated five.Working together, we can become ungovernable.

A riot is the language of the unheard (Martin Luther King, 1963).

Anarchism is the direct-action, class-struggle way. Trying again in 2008 on local elections, he now pitches himself as ‘a fighter for Muslims’.

VIOLENT

UNIONS

Unions are often based in an HQ distant from the actual workplace. Their leaders are paid a significant wage, and they are often hijacked by careerists or patronising academics who think they have an authority to speak on behalf of their members.

They are usually paid on a sabbatical and no longer do the same work as everybody else, and spend more time in meetings negotiating with managers, than on the ground empowering workers to take control of their workplace. This is in many cases the only way for the movement to be simple and not vitiated.

For AWL to publish such incorrect articles such as “Open letter to a direct-action militant” (Solidarity 3-200), is insulting but also lauding the very arguments of anarchists (and leftists) which are clear, the article is clearly aimed at anarchists, as elite, unhelpful and merely symbolic is concerning.

Smashing up some osteodontastic symbols of capitalist excess certainly makes a more immediate impact than plugging away at the trade union branches to demystify and radicalise them.

Firstly, the author has clearly failed to read Soffid’s open letter to UK Uncut, http://bit.ly/bSiplp. This article directly states that we must go further in our direct action, whilst not compromising action taken.

Secondly, whilst many anarchists openly criticise the roles and structures of the union, socialists are often more respectably reformist, if not as a principle. They have realized that the labour movement is frequently a political and bureaucratic place to spend your time. So why not use that time to create a labour movement of accessible, transparent and self-organised groupings, to enable us to respond to these cuts as effectively as possible and in genuine solidarity. “But, conversely, you “need” the labour movement. Your revolutionary anti-capitalist instincts cannot become a political reality without an agency capable of giving them meaningful content. That agency is the working class.” What anarchist radicalism is discredited by the working class is this, of which any sense and is highly patronising.

The working class is not the same as Leninist tactics. If anything, it is anarchism that militantly supports a mass movement of the working class and reclaims the power. If you believe in a socialist society, you must believe in the working class. They have the power. They must be the agents to control power. Their leaders are paid a significant wage, as decided by the working class. Their priorities are of the working class. They must be accountable to the working class. They must be the only political organisation of the working class. If there were genuine anarchists in the UK, then maybe the credit crunch might not have happened. The financial system has been run by the bankers, accountable to nobody. A deregulated system meant that the banks operated like gambling casinos. Governments have been too timid in monitoring and controlling the system. And we’re paying the price in lost jobs.

Direct action is a necessary tactic that enables individual citizens to be at the forefront of their own movement, to make mass decisions in a safe space without being dictated to by a political party or any persuasion. Anarchism is a tool to do this, despite the sordid propaganda of most, on all sides.

Democracy is key

The AWL is right to demand “democracy at every level” of society. It’s important (Solidarity 200), because as workers opposing cuts, we would be demanding a more greater say in how our workplaces and communities are run.

If there was more genuine democracy in the UK, then maybe the credit crunch might not have happened. The financial system has been run by the bankers, accountable to nobody. A deregulated system meant that the banks operated like gambling casinos. Governments have been too timid in monitoring and controlling the system. And we’re paying the price in lost jobs.

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Socialism must mean more democracy.

Catherine Kemp, Shropshire

Was the AWL right to expand on London Underground?

At the start of this year, Workers’ Liberty member Janine Booth was elected to represent London transport workers on RMT’s Executive. Workers’ Liberty members on the Tube decided to set up our own separate AWL branch, voting to recruit a new AWL member.

We were already in a good position to recruit. Over years, we have built up a group of activists around our rank-and-file bulletin, Tulsehoover, which celebrates its 20th birthday this year. While other left groups had been preaching leftist sounding slogans, or cozying up to the union leadership to advance themselves, Baptists have been listening...
A big new wave of uni cuts

From the Tory-Liberal government’s huge cut in government money for university teaching budgets will follow, for all universities unable to compete in the £8000-fee top end of the market, big cuts in courses; and for all universities, a re-gearing to market criteria.

London Metropolitan University is leading the way by cutting down from 577 courses to 160. Vice Chancellor Malcolm Gillies says that his cuts package is aimed at making the university “lean”, “competitive” and “tightly organised”. The university is being re-invented as a profit-gouging business, whose portfolio of courses will lurch around with the market.

Across the board, spending cuts will be applied strategically, not to trim, but to re-shape universities. In the Tory-Liberal vision, the university will sell itself as offering “good returns” on the “investment” that students make when they take on tens of thousands of pounds of debt, much of it commercial, in order to buy a degree. The new “lean” university will operate like any other cutting-edge capitalist company by busting unions and over-rudding, “inefficient” practices like internal democracy. University College London is leading the way here, outsourcing cleaning and security jobs in order to smash up the University’s Union branch.

Students have to re-organise and re-group to win this continuing fight. There has been a full in activity in recent months after the battles of the winter. Some students have been demoralised by the movement’s failure to stop the abolition of EMA (the small payment made to 16-19 year old students for higher education, further education and apprenticeships) and the increase in university fees.

But the movement of the winter did win concessions: the limited student support scheme that will replace EMA has been made much more extensive than was originally intended. That movement has activated and politically educated many thousands of students, further education and university students; it has left behind new student anti-cuts groups in many towns. Those students and groups need to step their activity up a gear and get ready for the battles to come.

NETWORK

The national network that brought together local anti-cuts groups, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), has suffered from the lull. It needs to be re-invigorated and re-launched as a campaign with firm democratic structures.

It must become accessible to student activist groups from all over the UK. A “loose network” is not good enough.

When students return from the summer, probably to find management in the process of making cuts and redundancies, our movement needs to hit the ground running. We need a national demonstration. The leadership of the National Union of Students was able to win a vote at NUS conference against holding a national demonstration in the first term, but that vote did not reflect student opinion. Student activists in the NCAFC have launched a campaign to force the NUS leadership to organise a first-term demonstration, and to organise one ourselves if the NUS won’t.

Direct action from students — occupations, sit-ins, demonstrations and more — is needed to win this fight. But students cannot win it alone. The government’s programme for higher education is an attack on trade unions, and it is a component of the overall attack on public services. Trade unionists and students must fight hand-in-hand against the government, Vice-Chancellors and education sector vulture-capitalists.

We must structure our campaigns in ways that mutually support one another, we must act in solidarity to defend one another. That means communication and unity between activists on the ground, rather than sub-ordinating student campaigns to the timetables of slow-moving trade union bureaucracies.

30 June and after

Teachers, civil servants, and other workers are set to strike on 30 June against the coalition government’s increases in pension contributions, cuts in pension provision, and raising of the pension age.

At Easter (22-26 April) the National Union of Teachers conference voted to ballot union members for a series of strikes. Other big public service union conferences are coming up soon. The civil service union PCS meets in Brighton on 16-20 May. Its Executive has already decided to ballot members on strike action, soon enough for them to join NUJ on 30 June.

The lecturers’ union UCU, which meets in Harrogate on 28-30 May, is also expected to join in on 30 June. Unison, the biggest union in local government and health, meets in Manchester on 19-24 June. Its health sector conference was on 4-6 April.

GMB, a general union with a lot of members in the public sector, meets in Brighton on 5-9 June. Unite, the other big general union, has no policy conference this year, only a rules-revision conference.

Activists will seek to use the union conferences to put pressure on the leaders and to rally members who are pushing for a fight.

They will demand support for the 30 June action, which Unison leaders have already shown they don’t want to give. They will press for 30 June to be followed up quickly by further strikes, including rolling and selective strikes, on a rising tempo — rather than being a sporadic protest, to be followed only by possible further sporadic protest days many months later.

In PCS, they will argue against the union leaders tucking away the huge job cuts in the civil service as a side-issue figuring on the prospectus of the 30 June strike, as an add-on to the protest on pensions, but not as something on which the union has definite plans for action to win even limited concessions.

Though the 26 March anti-cuts demonstration was big, it didn’t show a large body of workers, yet, confidently and insistently pressing the union leaders to organise rapid and coordinated action against the cuts.

That is no surprise given the defeats of recent decades, the corrosive impact of the New Labour regime of 1997-2010, and the training that union leaders (including avowedly-left ones) have given to the working class in seeing industrial action as chiefly a means of occasional protest.

It means that anti-cuts action is more likely, for now, to take the form of gradually-brewing, and fluctuating, ferment. It weighs against the possibility of a rapid explosion, but does not exclude it. Confidence will grow in action.

The contradiction between, on the one hand, the scale of the cuts and the threat they pose to the very fabric of the labour movement, and, on the other, the stance of the union leaders, sharpens the case for a rank-and-file movement in the unions. The cumulative impact of years of union setbacks creates difficulties for building new rank and file networks; but activists will look for openings.

The local anti-cuts committees are for now the main place where we can build the necessary cross-union rank-and-file committee.

They must support and promote all the rearguard action that will take place in local government services as the cuts work through, but also reach out to agitate on the welfare benefit cuts and join the gradually-swelling protest over the cuts and marketisation in health.

They must resist any drift for the anti-cuts committees, after council budget-setting, to shrivel into caucuses of left-group activists.

More: www.workersliberty.org/pointers
Tunisia: we should push for a workers’ government

By Ahlem Belhadj, a feminist activist in Tunisia and a leader of the LGO (Ligue de la gauche ouvrière, Left Workers’ League)

On 24 February there was the movement that we call here “Casbah 2” — more than 300,000 people demanding that Ghannouchi go. On 27 February Ghannouchi and the other Rally for Constitutional Democracy (RCD) ministers resigned.

Everybody declared a “technocratic” government to lead the country “administratively”. But in my opinion the far left committed an error in demanding a “technocratic” government. The January 14th Front [a coalition of left groups] made the mistake of not advancing the demand for a workers’ and popular government.

The new government has come to satisfy the popular demand taken responsibility for the many break-ins within the RCD regime. It has dissolved the Rassamuttion Constitution, the RCD, the former ruling party. At the same time it has committed the government completely in continuity on the economic and social levels, even more than continuity, because it is even more linked than its predecessors to US and French imperialism.

The government has also announced the dissolution of the security service, Ben Ali’s political police. They first announced that this service consisted of 200 persons! And they understood that this wouldn’t stand, so they came up with other figures. The known figures indicate that the body of the police comprised 120,000 officers, today they tell us it was 50,000. What is that that has been dissolved? What remains? We don’t know!

At the same time there is the emergence of revolutionary councils in the regions and in the different localities. There are many things being done at the level of self-organisation because the municipalities have been dissolved and the councils, self proclaimed by the people, are in the position of managing local affairs.

At the central level, to counteract the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Revolution [created on 11 February], there has been the creation of the “Higher Committee for the Realisation of the Objectives of the Revolution, for Political Reform and Democratic Transition” [ISPLROR, on 17 March]. On this “Higher Committee” 71 persons have been nominated, of which 17 represent associations and 12 political parties, while 42 are individuals.

There are very few representatives of these local committees in it. Some people on it are from the left or far left. The parties which make up the January 14th Front did not go collectively — as the Front — to discuss this proposal. Some groups, factions or parties agreed to be there independently of others and three parties are represented there officially.

The creation of this “Higher Committee” came as a response to the request of the National Council which wanted to be recognised by the president and to have the prerogatives of legislating — by agreement with the central leadership of the UCPT, which did not consult the unions on this question.

For the moment forms of workers’ control are not really developing in the factories. In some enterprises belonging to families linked to Ben Ali, the workers have found themselves without any management — they have fled — and there has been a responsibility for the management of these enterprises. There have also been quite a few farms which have been taken over by the workers, who have expelled those Ben Ali’s government had given these state properties. Around 80 big farms are involved.

In the educational structures also, there has been the election of teachers who direct them — rather than them being named from above. In public transport there has been a big strike to change the chief executive who was a man from Libya. But this is not very convincing.

Translated/abridged from an interview by Jan Malewski on 16 March, published in Inprecce magazine, www.inprecce.fr/article-inprecce?id=1136

Osama bin Laden: death of an enemy

By Martin Thomas

Osama bin Laden targeted ordinary working people — nearly 3000 of them on 11 September 2001 — in the confident belief that the imperialist government of the USA would be more hurt by that than his own followers, on the fascistic far right, would.

Anyone who cares for working people, and opposes bin Ladean’s program of terrorising religious fundamentalism, will be pleased by his death on 1 May at the hands of US forces.

We do not applaud or congratulate the US military. Their capture of bin Laden came after eight and a half years in which the US government and its allies have:

- turned Iraq into a hell of sectarian civil war and almost random reprisals by US troops;
- trashed civil liberties in the USA, Britain, and other countries;
- fired Afghanistan in a war which looks likely to end in at least a partial revival of Taliban power.

In 2001 we warned that the US-British attack on Afghanistan, in reprisal for 11 September, might well “end with bin Laden, or his similars, still at large and active, and new masses of recruits for them and other terrorist-fundamentalists”.

We were right. Ahmed Rashid, an expert on the Taliban and Al Qaeda, writes: “Before 2001 there were no known al-Qaeda cells in Europe except for... one in Hamburg... Today every single European country has an al-Qaeda cell”.

The principles are the same as those in our response to Libya today. We will not back a NATO intervention gets rid of Gaddafi. We will not mobilise to try to stop NATO imposing a no-fly zone or bombing Qaddafi’s command centres (both of which are not imperialist invasion). But we will not endorse, applaud, or congratulate NATO.

6 SOLIDARITY

VOICES FROM THE ARAB REVOLT

Osama bin Ladean rebels fight for life

By Martyn Hudson

Qaddafi has been drilling himself in the battle flags of the past and appealing to international opinion in order to achieve a ceasefire which would provide a cover for the complete elimination of the rebel positions in Misrata.

Draped in his Punic Roman toga whilst addressing “his” people, he has also received support from a super-team of pro-regime “anti-imperialist” international including Daniel Ortega, Castro, Chavez and Kim Jong-II. The death of his youngest son in the NATO raids on his Tripoli compound has led to further appeals to NATO to back off. Some Tony MBL’s are receptive.

The rebels themselves insist that no settlement can be based on the perpetuation of Qaddafi’s family clique.

The pro-regime militias have continued to target journalists, bloggers and paramedics, and more reports are coming out of wider atrocities in the early period of the uprising against civilians including widespread rapes and the mass murder of pro-rebel troops.

Libya’s tribal complexity could have a serious impact on the struggle. Rebel spokespeople have spoken out against descent into tribalism and factionalism. The regime has threatened to use tribal militias against the people of Misrata, implying a threat that they would be particularly unstrained in their brutality.

However, only Qaddafi’s own Qadhafia tribe is totally loyal. The Warfalla tribe of Tripolitania, who provide many of the personnel of the security services, have wavered backward and forward between the regime and the rebellion. Other tribes, including the Tuaregs, the Toubalas, and the Maghara, who have been particularly persecuted by the regime, have entirely supported the rebellion.

Over the last two days Libyan regime incursions into Tunisia to attack Berber insurgents at the crossing points have been documented. The Zuwaya tribe of Cyrenaica (Senussi loyalists) have consistently committed themselves to the revolution.

The tribes will be important in democratic post-Qaddafi Libya but we must hope, as the rebel authorities do, that there is an overriding democratic mandate from the whole people of Libya, and a rejection of communalist politics. Misrata itself is still under blockade under the most terrible conditions. Although there have been many attempts by the pro-tyrant left to downplay Qaddafi’s drive for slaughter, and to brand the rebel movement reactionary, it is clear that the rebels form a genuine citizens’ army.

They are not a socialist or working-class force — but if they stand for limited goals of an open civil society and multi-party government against Qaddafi, then that should be enough for the left.

Qaddafi himself has tried to buy off sections of the rebels by offering them cars and substantial cash payments. As one rebel, reported in the Guardian, said, the revolution was never about money, it was simply a refusal to submit to execution when asked to lay down arms against the regime.

The rebels know the fate of those in the past who have offered any challenge to the Qaddafi family business.

To describe the uprising as about securing the oil lines for “imperialism” or being a proxy of sinister bourgeois forces is nonsense. Of course, this is a bourgeois revolution, in the usual manner of bourgeois revolutions — contradictory, confused, and often unaware of its own nature. But the rebels know that if they lose militarily, then they will be physically eliminated.

In the same way as the Petrograd commune, in 1919, fought for its existence, knowing that the counter-revolutionaries would kill them all if the city fell, so free Libya fights for its very existence.
Iraqi government cracks down on unions

The General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW) has called for support from the international labour movement against a crackdown by the Maliki government in Iraq. According to the GFIW a ministerial committee has “dismissed” the Executive Bureau of the GFIW and “authorized” the Ministerial Preparatory Committee (MPC) to renew and issue memberships to trade unions. These measures “pave the way for rigging [the] elections” for union committees now due to be held by ministerial decree.

The GFIW called upon... Iraq’s civil society organisations... the International Confederation of Trade Unions, the ILO... to show solidarity and support.

Although May Day saw a workers’ demonstration in Baghdad demanding union rights (picture above) we understand that other union organisations, including the Federation of Workers’ Councils and Unions of Iraq (FWCUI), have faced similar government interference. • More details: www.iraqitradeunions.org

Egyptian trade unionists speak in Britain

Between 18 and 20 May, Egyptian trade unionists Kamal Abbas and Tamer Fathy will be visiting Britain, hosted by the Egypt Workers’ Solidarity campaign.

The Egyptian revolution was prepared by groups of workers struggling to build independent trade unions — and, since the fall of Mubarak, union organisation, workers’ protests and strikes have spread like wildfire.

Kamal and Tamer are organisers for the Centre for Trade Union and Workers’ Services and the new Egyptian Federation for Independent Unions. They will be speaking at the Fire Brigades Union conference in Southport on 19 May, and at EWS public meetings in Liverpool on 19 May and London on 20 May.

Liverpool: 6pm, Thursday 19 May, Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Ranelagh Place. For more information ring Elaine on 07733 248 530

London: 6.30pm, Friday 20 May, Room 63, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square. Ring Mark on 07984 163 770

www.egyptworkerssolidarity.org / info@egyptworkerssolidarity.org

Hamas-Fatah agreement

By Mark Osborn

The Palestinian secular nationalist party, Fatah, has reached an agreement with the Islamist movement Hamas to form an interim Palestinian government and to organise a general election.

The agreement goes alongside an Egyptian promise to open up the Egypt-Gaza border. Speaking on Egyptian state television, Fatah central committee member Azzam al-Ahmad said the election would take place within a year.

The formal, detailed agreement is expected to be signed on 4 May. Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal arrived in Cairo on 1 May to take part in the formal signing, which has been brokered by Egypt.

As details of the accord were announced, 100 people went to the Square of the Unknown Soldier in Gaza to celebrate. They were beaten by Hamas police thugs. Hamas has built a one-party clerical state in Gaza and tolerates little opposition — even, in this case, an independent manifestation of support for its own policy.

One proposed effect of the deal will be that Fatah will be allowed back into Gaza and Hamas allowed to operate openly in the West Bank. How that works in practice remains to be seen, but if the deal results in more political space in Gaza and the West Bank, this might be exploited by democratic opponents of Hamas.

Fatah holds power in the occupied West Bank. Hamas, which won the last parliamentary election in 2006, routed Abbas’ forces in 2007 to take state power in Gaza. Both sides have heavily repressed their rivals in the areas under their control, although much more political space exists in the West Bank.

The Hamas-Fatah deal is a product of the recent upheaval in Egypt and represents an Egyptian policy shift. Egypt’s military is aiming to gain leverage over Israel, mend fences with Iran, and gain credibility among a largely pro-Palestinian population. They are shifting Egyptian foreign policy away from the US and towards re-establishing Egypt as a major independent force in the region.

Fatah’s President Mahmoud Abbas has lost his patron in Egypt, President Mubarak. Hamas may face a similar problem, as Syria’s president Bashar Assad is facing his own uprising.

The reconciliation is backed by Iran. And the Syrians have followed the Iranian lead.

Egypt signed a peace accord with Israel in 1979. Israel worried that the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak would mean the scrapping of the peace treaty, although one of the first announcements made by the Egyptian military was to confirm their commitment to peace with Israel.

Israel has denounced the agreement. Israeli President Shimon Peres said, “The agreement between Fatah and the terror organisation Hamas is a fatal mistake that will prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and will sabotage chances of peace and stability in the region.”

Hamas’ description of the killing of Osama bin Laden as the assassination of “an Arab holy warrior” will not ease Israeli Jewish fears.

However, the current right-wing Israeli government has offered little to the Palestinians. Abbas has said he will not return to US-sponsored peace negotiations until settlement building is halted in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. As a way of punishing Abbas, and applying pressure, Israel has suspended tax transfers to the Palestinians. Reuters reports that Israel’s Finance Minister Yvval Steinitz has suspended a routine handover of 300 million shekels ($88 million) in customs and other levies that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinians under interim peace deals.

The payments make up 70% of Palestinian Authority revenue. Hassan Abu Libdeh, the Palestinian economy minister, said the PA would be unable to pay salaries of its employees if the transfers were blocked. The PA pays the wages of 150,000 people in the West Bank and Gaza.

The US says it will keep funding the PA. A State Department spokesperson said, “If a new Palestinian government is formed, we will assess it based on its policies and [that] will determine the implications” for future aid.
**Syria: revolt at a turning point**

By Dan Katz

The confrontation between the Syrian police state and the popular movement is now in a decisive phase. Either regime repression will become so excessive that it may lose support from the population, or the resistance will make major gains. The main question now is whether Syria will see a popular revolution or a military coup.

The Assad regime is facing increasing domestic and international opposition. The opposition is more fragmented than ever before, with a variety of groups competing for influence. However, the opposition is also becoming more united in its calls for the Assad regime to be overthrown.

The international community is not unified in its response to the situation in Syria. Some countries, such as the United States and France, are calling for military action against the regime. Others, such as Russia and China, are opposed to military intervention.

The Assad regime is supported by Iran and Russia, which have provided military and financial aid. However, the regime's allies are not united in their support, and some are beginning to distance themselves from the regime.

The opposition is led by a wide range of groups, including political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations. The most significant opposition group is the Syrian National Coalition, which represents a broad range of political and social groups.

The Assad regime is facing economic difficulties, with high inflation and unemployment. The regime's popularity is also declining, with widespread protests and strikes calling for regime change.

The Assad regime has responded to the opposition with violence, arresting and killing protesters. The regime has also used the media to spread propaganda and control information.

The opposition has responded with civil disobedience, protests, and strikes. The opposition's efforts have been supported by international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union.

The Assad regime is facing a serious internal crisis, with increasing opposition and military weakness. The regime is facing a tipping point, and the outcome is uncertain.

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**Syria's people are fighting for democratic rights and freedoms**

Syria's people oppose the regime's use of violence and repression. The regime has been using violence and repression to maintain power, and the opposition has been using non-violent resistance to challenge the regime.

The regime's violent response to the opposition has included arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The regime has also used the media to spread propaganda and control information.

The opposition's efforts have been supported by international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union.

The regime is facing a serious internal crisis, with increasing opposition and military weakness. The regime is facing a tipping point, and the outcome is uncertain.

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**Oppose deportations to Iran!**

Six Iranian refugees are now in their fifth week of a hunger strike to demand asylum in the UK and protest against deportation by the Home Office.

On Friday 6 May supporters will march to the Home Office in Westminster to demand fair treatment for refugees. The six were tortured and imprisoned for their involvement in opposition to the Iranian regime. But despite clear evidence of this, the Home Office has refused to let them stay in the UK.

Facing deportation, they took drastic action: four of them have sent their mouths together in protest; by Friday all will have gone 32 days without food. They have been kept out of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) headquarters in Croydon, and Amnest y International in Clerkenwell.

Their case highlights the rotten state of UK asylum policy. Rather than support refugees, the UK Border Agency operates a systematic policy of disbelief, ignorance, confusion, and abuse. They have signed up to a new official policy of “asylum refusal over asylum.”

The hunger strikers will be on the march in wheelchairs. Bring banners, drums, music, and passion.

Stop ethnic cleansing in Essex

Resist the evictions at Dale Farm!

Dale Farm, the UK’s largest traveller site, home to 1,000 people, is under imminent threat of eviction, by Tory-run Basildon council. The people facing eviction have not been offered suitable alternative space or accommodation. Get in touch to help resist this: http://dalefarm.wordpress.com/savedalefarm@gmail.com
We continue our series of articles by James Connolly about the 1913-14 Labour War in Dublin, and the power of the Irish movement. In December 1913, a meeting of the TUC conference considered a militant motion in favour of solidarity action to support Dublin. Let us, just for convenience sake, take up the fight at the moment it became a subject of national action on the part of the British labour movement.

A public meeting had been proclaimed in Dublin in a brazen illegal manner. For declaring that this proclamation was illegal, and addressing it to the working classes, there were leaders of the masses as distinguished by ordinary times and ignominy, when suddenly some great event takes place towards Dublin the working-class movement of Great Britain reached its highest point of moral grandeur – attained for a moment to a realisation of that sublime unity towards which the best of us had so continually aspired. Could any feeling but have been crystallised into organic expression by the whole of the real social elements? Certainly, who, recognising the wonderful leap forward of our class, would have hastened to burn behind us the boats that might otherwise have been so usefully employed for the spread of an idea of union around Dublin and division, could we have found labour leaders capable enough to demand that not the working class, but its collective soul it should hasten to express itself as betitled that soul and not be fettered by the rules, regulations and codes of organisations conceived in the olden outworn spirit of sectional jealousies; could these things have but been vouchsafed to us, what a new world could now be opening before the working men.

Consider what Dublin meant to you all! It meant that the whole force of organised labour should stand behind each unit of organisation in each and all of its battles, that no company, battalion or brigade should henceforth be allowed to face the enemy alone, and that the capitalist would be taught that when he fought a union anywhere he must be prepared to fight all unions everywhere. For the first days and weeks of the struggle, all labour stood behind Dublin, and Dublin rejected. Dublin suffered some temporary reversions, but expiated that even in its suffering it was the medium for the apostle of a rejuvenating idea. How often have I heard the responsive cheer to the question whether they would be prepared to stand by others as these others had stood by them!

Wilson’s New Year resolution. We asked our friends of the transport trade unions to isolate the capitalist class of Dublin, and we asked the other unions to back them up. But to accede in the face of the overmatch of the enemy by giving way we had next to the end of the whole of our funds. We argued that a strike is an attempt to stop the capitalist from carrying on his business, that the success or failure of the struggle entirely upon the success or non-success of the capitalist to do without the strikers. If the capitalist is able to carry on his business without the strikers, then the strike is lost, even if the strikers receive more in strike pay than they formerly did in wages. We said that if scabs are working a ship and union men discharge in another port the boat so loaded, then those union men are strike breakers, since they help the capitalist in question to carry on his business. That if union seamen man a boat discharged by scabs, these union seamen or firemen are by the same reason strike-breakers, as also are the railwaymen or carters who assist in transporting the goods handled by the scabs for the capitalist who is fighting his business. In other words, we appealed to the collective soul of the workers against the collective hatred of the capitalist.

ASKED

We asked for no more than the logical development of the idea of one united working class of Ireland. The working class of Ireland should help us to prevent the Dublin capitalistic system carrying on its business without us. We asked for the Isolation of the capitalists of Dublin, and for an answer the leaders of the British labour movement proceeded calmly to isolate the working class of Dublin.

As an answer to those who supported our request for the isolation of Dublin we were told that a much better plan would be to increase the subsidies to enable us to increase strike pay. As soon as this argument had served its purpose, the subsidies fell off, and the “Dublin Fund” grew smaller and smaller as if by a pre-arranged plan. We had rejected the last terms offered by the employers on the strength of this talk of increased supplies, and as soon as that last attempt at settlement thus fell through, the supplies gradually froze up instead of being increased as we had been promised. In addition to this the National Railwaymen, whilst in attendance at the Special Conference in London on 9 December, had actually in their pockets the arrangements for the re-starting of work of the Western, North-Western and South-Western boat at the North Wall of Dublin, and in the train returning to Dublin the next day, had the line being re-opened. No vote was taken of the men on strike; they were simply ordered back by their officers and told that if they did not return to their work their pay would be stopped. The Seamen’s and Firemen’s Union in Dublin were next ordered to man the boats of the Head Line, and being disarmed by free labour men supplied by the Shipping Federation.

In both Dublin and Belfast the members refused, and they were then informed that union men would be brought from Great Britain to take their places. Union men to be brought from Britain to take the place of members of the same union who refused to desert their brothers of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union.

We were attempting to hold up Guiness’ porter. A consignment was sent to Sligo for shipment there. The local Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union official winded me for instructions. I wired to hold it up; my men obeyed, and it was removed from Sligo, railed to Derry, and there on board by members of Mr. James Sexton’s National Union of Dockers on ships manned by members of Mr. Havelock Wilson’s National Union of seamen and discharged in Liverpool by members of Mr. James Sexton’s Union.

When the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company was still insisting upon carrying the goods of our worst enemy, Jacob’s (who is still enforcing the agreement denounced by Sir Henry)推向 Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union, we do not blame Joe very much. He had been dis-appointed by Mr. Joe Houghton of the Scottish Dockers that his union would not hold up any boat for us unless joint action was taken by the National Transport Workers’ Federation. As on a previous occasion, his members at Ayr had worked coal boats belonging to a Belfast firm that was making war upon the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union; we do not blame Joe very much. He had been disappointed.

But why go on? Sufficient to say that the working class unity of the first days of the Dublin fight was sacrificed in the interests of sectional officiousness. The officials failed to grasp the opportunity offered to them to make a permanent reality of the union of working class forces brought into being by the spectacle of rebellion, martyrdom and misery exhibited by the workers of Dublin. All England and Scotland could have been on a working class official-dom and working class rank-and-file alike responded to the call of inspiration; it would have raised us all upward and onward towards our common emancipation. But sectionalism, intrigues and old-time jealousies damned us in the hour of victory, and officialdom was the first to fall to the tempter.

And so we Irish workers must go down into Hell, bow out to the last of the star-drapers, have our leaders be seared by the iron of his hatred, and instead of the sacramental wafer of brotherhood and common sacrifice, at the feet of the devil, about to betray, Dublin is isolated.

• From Forward, 9 February 1914
• Rest of the series: bit.ly/3qyAEI

The Masses of the Classes

The Men of Man

The Solidation of Dublin

By Dominic Behan: Irish Workers’ Voice, Dublin, 1915

Tune: Brennan on the Moor

By a scarlet, iron fist.

There lies a page in history,
When workers first fought back,
And the might of exploitation
At last began to crack.

Chorus

For Connolly was there,
Great, brave, undaunted,
James Connolly.

When the bosses tried to sweeten the men,
Away on Glasgow’s Clyde,
A voice cried rolling clear and strong:
Soon stopped them in their stride.

Chorus

And then in Belfast City,
The workers lived in hell,
Until at last they gained,
And all the world can tell.

Chorus

To smash the Dublin unions

By James Connolly

The scabs they did enlist,
But all their craft was shattered
By a scarlet, iron fist.

Chorus

They say that he was murdered,
Shot, dying, in a chair.

Final chorus:

For Connolly will be there,
Great, brave, undaunted,
James Connolly will be there.
By their heroes shall we know them.

Reason in Revolt
By Sean Matanna

This year, again, on the 95th anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916, which triggered a series of events leading to Ireland’s war of independence, official celebrations in Dublin and elsewhere were low-key. The scaling-down dates back to the 1980s. Sean Matanna, who co-produced the film (for a forlorn survivor of Solidarity), No. 482, 11 April 1991.

This year’s markedly muted celebrations in Dublin to mark the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916, and of the martyrdom before the British firing squads in Dublin and on the gallows in Pentonville Jail of the founders of the Catholic Irish state, reminded me how starkly people, classes and creeds are in their heroes.

From Lenin to Yeltsin is a long way down...the descent from Wolfe Tone to Ian Paisley is even longer and steeper. In Britain it isn’t “mainstream” any more think much of the World War Two heroes whose very stiff-upper-lip exploits help to define the present. The blind and panicky vengefulness of Ireland’s-huckster bourgeoisie, to be exact.

For many decades they have endorsed and propagated a version of the story of Ireland’s unequal contest with England, burned into a splendid epic legend. The long half-forgotten myths of ancient pre-Christian Ireland — such as the story of the young champion Cuchulainn — were rediscovered, refurnished, and woven into the fabric of living history by men like Padraig Pearse. They took heroes like Cuchulainn, the great warrior who died on his feet, having tied himself to a tree to face his foes, his wounds stanching with moss, and Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and on the cross, as their inspiration for the lives they expounded in political struggle.

Fagan myth and Christian myth were merged and fused with ancient and modern history — and with the history of Christianity. Henry Joy McCracken, 200 years ago: “The rich alcohol-bodies across Catholic nationalist Ireland will have re- passed a “loyal” resolution denouncing the Rising and its leaders, with moss, and Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and on the cross, as their inspiration for the lives they expounded in political struggle.

One of the more impressive aspects of the film, I thought, was the analysis of the State’s role in the dispute. The filmmaker has managed to convey the varied and multiple attacks by all sides, the bosses off the hook — it’s all in the film, and all explained clearly and effectively. This aspect of the film helps to frame the dispute in a wider context and illustrates a number of wider lessons that we should be aware of and be able to deal with when taking action ourselves.

The Brent Trades Council’s production of ‘The Great Grunwick Strike 1976-1978: A History’ is a moving and important historical document. I hope to see it at my university next term because I think there’s a lot to be learnt from the Grunwick Strike, and people should be able to have access to this history and learn from what’s gone before.

Contact the Brent TUC by emailing info@brenttuc.org.uk, if you’re interested in getting a copy of the DVD.

The Indomitable Jayaben Desai

Remembering Grunwick
By Marge Dewhurst

Having seen a link on Facebook, and knowing nothing about either the Grunwick dispute or Jayaben Desai, I went to the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn to learn all about them. The Brent TUC produced ‘The Great Grunwick Strike 1976-1978: A History’ and held a special screening of it, in tribute to the late Jayaben Desai, leader of the strike.

The film is really well made and a really good resource for understanding class struggle. It’s holistic in its representation and uses interviews and original footage to describe the events, personalities, decisions and betrayals that all contributed to the dispute and its outcomes. It’s really worth watching, as it brings you very quickly into the heart of the problem and exposes what the struggle was about.

The film’s strength, like the strike, is its grounding in strong and clear class politics, which manage to overcome every social division that normally separate us. All aspects of the strike questioned the traditional workings of the Trade Union movement at the time; it was led by a mostly female, immigrant, grass-roots workforce who were simply demanding union recognition.

The film shows the importance of the action and the collective change that can result from such a struggle.

The Grunwick Strike brought people together, up and down the country, across races and genders, ultimately transforming it from a small dispute in North London into a national struggle for union rights and a wholesale fight against the State and the Tory government who were so determined to defeat it.

The filmmaker, Chris Thomas, has managed to capture the clear understanding of the striking workers — and of their many supporters from Yorkshire miners to Guardian journalists — who could all see what battle was being played out through this dispute; the battle between capital and labour.

The most impressive aspect of the film, I thought, was the analysis of the State’s role in the dispute. The filmmaker has managed to convey the varied and multiple attacks by all the authorities; the police using violence on the picket lines and arresting organisers, the media spinning lies to control public opinion, and the judiciary making special laws to get the boss off the hook — it’s all in the film, and all explained clearly and effectively. This aspect of the film helps to frame the dispute in a wider context and illustrates a number of wider lessons that we should be aware of and be able to deal with when taking action ourselves.

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FEATURE
RMT will strike to defend Tube reps

By Janine Booth, RMT Executive (pc)

RMT London Underground drivers will strike for 24 days over a period of a week in the week beginning Monday 16th May and again in the week beginning Monday 23rd May.

We demand the reinstatement of Bakerloo line drivers’ health and safety representative Eamonn Lynch and long-standing RMT Northern Line driver Arwyn Thomas.

We have named both sets of action at once, letting employers know they won’t be able to just ride out the first strike and force drivers back at work.

The strategy was formulated in exhaustive meet-ings by a rank-and-file strike committee.

We launched Eamonn for following an instruction the ballot turned out to be wrong, and sacked Arwyn following allegations of a strike-breaker.

Following two 24-hour strikes on the Bakerloo and Northern lines, I successfully proposed to the union’s Executive that we escalate the dispute to a strike ballot of all RMT’s Tube driver members. Just under half of those members voted in the ballot, and nearly two-thirds of those voted yes. In context, the ballot result was good.

The union has often felt unable to escalate an anti-victimisation dispute beyond the workplace of the individuals being victimised. This was a big deal. We were asking passenger support and lose money to defend people they might never have met or even heard of before the start of this campaign.

Of course we can expect attacks from Boris Johnson about the ballot, but it is both a higher majority and a higher turnout than he got when he was elected Mayor.

A strong ballot result can’t win a dispute by itself. We have a lot of work to do in building for the ac-tion, by targeting those the company thinks don’t have the clout to do anything about the campaign.

A strong result is necessary to build on and win.

This dispute is a chance to turn the tide. We have had some defeats recently and our campaigns have not always been effective. With this dispute, we are not discussing how to reg-ister a protest, we are discus-sing how to win. The key question is that they will still not cross our picket lines. They know that if the company gets away with sack-ing our reps, that has an impact on them too. It will change the nature of the workplace.

In our company gets away with it, remaining reps and members will think about standing up to man-age-ment and people will be reluctant to come forward to be reps.

RMT London Underground is classical liberal arbitration and discipline, with drivers receiving much harsher punishments from minor infringements than their non-transport colleagues a few years ago. If the company takes us out of their, it needs to intensify that clamp-down.

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Police kidnap anti-monarchists to prevent protest

By Daniel Randall

On Friday 29 April I was arrested with nine others outside Charing Cross station in London — not for protesting, not for doing anything, but because the police wanted to clear the streets for the Royal Wedding.

We are considering a legal case for wrongful arrest. What follows is an account of what the police did by one of my fellow arrestees, reproduced with permission from theguardian.com.

I was intending to go to the “Not the Royal Wed - ding” street party organised by campaign group Republic.

A British Transport Police officer spotted some republican placards one of us had in a bag and decided to search everyone, under the Section 60 that decided to search everyone, under the Section 60 that has been “rounding people up” in advance of the royal wedding, despite the Met themselves denying that any arrests in previous days had been “specifically” related to the event.

After having been searched by the BTP we were told we could not leave because an officer from the Met “wanted to talk to us.” Within a few minutes, about twenty Territorial Support Group (TSG) officers had arrived and surrounded us in possibly the world’s smallest kettle. After another few minutes, I was grabbed by a TSG officer who informed me that because we were “in possession of climbing gear” we were to be arrested for a breach of the peace.

The BBC and the Guardian have both faithfully repeated the climbing gear claim as fact. There was none. There was nothing that anyone could reasonably have mistaken for climbing gear. There seems to have been no attempt by the police to ascertain the accuracy of that police claim. We were cuffed and held until a hired coach arrived. Tourists stopped to pose for photos with London bobbies while we stood handcuffed in the background. A cameraman for a film crew making a documentary about protest took some footage.

“Ah,” said my arresting officer, “That’s a good one.” “Yeah, not bad for the TSG, eh?”

On the coach, we were transferred to a non-TSG unit and driven to Sutton police station, about a dozen miles out of central London. Four of us were led of the coach to be processed in the police station. We were searched again and had our personal details catalogued and details taken.

We were not at any point charged with any offence; nor was any indication given that we would be charged with any offence. A senior officer, giving some background to one of the desk officers who were doing the paperwork, explained that we were “anti-monarchists” who had been planning to “commit a protest” near the wedding.

This language is similar to that used by Metropolitan Police Commander Lissa Jones when she said this week, “Any criminals attempting to disrupt the royal wedding, be that in the guise of protest or otherwise, will be met by a robust, decisive, flexible and proportionate policing response.”

At this point I was banged up in a cell for a little under an hour, before being released into the wilds of Sutton.

Police also raided squats in London, in the run-up to 29 April, and in Bristol, in an area where local people have protested against the opening of a Tesco supermarket. http://bit.ly/miKKyQ

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2011
From Tunis to London: the workers’ agenda

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers’ Liberty
Friday 8-Sunday 10 July
Highgate Newtown Community Centre, Archway, North London

• The rise of the Egyptian working class
• The fight against cuts: where does Labour fit in?
• Celebrating the Paris Commune
• Imperialism and Islamism a decade after 9/11
• Owen Jones on his book Chavs: the denigration of the working class
• Are socialists “multiculturals”?
• The strengths and weaknesses of anarcho-syndicalism
• The 1880s: the first British Marxists and the rise of the mass labour movement
• An alternative history of the Second World War

Includes a Saturday night social, free creche and accommodation and cheap food.

Tickets bought before the end of May are £18, £10/low waged/students, £6 unwaged/school students. Book online at www.workersliberty.org/ideas. Email avl@workersliberty.org or call 07796 690 874.

Teachers, lecturers, civil servants to strike together

By Tom Unterrainer

Unions representing over 600,000 teachers, lecturers and civil servants are set to take national strike action on 30 June against Government plans to radically attack their pensions.

The government has already switched the means of public sector pensions from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the generally lower rate, the Consumer Price Index (CPI). A pension currently worth £10,000 a year will, by 2016, be worth 6000 less than it would be on RPI. The government also looks to increase the level of contributions and raise the retirement eligibility age. For teachers this could mean an increase in contributions from 4% to 9.8% and an increase in retirement age from 66 (pre/post 2007) to 68.

Lecturers in further and higher education will be struck against the same pension scheme as teachers will be similarly affected.

Low-paid civil servants organised by the PCS have, on average, a much lower annual pension of only £4,200, but will also be expected to pay higher contributions and retire later. United action on pensions makes sound industrial sense: if ballots are successful across the unions then industrial action is both possible and necessary.

A serious counter-attack on pensions will require more than a “one-off” day of united action.

Unfortunately, the “model” of trade union militancy over the past decade has been the strike activity of PCS — a one day strike followed by another one day strike, many months later, and then petering out with very little won.

As things stand it looks likely only one day of action will take place between now and the autumn. Efforts at the NUT conference at Easter to win a commitment to sustain selective action in groups of schools was kept off conference floor by a bungling and sectarian left.

Cross-union, unified action between the NUT, ATL, UCU and PCS is positive but it is only a start.

These unions represent a small minority of trade union members in the public sector.

If the action does not spread to the other major teachers union (the NA-SUNU) and to Unison, Unite and GMB members in the public sector our class will be struggling with only a portion of its strength. These unions will only take action with considerable pressure from below, and will be unwilling to see other public sector unions fighting and winning.

UCU has signalled its intention to take action against the massive proposed cuts in courses and jobs. Teachers will not act on other issues — from workloads to pay and pensions. None of these things will be tackled by the pension ball-busters.

In Nottinghamshire, Tower Hamlets and Camembury, teachers and public sector workers have taken action against local cuts. That is good, but not enough. National attacks should be met by national action.

Teacher unions must organise for more action beyond one day of strikes. We need to open the new school year with further, named strike days.

Unions should work towards united national action across all public sector unions, but an individual union should not hold itself back on action before this happens.

Strike committees with representation from all the unions taking action should be formed to ensure a constant flow of information, support and accountability. Representatives from other unions should attend; and they should be involved in spreading solidarity and support.

Socialists in the trade unions need to fight on issues of organisation, democracy and politics in our movement: greater accountability from the union leadership, greater rank-and-file control over disputes and for political ideas and action from the unions to take on both the Tory government and the Labour Party.

A winning strategy will cause enormous disruption to the government and they will be politically neutered.

Our movement should use its size, energy and organisation to fight for a workers’ government — one that represents our interests and which depends on our class for its legitimacy. That means not just the cutting, privatising, pro-capitalist and anti-working class Tory/Liberal coalition.