Poor pensioners
Rich bankers and bosses

ROBBERY!

TOP 1,000 GOT £60 BILLION EXTRA LOOT LAST YEAR

Former Network Rail boss Iain Coucher got £214,000 in pension payments after working for the company for three years!
**NEWS**

What is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty? Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists’ relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity. The Alliance for Workers’ Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers’ control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and to end the bureaucratic and managers’ privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with “social partnership” and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers’ struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers’ charter of trade union rights – to organise, to form trade unions and Labour Relations Act 1992, which mandates em- ployers to allow union reps time off for such things as representing members on grievance disputes.
- In larger public sector workplaces, where union organisation is stronger than in most of the private sector, bosses find it more economical to release a few people from regular work, either all hours of a fixed part of the week, than to have to release people for odd hours here and there.

**Conclusions:**

- Large amounts of “facility time” go unclaimed.
- An official government survey found that union reps in the public sector put in 100,000 hours each year on union activity outside their normal working hours.
- A TUC survey found that one-quarter of all union reps on “facility time” regularly put in time outside normal work hours.
- Even the Taxpayers’ Alliance, a right-wing group campaigning against “facility time”, finds only 2,000 full-time equivalent units of “facility time” across the whole public sector; this out of a work force of six million.
- Many union branches find it difficult to fill “facility time” posts.

**Compromise**

The report is wordy and diffuse. It shows the signs of being a judicious compromise between different interests (in the submission, as in Labour Party affairs generally), the unions almost always as a bloc, “av- eraging out” between the more leftish unions and the more conservative ones.

Unions activists — probably, even union executive members — were allowed no voice to it. All the factors make it doubtful that the union general secretaries will fight for the positive proposals without strong pressure from their union members. Some vital changes, which in the past have had trade union support — allowing trade union representation of candidates to amend National Policy Formulae reports, easing bureaucratic obstacles to Constituency Labour Parties putting new rule changes — are not in- cluded. Worst, the submission “can see no value in a re- turn to a resolution-based process that operates around Conference” (i.e. the relatively simple structure, based on resolutions to conference from CLPs and unions, which existed from the start up to Tony Blair’s changes in 1997). Instead, it pitches its proposals as trumping the Labour Party today back to what was outlined on paper, in 1997, but never really operated. The reason why the Na- tional Policy Forum, the Policy Commissions, the Joint Policy Committee, and so on, have all become so timid is, however, that their purpose was pre- cisely “a toolbox to keep out unwanted voices.”
Egypt: row over election date

By Clive Bradley

“There is total class war - going on in Egypt right now,” Joshua Stacher of Kent State University told Time magazine. “There is total class war - going on in Egypt right now,” Joshua Stacher of Kent State University told Time magazine.

“The Brotherhood has been formed which is far from the IMF earlier in June, which like most such agreements would require a new constitutional ‘austerity’ measures. But the government wants to pump money into the workers' movement to some extent. The government secured a $3 billion loan package from the IMF earlier in June, which like most such agreements would require a new constitutional measure – but the government has been completely alienated from the IMF at the 700 level by the unions.”

The biggest public debate in Egypt is whether parliamentary elections, which the Muslim Brotherhood is calling for, should be postponed. Many in the Muslim Brotherhood have been critical of the current government, saying it is not doing enough to address social and economic issues. The Brotherhood has been a major player in Egyptian politics since the Arab Spring, and its leaders have been detained and imprisoned several times.

The Brotherhood argues that the current government is not up to the task of governing Egypt, and that the country needs a more inclusive government that represents a wide range of interests. The government, however, is wary of the Brotherhood's influence and has sought to limit its political power.

Obama tries to escape Afghan ratchet

By Rhodri Evans

In October 2010, Ahmed Rashid, author of much-read books on the Taliban and the Afghan and the Afghan war, wrote: “In the past year, violent incidents have risen by 50 per cent, the Taliban have spread to the north and west of the country and the battle for control of the Taliban-dominated Pashtun south state gets bloodier by the day.”

The results of Obama’s 2009 “surge” of extra US troops into Afghanistan has not been significantly better since then. In May 2011 Rashid assessed “the security situation” as “actually slipping.”

The US can always defeat the Taliban in head-on battles, but then the Taliban moves away, over the borders or to other areas in Afghanistan; the rural people of Afghanistan became more resentful of US militarism and the corrupt US-backed Kabul government, and so the Taliban are back.

On 23 June Barack Obama concluded, logically enough, that if more US troops and billions of dollars do no good, then he should pull back some troops (10,000 now, another 23,000 by September 2012) and spend less money. “The Taliban repeated that "our armed struggle will increase from day to day", and many conservatives complained that Obama’s drawdown is too big, too soon.

The USA is caught on a ratchet. Since 2003 its troop numbers in Afghanistan have inched up steadily, always seeking by some extra force to pacify the country, always only making things worse. And then troop reductions become “risky.” “Risky” or not, the US and British troops in Afghanistan process: things worsen, not better. They should come out.

SOLIDARITY 3

The return of the UVF?

By Liam McEnulty

Belfast saw its worst Loyalist-originated rioting in several years on Monday— Wednesday 20-22 July. Three people suffered gunshot wounds and houses on both sides of the east Belfast community — on the interface between (Protestant) lower Newtownards Road and (Catholic) Short Strand — were damaged by petrol bombs, stones and other missiles. What lies behind the violence?

In the context of unemployment, deprivation and low self-confidence the Loyalist paramilitaries have thrived, feeding off various grievances and offering a destructive means to young Protestant people of gaining status and power. The implosion of the Progres- sive Unionist Party (PUP) after its leader, Davy Purvis, stood down last year in frustration over continued Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) violence, has left a vacuum which is only partly being filled by the main Protestant party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Many people have been completely alienated from the Stormont political system.

Now a renegade com- mander within the UVF has taken over paramilitarism in the area. New murals, flags and graffiti on a nearby bar stating “prop- erly of the UVF” have ap- peared, and there are new threats that elements discontented with the rise of dissident Republican violence have been frustrated at the moves of the UVF leader, Purvis. On 23 June, a new commander is appointed by Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) vision, has left a vacuum which is only partly being filled by the main Protestant party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Many people have been completely alienated from the Stormont political system.

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New lessons in online campaigning

Canadian postal workers' picket line

Press Watch
By Pat Murphy

The Guardian vs 30 June

Press Watch
By Pat Murphy

Most of the press haven't been very interested in 30 June. The tabloids have only had brief factual reports of statements by government ministers and union leaders.

The more left-of-centre papers seemed unsure how to react until they were given the line by Ed Miliband, Ed Balls and Shadow Education spokesman, Andy Burnham. Then the Guardian, Mirror and, to a lesser extent, the Independent warned editorially that striking unions would “fall into a trap”. Exactly what this trap was and how the consequences would be worse than accepting the proposals to work until we drop, have on average extra £100 per month taken out of our pay, and then get a much worse pension, wasn’t explained.

There is diversity in the press — whatever someone on the left say — and it is up to us to speak up about the government's plans in a real way that’s worth defending. Strike and power — it is essential that protection by workers, though, is one of those rare issues where the press is united.

The attitude of the left as well as that of the right-wing press to this strike in line with Vince Cable — workers have the right to strike but they should never use it. Have not found a daily paper which supports the 30 June strikes. More to the point, that is practically always the case. Occasionally the Mirror will get close (it did when the miners were under the most severe attack in 1984-5). But the worst offender is the middle-class Guardian.

There was some difference in the chosen arguments expressed by why workers should never strike, reflecting the political loyalties and masters of particular papers. The right-wing press focused on the teachers, and insisted that it would set a bad example to pupils and upset parents for them ever to strike.

The Guardian and Mirror took their cue from the utterly empty and cowardly Miliband and pedalled the “falling into a trap” line.

The lack of serious detailed comment on the pension proposals or insight into the union-government talks, even in the Guardian and Observer, undermined whatever force that argument might have had.

It was left to the Guardian’s readers (obviously quite a few teachers) to fill the letters page with well-directed lines on exactly what the alternative to this “trap” was. Aside, of course, from simply accepting these draconian attacks on pensions?

The talks are a farce. Even the non-balloted GMB made that clear in articles by their chief negotiator Brian Stratton in a number of the Guardian’s reports. To announce the government’s proposals in public before the “negotiations” had even finished swiped the last tiny bit of that

run from under the feet of the so-called “reasonable” union leaders.

A number of self-styled Labour modernist commentators lectured in the Guardian, Independent and Mirror about the need to go beyond the “knee-jerk” response of striking and demand more nuanced, up-front and considered plans for winning our case. I read as much of this stuff as I could find and without exception it lacked any of these smart new strategies.

The most interesting aspect of press coverage was the conclusion drawn by a large number of commentators of some success for 30 June. It all pointed consistently in the same direction.

In the Observer (19 June) Toby Helm and Mark Townsend quoted an adviser to one of the City’s main pensions firms (John Wraith) that saying “The gap between public and private sector pensions is not a reason for cutting public service pensions, but for improving levels of pension provision in the private sector.”

Jeremy Warner, assistant editor of the Sunday Telegraph published an article in that paper with the impressively honest headline “There’s nothing unaffordable about public sector pensions.” He described the government pension proposals as a “meme” and used the fact that he had clearly read the whole of the Hutton Report to put that. Deep inside the report is a graph showing the share of GDP spent on public sector pensions going back to 1999 and projected forward to 2060. It peaks at 5.6% two years ago (2009-10).

The Financial Times has been warning for some weeks now of the risk of millions of workers opting out of their schemes due to higher contributions and questioning the need for, and the sense of, these proposals.

As the industrial conflict heats up the right-wing press, tabloids in particular, will get more combative and nasty. There were early signs of that last week with a front page splash in the Daily Mail claiming that Christine Blower had received a 10% pay rise at a time when her members were getting a pay freeze and going on to provide the salary levels for Mark Serwotka and Mary Bousted. The story was potentially damaging and a reminder of one reason why there has been a tradition in the socialist movement of arguing for elected trade union leaders to receive a wage which reflects the earnings of their members.

But the “facts” in the story about Christine Blower didn’t fit the headline — her salary is linked to that of the head of the union branch. Some time s civil conversation about political differences is possible.

And as Marxists believe that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself, I will freely admit to a grudging respect for the SP. So on so many issues, but still...

Dave Odler, writing on the AWL website

Andy Murray: strike-breaker?

I was amused to see the integral role played by tennis stars in Britain’s industrial relations being reaffirmed recently. When the Evening Standard, the Standard, and The Guardian published reports of the strikes by Andy Murray and Elena Baltacha in its ongoing hate campaign against Tube workers and their union, the RMT.

Baltacha was said to be “worried” by the strikes, and the Standard had Murray, in a front-page lead headline, “pleading” for the strikes to be called off.

In reality, all that either of them had said was that they “hoped it all gets sorted out” — hardly the kind of subtle anti-trade union anti-strike stance...

Murray and Baltacha will surely have been delighted, then, to see that the dispute was resolved with workers winning reinstatement for their sacked colleagues.

Game, set and match to the RMT.

Perry Stelmar, north London

Letters

SP's working-class base

In general, the “Who are the Socialist Party?” (Solidarity 209) article is a fair assessment of the history and politics of Militant/SP.

But what it doesn’t mention is the class nature of the SP’s membership, and that is important only because the SWP is always considered by the British far left in having a predominantly working-class make up.

Yes, I know that this is not decisive. 30 years on the far left have taught me that political ideas outweigh sociological composition or weight of numbers. But it cannot be insignificant that the SP recruits workers, on a scale that no other Trotsky group currently can. I include the AWL in that stipulation.

Trotskyism sometimes uses a phrase about the importance of “smelling the worker’s cadre”. The thing that strikes me more and more about the SWP is that it smells of the university seminar room and the academic journal. The SP, whatever the deficiencies of its ideas — and its “theoretical” output is weak — is noticeably more proletarian and less ex-student.
Seize the loot — or be looted!

Ed Miliband says the unions should not strike on 30 June because they risk alienating public opinion. Hundreds of teachers, civil servants and lecturers know he is wrong. Striking is the right — and organising for further strikes is right and necessary.

Striking is the most effective way to stop the government from destroying public sector pensions, reducing health and social services to a “death’s door only” minimum and condemning millions to a “choice” between penury or becoming cheap labour for multi-millionaires.

Striking is necessary because the government wants to negotiate only on details of its pension reforms. Striking is necessary not just because it is a more effective protest than demonstrations or lobbying. Strikes are a direct challenge to the power of bosses and the government and their ability to implement reforms.

The bosses and government know they cannot run public services without teachers, civil servants and other public sector workers. If the bosses also know workers will not put up with job losses, wage freezes, pension cuts they will feel a lot more pressure. They may respond with belligerence. They may back off. We have to know what we are up against and what we can do to strengthen our fight.

Do the unions have all of “public opinion” on their side? Probably not. But they have a lot more sympathy than Miliband and the rest of the Labourfrontbench will give credit for. Millions of people are in the same boat as teachers and civil servants, facing an old age of poverty, restricted opportunities and fear of losing their independence.

And other public sector workers are looking to the teachers and civil servants to start a fight. They do not want to do what Tony Blair — a man truly despised in the “court of public opinion” — calls “engage with change”. They know that “engaging with change” means seeing “non-essential” hip operations cancelled, nurseries closing and teachers forced out of their jobs.

Ed Miliband didn’t back the strike on 30 June because this further strikes will change the nature of the opposition to the coalition. They will require him to change his “I’m getting tougher” stance. He is less able to say “leave it to us, and when Labour gets into power we will make it all right.”

Anyway Miliband and his Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls have not said they will repeal the Tory policies. They have not committed to opening nurseries, reversing privatisations, and curtailing the new pension age?

We cannot and should not “leave it to them”. Nor should we let them get away with their disgraceful, anti-strike, demagogic lecturing. The unions should call them to account.

The labour movement needs political alternatives — in the first place a clear idea of what it is fighting for and not just on the pension issue. Over the last few years Workers’ Liberty has argued for a programme which brings together ideas for action and demands to inspire, shape and advance the class struggle against the bosses’ drive to make the working-class pay for the crisis. A programme for union and anti-cuts activists to fight for in the labour movement.

In the wake of 30 June this programme can be a tool that will strengthen our struggle. The programme must include:

**PENSIONS**
- Fully fund public sector pensions, no rise in worker contributions
- Immediately reverse the index link for pensions back to RPI from CPI
- Pensions (and benefits and the minimum wage) should rise in line with prices or earnings, whichever is higher. (At the same time the unions should calculate an inflation figure which matches the real spending needs of workers and the poor.)
- Make the state retirement age for men and women 60.
- All workers deserve to enjoy life “after work.”
- Tax the private bosses to fund pensions for private sector workers, levied up to the value of public sector pensions.
- Workers’ control of pension funds.

**BENEFITS**
- Oppose and reverse Tory Welfare Reform, which will force jobless and disabled into low paid, insecure employments
- End all “workfare” cheap labour schemes.

**JOBS**
- Stop the job cuts in public services. Jobs for all!
- End and reverse the privatisation of public services.
- Cut the working week without loss of pay to create jobs for all who need them.

**WORKERS’ GOVERNMENT**

To many working-class people such policies seem hard to win. The first question asked is “how can we afford it?” The straight answer is that “we” cannot afford it unless we seize the wealth of the ultra-rich.

Seizing the loot which the ultra-rich have extracted over years and centuries of exploitation, taxing rich households and companies, taking banks and industry into public ownership, could finance all of this and much more to meet the needs of working-class people. For instance, serious taxa tion of just the top 1000 richest people in this country could yield hundreds of billions of pounds.

Many unions already have policies along these lines — less radical, but roughly speaking similar. If the unions were even pursuing their own policies with conviction, such demands would seem much less “unrealistic”.

The demand to “end to means testing” — to stop the state shaming the poor — was once a well-understood and “bottom-line” policy in the labour movement. Years of inaction by union leaders, and pleading for “crumbs from the bosses table” have meant such policies have faded from political life. Debating and discussing what should be the labour movement’s new “bottom line” can restore such ideas, restore the practice of having principles and the idea that it is right to fight on a point of principle.

In the fight to save pensions, jobs and services we need something much much better than little concessions from the bosses and deals negotiated behind the backs of the workers. We should not leave it to Miliband to “get on with it” if and when Labour gets elected to government. We call on the unions to put pressure on Labour, and that could commit Labour to stronger opposition. But at the same time we know that, left to its own devices, Labour merely stands for a more “humane” deficit reduction and that too is an attack on working-class people.

To win our whole programme and a radical transformation of society, we need a different kind of government — a workers’ government — one which understands the necessity of attacking the wealth and power of the ruling class. That’s a big idea — a socialist idea. We hope labour movement activists who now see better possibilities of fighting back will want to discuss that idea with us in the coming months.
By Stewart Ward

Some recent disputes have, to great effect, employed the sorts of tactics and strategies that can turn an industrial dispute into a real weapon, used to force concessions from bosses rather than just to register a protest.

For example, on London Underground to win the reinstatement of sacked union reps, strikes at Ravenswood school in Rotherham against job cuts, and the Southampton council workers’ strike, are proving that there is an alternative way of conceiving of and running industrial disputes. In the case of London Underground and Ravenswood they have already won. What are they doing differently?

**RANK-AND-FILE DEMOCRACY**

Who runs a strike? The officials of the union, or the striking workers themselves? A union with sufficiently democratic structures for these two groups to be the same is rare indeed.

Often, strike strategy is cooked up behind closed doors by union leaders and then presented as a fait accompli to workers, they are then pressured to “support their union.” This is a recipe for a strike over which workers feel no ownership.

But in Southampton, at Ravenswood and on London Underground, rank-and-file democracy has been crucial.

Although few unions have structures that give formal control of disputes to rank-and-file strike committees, socialists involved in such workers’ strikes have fought for as much control as possible to be given to democratic bodies representing the grassroots membership. Mike Tucker, the branch secretary of Southampton District Union, told Solidarity last week: “The effective sovereign body in the dispute is a joint Union-Solidarity strike committee. It’s made up of branch officials and stewards and it meets weekly to take decision about the direction of the dispute and which sections will be called out next. No one else is called out without meetings involving reps and stewards from that section to make sure they’re on board with the strategy. We’ve also been holding mass meetings since November.”

Regular mass meetings, which discussed and debated strike strategy, were also key at Ravenswood. In both cases they represented channels by which workers could take ownership over their own strike rather than being used as foot-soldiers for union leaderships.

On London Underground, Workers’ Liberty member Ja- nine Boothby stood for election to the union’s executive promising to act as a voice for the rank-and-file; in the victimisation dispute she has fulfilled that promise. Strikes needs leadership, but that doesn’t mean unaccountable union officials telling “ordinary members” what to do.

Janine has consistently developed strategy based on dis- cussions, debates and decisions taken by the rank-and-file Train Grades Committee. Janine and other AWL members working on the Tube have argued for particular approaches, but within the context of a debate among rank-and-file workers about the direction of the dispute, rather than with the old “the Executive knows best” attitude.

The experience shows how revolutionary socialists who stand for, and win, leading positions within a union can disrupt and subvert the bureaucracy’s traditional modes of functioning, and it also shows how much more effective a strike campaign can be when the workers involved take the lead in planning action.

For Workers’ Liberty, the 30 June strikes are an opportu- nity to make the case for how the whole labour movement can be transformed. Rank-and-file committees which have real control over the direction of disputes are integral to our vision of what a fighting, democratic workers’ movement looks like. Regular mass meetings, AWL members have led the fight to set up joint union committees and won offi- cial support and backing from the unions locally. But where unions won’t support rank-and-file strike committees, they should be organised independently, both within and across unions. Ultimately, we want permanent rank-and-file net- works (again, both within and across unions) that can force union leaderships to act – and, when they won’t, organise action independently.

**REAL DEMANDS**

Many recent strikes, even significant national disputes like the postal workers’ strike, have been based on no concrete demands. CWU officials would sound resolute in telling their members that the strike was “against what management is doing”, but the actual po- sition of the union — its only demand — was that man- agement negotiate with it.

This reflects a lack of strategy from union leaderships, and a means by which union bureaucracies can engineer sell-out deals. Once in negotiations, rank-and-file members have lit- tle control over what’s discussed. Striking workers become a stage army for the bureaucracy rather than a conscious agency acting in their own interests. It’s not that the bureau- crats are consciously trying to make life worse for their mem- bers; it’s more that they see their role as managing and mitigating practically-inexitable defeats rather than ever ac- tually winning anything.

In the recent Tube workers dispute to win reinstatement for sacked reps Eamonn Lynch and Arwyn Thomas, the de- mand was singular and clear: reinstatement, and nothing less. The industrial campaign would continue until both men were back in London Underground employment. In the Rav- ensworth strikes, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) made the demand for the withdrawal of all threatened re- dundancies central to the strike. Workers knew that they weren’t striking in general protest against what management was doing, but were active participants in a campaign aimed at winning specific concessions and forcing specific action from their bosses.

**TAKE STRATEGIC ACTION, ESCALATE WHERE NECESSARY**

At Rawmarsh, when sustained strike action had worked management down to the extent that only one worker now faced redundancy, the movement would have seen the strike de-escalate to “match the de-esca- lated threat from management.”

But the workers’ reps stubbornly worked to stop all job cuts — no compromises — so they stepped up their action and began working a two-day week on the site.

On London Underground, the experience of the recent job cuts dispute — where the RMT and TSSA staged several 24- hour strikes — is still fresh in workers’ minds. They have previ- ously seen and experienced that a one-day strike is not enough to win concessions. Activists worked out a strat- egy that involved 48-hours’ worth of strike action, but strate- gically spread across shifts to ensure an entire week’s worth of disruption.

It certainly had an impact; after the strikes were an- nounced, the Evening Standard was shrieking, terrified, at the prospect of “burying the Tube forever.” The lesson is clear: if you want to win, you have to be prepared to take the kind of action that will achieve victory — take action that has an impact.

Southampton also shows how strikes can be creatively planned to do the maximum damage to management plans. The local council workers’ strike set an excellent example: they didn’t go back to work until their demands are won. But it is also a “rolling” strike, different sections of the workforce taking action on different days, for a week, at a time ensuring the impact is spread as widely as possible across the council’s functioning. The walkouts were supplemented with ongoing campaigns of ac- tion short of strikes (such as work-to-rules and overtime bans), meaning that even when particular sections are not on strike, they are still having an impact.

The old labour movement saying, “the longer the picket line, the shorter the strike” also rings true. Sometimes it’s not enough to strike longer; you have to strike bigger.

Strikes often lose when they become protracted and stag- nate. Looking for ways to spread the dispute is better and al- most always necessary. After two days of localised strike action on the Northern and Bakerloo lines (the lines on which Eamonn Lynch and Arwyn Thomas worked) failed to have any impact, the AWL called on all the drivers across the whole of London Underground. This was a risky move. The AWL thought that the strike had certainly made the disruption on two lines. When threatened with disruption across the whole network, they had to move.

**STRIKE PAY**

“I can’t afford to take strike action” is perhaps the most frequently heard reason for people to cross a picket line. Sometimes it’s a disingenuous excuse to scam, but it can represent a real financial concern.

It’s an issue that can be dealt with in one fell swoop if unions organise proper strike pay. “No benefit but strike ben- efit” was said to be a favourite slogan of GMB founder Will Thornto. It’s an important principle; unions should exist as means by which workers can take action against their bosses, not service-providers.

In both the Rawmarsh and LU disputes, workers knew strike pay was available. Unions in the Southampton coun- cil strike last week: “No benefit but strike benefit.” It’s clear that workers can participate in disputes alongside better-paid ones.

100% strike pay is impractical; it would mean that strikes would collapse when the money ran out. The purpose of strike pay is to facilitate sustained action rather than one-day stoppages, and to soften the financial hit of striking so as to prevent the management starving us into submission.

Almost all strikes will involve some level of financial sac- rifice for workers, and everyone needs to be convinced the bosses that the workers won’t blink first, but no strike should set out aiming to be long-drawn-out. Every strike — it’s explicitly understood as an act of demonstration or protest — should aim to win, and win quickly.

**Battle-plan in brief**

• Strike committees within and between unions
• Effective picketing: stop the scabs!
• Mass meetings and assemblies, not just rallies.
• Renew the unions. Fight for union democracy
• Set dates for new action. Discuss rolling and selective action.
• Organise local and national strike levies
• Combat the anti-union laws. Prepare for unofficial action.
• Strike funds so unions can continue to operate after “sequestration”
• Make the unions fight for Labour Party democracy.
• Fight for a workers’ government!

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6 SOLIDARITY
DON’T CALL STRIKES OFF FOR EMPTY PROMISES
After the initial nine days of strike action at Rawmarsh, school management were looking shaky. They reduced the number of threatened redundancies, then announced there would be no job cuts until the following September.

Prevailing trade union culture would have led the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to calling off the strikes, but this time it didn’t. Although the announcement of the next set of strike dates was sometimes put on hold while talks were ongoing, the dispute was never called off, the ballot mandate over them. The NUT negotiated from a position of strength.

Tribunal panel unexpectedly delivered an early verdict — ruling it didn’t. Although the announcement of the next set of the number of threatened redundancies, then announced, as expected, that he was unfairly dismissed. Although LU

DON’T CALL STRIKES OFF FOR EMPTY PROMISES

UNIONS have conducted an awareness-raising campaign across the city to make sure other workers in Southampton know what the dispute is about, building an understanding of the strike a chance to actively participate.

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BUILD A STRIKE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Strikes need solidarity to win. In Southampton, action has been complemented and fed into by regular demonstrations, rallies and mass meetings that give supporters of the strike a chance to actively participate.

Unions have conducted an awareness-raising campaign across the city to make sure other workers in Southampton knew what the dispute was about, building an understanding of the strike as not just a sectional squabble between employers and employees at the council but a class battle across the whole city. The NUT at Rawmarsh and the rail union RMT on London Underground also turned outwards, building campaigns of solidarity and inviting support from local and national labour movement bodies. The RMT held a public strike rally on the eve of the last planned strikes (the threat of which finally forced bosses to cave), and organised leafletting of the public to build support for the campaign. They also organised an email campaign through the LabourStart website, which saw London Mayor Boris Johnson and TfL management bombarded with thousands of emails supporting reinstatement for Eamonn and Arwyn.

No strike is guaranteed victory. But a strike based on these kind of steps has an better chance of victory than one which fits the pattern of after-the-fact protests led from above.

Hundreds of thousands of workers are about to participate in the first set-piece industrial confrontation with the government; if militants in workplaces and union branches can build strikes fought to win, based on rank-and-file democracy and solidarity, then action after 30 June will be more than a one-day set-piece.

DON’T CALL STRIKES OFF FOR EMPTY PROMISES

After the initial nine days of strike action at Rawmarsh, school management were looking shaky. They reduced the number of threatened redundancies, then announced there would be no job cuts until the following September.

Prevailing trade union culture would have led the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to calling off the strikes, but this time it didn’t. Although the announcement of the next set of strike dates was sometimes put on hold while talks were ongoing, the dispute was never called off, the ballot mandate over them. The NUT negotiated from a position of strength.

Tribunal panel unexpectedly delivered an early verdict — ruling it didn’t. Although the announcement of the next set of the number of threatened redundancies, then announced, as expected, that he was unfairly dismissed. Although LU
Pensions: who loses, who gains?

By Chris Reynolds

Almost all workers and pensioners lose. Employers and the Government gain. The Government plans to save £2.8 billion a year immediately by levying bigger pension contributions from public sector workers from April 2012.

The Government has changed inflation-uprating for pensions from one price index, RPI, to another, CPI, which on average is about 0.8% lower each year. That’s an accumulated cut of 15% in your pension after 20 years of retirement. If or when, you work as a teacher for 20 years, then do other work for another 20 years, then the value of the pension you claim from your teaching work will have been cut by 15%, even before you retire.

The RPI-to-CPI change applies to all pensions: public-sector, state, and private-sector schemes too (unless their terms state explicitly that inflation-uprating means RPI). The Government talks of legislation to override the terms for those schemes.

The Government estimates that the change means a cut of £83 billion in pension liabilities (i.e. the sum required today to cover future pension payments).

The Government is also increasing the age at which the state pension and public-sector pensions can be claimed. Last October, the Government announced that it would speed up the increase in women’s pension age, so that it will reach 65 by November 2018. The state pension age will then increase to 66 for both men and women from December 2020.

The Government plans to change the “accrual rates” for public-sector pensions (from 1/60 to 1/80 or 1/100) to change public-sector pensions from “final salary” to “career average”.

The Government gains? So the Taxpayer Gains?

Some taxpayers, maybe. The Thatcher government after 1979 made much noise about cutting taxes, and did cut taxes for companies and for the rich. The average working-class household it raised taxes, mostly by shifting the tax burden from visible progressive taxes like income tax to less-visible regressive taxes like VAT.

The top one thousand people alone in the UK have wealth which increased by £60 billion in 2010 to reach £396 billion, according to Sunday Times Rich List. If those top thousand were reduced to £1 million each (to routine luxury, rather than ultra-riches) then that would yield £395 billion.

The total liabilities of the public sector pension schemes, for all the millions of workers they cover, are only £270 billion. Seriously taxing the rich could easily solve any pension-funding problems.

Don’t We Have to Cut Somewhere to Limit Pension Costs? People are Living Longer.

The Government’s own Hutton Report showed that listing public sector pension schemes can balance their books up to about 2060, which is as far ahead as anyone can see. The schemes vary. The Local Government Pension Scheme is a fund, invested in the stock market, from which pensions are paid. In 2007 its liabilities, at £159 billion, slightly exceeded its assets, at £132 billion. Such comparisons fluctuate from year to year depending, for example, on the state of the stock market.

The NHS, teachers’, and civil service schemes are not funds. The Government collects the contributions as current revenue, and pays the pensions out of current revenue. Currently payments into the NHS scheme, for example, far exceed payments out.

The extent of “living longer” varies enormously with social class. Men in the Parkhead district of Glasgow have a life expectancy of 59, so they will be lucky to claim a pension before 60. Meanwhile the Government is forcing many people much younger than 60 out of the workforce, by cutting public service jobs and deliberately sustaining mass unemployment as a bludgeon to force down pay and conditions. Lose your job at 50 plus these days, and however hard you try to find a new job, there’s a good chance that you’ll get nothing except scraps of casual work.

When the economy is run so that everyone young or middle-aged, and in passable health, has a decent job open to them, perhaps we can start listening to what the Government says about more over-60s or over-65s working.

What Do “Accrual Rates” Mean?

In the private sector, “defined benefit” schemes are now common. You pay a fixed amount into a fund (and, with luck, your employer pays too), and at retirement you get a lump sum depending on how the fund has performed.

You can then trade that lump sum for an annuity (a regular yearly payment until you die).

You take the risk, if there is a stock-market crash, your pension goes down with it.

The public-sector schemes are “defined benefit”, which means that whatever the stock market does, your pension is related either to your “final salary” or your “career average”.

Most people do not work in the same job, or even in the same sector, all their life. If you work as a teacher for 20 years, for example, then you “accrue” 1/80 for each year of “final salary” as your pension. You may also accrue other pension rights from other jobs.

Part of the Government’s plan is to reduce “accrual rates” from 1/60 (the usual rate now in the public sector) to 1/80 or 1/100. With a 1/80 accrual rate, you have to work 40 years in the same sector to get 40/80 (one-half of your “final salary”), or “career average”, as your pension. This move obviously goes together with the Government’s plan to raise the age at which you can claim your pension.

What’s the Difference Between “Final Salary” and “Career Average”?

Most public-sector pension schemes promise a pension linked to “final salary”. (That may mean not literally your pay in the last year before retirement, but, say, the average of the best three years in your last ten years before retirement).

The Nuvos pension scheme in the civil service (for everyone except the civil service since 2007) is “career average”. The Government wants to change all schemes to “career average”.

There are advantages to “career average”. Managers and the like usually get many promotions in their working life, and so on much higher pay than routine workers, and so inequality during working lives is preserved and magnified in retirement under “final salary” schemes.

There is a very big hitch. A calculation of your “career average” pay depends on the inflation-uprating applied to the pay you get 30 or 20 years ago. If the inflation-uprating is at a low rate, and if the “accruals” rate is not improved (since, even for the less-promoted, “career average” will still be less than “final salary”), then a “career average” scheme ends up much worse than “final salary”.

Shouldn’t the Unions Negotiate More Before Striking?

The Government is happy to negotiate on details. It is rigid about demanding an extra 3%-plus of workers’ pay in pension contributions, overall, but happy to talk the unions about whether Jack should pay 6% extra and Jill 0% extra, or both 3%, or Jill 6% and Jack 0%. It has already implemented the RPI-to-CPI change. It is rigid on all the main principles of its plan.

Union leaders may win some concessions on details. Many experts have warned that the Government’s plans risk “crashing” public-sector pension schemes by prompting so many workers to opt out that there aren’t enough current workers paying in to cover the pay-outs to pensioners. The Local Government Pension Scheme already has over 25% of workers opting out, and about 10% of new entrants are opting out of the Teachers’ Pension Scheme.

The union leaders could present small concessions as “a step towards calling off action. But unless the basics of the Government’s plan are defeated, working-class pensioners across the board will lose billions.
By Martin Thomas

AWL was distributing leaflets calling for rank and file control in the unions’ battle against the Coalition government’s cuts, for the use of selective and rolling strikes and strike levies, and for a political front against the government. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SP) were distributing leaflets calling for a general strike.

It was a meeting in central London on 22 June, entitled “Unite the Resistance”, in effect an SWP rally but nominally non-partisan and giving platform slots to Rob Williams, for the SP’s National Shop Stewards’ Network, and Andrew Burgin, for Counterfire’s Coalition of Resistance.

A large-ish meeting was applauding calls for a general strike, and we were fucking up their union democracy and political machinations day.

In essence, the SP’s and the SWP’s demand is not that the unions plan anything different. It is that the unions opposite call for short-term agitation replaces serious political campaigning.

need to strike together... If we all struck together — a general strike — it would stop the Con-Dems in their tracks”. RTW’s model motion for union branches demands nothing from the union leaders but support for demonstrations which RTW is planning at the Lib-Dem and Tory conferences in September and October.

In an interview published in the New Statesman on 23 June, PCS [civil service union] general secretary Mark Serwotka, who spoke on 22 June, proposed a perspective of working-class action building up “incrementally” for the next four years, over the whole life of the Government.

GARbled

As with the renaming of October, we have here a good socialist idea garbled, or rather two good socialist ideas garbled so as to transform them from providing solid, unembellished momentum for day-to-day working class action building up into demagogic self-consolation.

Often working-class action starts with a warning strike, or a strike in only one section, and then builds up or spreads out as workers gain confidence and a sense of solidarity. But to rename a possible October protest strike as the decisive “general strike”, and to dismiss the need for rank and file control to redefine action beyond protest strikes, does not help extension.

Again: today, the battles against the first big round of council cuts budgets, against higher university tuition fees, and against the first rush of job cuts in the civil service, have been lost. That does not mean that future battles will be lost. In 1970-1, the Tory government of the time, driving a policy of Thatcherism-before-Thatcher, won a series of victories over a labour movement slow to adjust to the sudden shift of government policy away from over twenty years of soft-softly. Then in early 1972 a wave of militancy began which would rise as high as the 1920s. Today the labour movement has lived through a long period of relative capitalist upswing (1992-2007) and a long period of growth in public-service employment. Maybe it will take time to readjust, and then readjust fast.

That is a fundamental idea for socialists after setbacks. To make that thought an excuse for not speaking honestly about the battles now is another matter.

Mr. Bambery’s “incremental” perspective comes down to him saying: what I, and my [SP-controlled] union, are proposing now will lead to defeat on the immediate issues. But never mind. The workers won’t be daunted. Bit by bit they will push the unions generally into stronger action, and by 2015 to adequate action.

It is a hindrance, not a help, to serious working-class strategy to have the SWP and SWP decorating Mark Serwotka’s “incremental” plan with claims that the October plans are “re- ally” a general strike, likely to bring the Government down, or a step on an escalator smoothly leading to a full-scale general strike.

We (AWL) must not allow our opposition to make “general strike” an (empty) slogan now to trap us into a static or gradualist view of things. The class struggle can sometimes “skip stages”. The 1926 general strike in Britain when union membership had been falling since 1920, to only 63% of the 1920 figure, and strike-days had been decreasing since 1919, pushed up to the trench general strike of June 1936. Leon Trotsky denounced the Stalinised Communist Party for constantly appealing for strikes on limited economic issues. He wrote: “The masses make hardly any response to appeals for strikes on a purely economic plane... The masses understand or feel that, under the conditions of the crisis and of unemployment, partial economic conflicts require unheard-of sacrifices which will never be justified in any case by the results obtained. The masses wait for and demand other and more efficacious methods.”

But the SWP’s and SP’s implausible calls on the TUC to launch a general strike are very different from Trotsky’s arguments in 1935. They are implausible even as a “measur- ing rod” to judge the TUC by, because the blunt truth is that if the TUC suddenly called on all workers to strike, then the “adverse reaction about-turns” would produce chaos and demor- alisation rather than powerful action. Their dressing up of October as “the general-strike” differs from Trotsky’s argument in 1935 for general-strike agitation because it lacks honesty, thought-through-ness, and grounding in reality. Their agitation is a hindrance, not a help, to real advance towards a general strike.

TROTSKY

In 1935 in France, Trotsky was demanding of the recently-formed United Front of the Communist Party and Socialist Party “a broad political offensive”. “The workers’ alliance of parties and trade unions must be formed. [It] will have no revolutionary value unless it is oriented toward the creation of... Committees of struggle representing the mass itself... Workers’ militia. ‘Committees... must become, during the course of the struggle, organs directly elected by the masses... On this basis the proletariat power will be erected in opposition to the capitalist power, and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Communes will triumph.”

Trotsky knew that the Communist Party and Socialist Party leaders were frauds — but also that beneath them there was a bubbling mass of organised and revolutionary-minded workers who could (and would in June 1936) go over their heads. Honestly and clearly, he mapped a course by which the “going over the leaders’ heads” could win.

We do not have that bubbling mass, but yet we too need hope and clarity.

The agitation of the SP and SWP is unpolitical, except on the level of routine populist demonisation of Cameron and the Coalition.

The SP/ NSSN blusters: “Cameron, Clegg, Osborne... the people are coming! Get out now!” The SWP states: “Let’s march together, let’s strike together. Let’s bring them down.”

Neither says anything about what should replace the Coalition. They know that Ed Miliband is useless. Instead of developing any agitation for the unions and the left to re- shape the Labour Party, they effectively recommend workers to “forget” Ed Miliband’s uselessness temporarily, all the better to sound a militant note about bringing down the Government. (Later — “incrementally”, no doubt — they will turn back to routine anti-Labourism).

The Coalition’s measures can be deflected or limited here and there by local and sectoral action, and that is vital, but only if we see that the programme is a means of exerting organised working-class pressure on it. It is in part because the path to getting such a govern- ment cannot be measured out on a calmly-strenuous and impassably-looking that “general strike” calls are unrealistic as yet. There is nothing for it but to set to shifting the obstacles.

Chris Bambery’s The Left and the Crisis: a critique

Whatever the vagaries of his political positions and as-
sessments since the early 50s (including a softness on
the Stalinism of the same period), the question of the
nature of oppression and its relationship to art.
Berger's sketches in the book are central to understanding
Spinoza's stance. From the historical memory of Spinoza the
Arab spring becomes a summer — made possible by
the lens-grinder and expert in optics, it reveals a Spinoza ob-
serve — with that work
The sheer power of writing the word "Kleber" in mem-
yor to our looks to me to be hugely significant — as much
into the world of today in which we are living
So, when a difference occurs, a discussion should take place,
and organisational disruption caused by these people can
be "factionalism". It can manifest itself in frequent and re-
sulted...
Southampton workers press onwards

By Stewart Ward

Southampton council workers’ strike move- ment continues after talks with ACAS broke down in late June.

Tuesday 28 June will see street cleaners, parking staff, refuse collectors, librarians and others take renewed strike action in a dispute that involves over 2,000 workers — members of Unison and Unite.

Over 4,000 workers face redundancy on 1 July if the dispute is not resolved, by the Tory council’s new terms, which will means significant pay cuts of between two and five per cent, as well as other attacks. The tactic of imposing new conditions by threatening, or turning a back, carrying out, mass redundancies has become increasingly unacceptable as the coalition government came to power, with Lon- don firefighters along with local government workers in several authorities across the UK facing similar attacks.

As the right-wing press begins to overcome with a sense that the amount of rubbish piling up on the streets, the council has moved to hire agency workers to clear the backlog of refuse that has built up due to the strikes and refuse workers’ ongoing work-to-rule. The legitimacy of this move is questionable; it is illegal for bosses to hire agency workers to do the jobs of striking staff, but a change in the law allows them to hire strike breakers if they are employed directly. The hypocrisy of a council that can afford to em- ploy strikebreakers, while claiming its existing em- ployees must take pay cuts will undoubtedly anger an already bitter and restless workforce.

A feeder march of local government workers and trade union supporters will form a joint PCS-NUT rally on June 30 as the council strikes intersect with the national pensions dispute.

The council is still determined that where one-day protest strikes, called and con- trolled from above, are all too often the only weapon in a union’s arsenal, other public sec- tor organisations have learned from Southampton’s ex- ample.

For an interview with Mike Tucker, branch sec- retary for PCS in Southampton City District Union, see bit.ly/mUPKU

British Airways: uneasy truce in a fight that deserved more

By Darren Bedford

British Airways cabin workers have ended their dispute over job losses on the main resolute, even in the face of a union-busting manage- ment, can win.

On that terrain, the work- ers have landed a blow big enough to turn the course of the campaign. That Walsh’s scheme (vari- ously referred to as “new fleet” or “mixed fleet”, and based on significant cuts to the fleet) has been more “offensive” from the get-go (picket line chant and union propaganda struck a consistently conciliatory and apologetic note, hardly likely to leave the belligerent Walsh quaking in his boots), and if the union had explored the possibilities for ex- panding the dispute to other sections of the BA workforce, and the wider workforce at Heathrow, the main hub of the strikes, then things might have turned out differently.

All of that is speculation now. What we can say con- cretely is that the dispute has two real losers — one positive and one negative. Positively, it shows that workers who are prepared to take strike action and re- main resolute, even in the face of a union-busting management, can win.

The restoration of travel allowance is a con- cession forced from manage- ment and without their history of massive strike votes and solid union back- up, they would not have been as effective. Strike ac- tion does get the goods.

But the negative lesson is that a dispute on an entirely defensive basis, with too little or no engagement, demands, gives manage- ment the upper hand from the start.

The cabin crew work- ers, so keen to let people know that they weren’t “militants”, have in many ways been区别 themselves in this dis- pute, and deserved more confidence, then they will be able to find a minor dis- crepancy between the deal (some- workers who have been reemployed) and chal- lenge the union in the courts. Activists need to start discussing what we do in the event of a court injunction and start organ- ising to turn it into a victory.

Conference made some valuable commitments to turn the partnership and towards a class-struggle approach. Time will tell if the strong words can be turned into a reality. For the past fifteen years, the bureaucracy has trained union leaders in activism of social partner- ship and sectarianism to war- rant against this.

Leadership now recognise that they need the left if they are to win on the ground. Can the leadership stop squabbling among themselves, after such a victory?

The problem we face is that it is impossible to bal- ance 1.2 million people striking over job losses, the continuance of the anti-union laws. If the government is feeling

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30 June round-up

By Kieran Miles

Public sector pensions strikers will be joined on June 30 by workers tak- ing action in a number of local disputes.

In south London, jour- nalists continue to strike over job losses at Newsquest. 33 workers took to the picket line in Sutton on 27 June, the sec- ond strike in a month. The union’s NUT and ATL will be striking at Stroud’s College in Egham. Students from Royal Hol- loway will be going to the picket line and students in the college will be walking out on 30 June. Then, in the afternoon, hundreds of strikers from across Sur- rey, including representatives from Save Our Teachers and Surrey, and all 16 unions that work in Camden County Council, will be striking in Cam- bedley to discuss future in- dustrial action over the summer. This will culmi- nate in a demonstration outside Education Secre- tary Michael Gove’s office.

A Doncaster Unison strike ballot found 66% in favour of striking June 30. The ballot was in re- sponse to proposed local cuts of £70 million — in- cluding 700 job losses. The Unison will involve classroom assistants, lunchtime supervisors, cleaners and other non- teaching school staff, as well as other council workers such as grounds maintenance workers, council workers, and social workers.

Unison members in the repairs and improvements section of Camden Coun- cil’s Housing & Adult So- cial Care directorate will be striking on June 30. Over 80% voted in favour of striking in the ballot. Camden branch secretary Max Colman will call the conference.

Union and Histradust

For an article on the debate in Unison about the union’s relations with the Labour- led national federation Histradust, see bit.ly/kUH7wK

For a review of Omar Barghouti’s book on the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, see bit.ly/kUkSku

Unison: tough talk, but...
48-hour general strike in Greece

By Alan Gilbert
Greece's two union confederations, Gee and Addy, have called another general strike on 28 and 29 June, this time for 48 hours. It is to apply pressure on the parliamentary vote on the Pasok government's new plan for cuts and privatisation, imposed in order to get new IMF, EU, and European Central Bank credit.

Buses, air traffic, docks, power stations, etc. will be all be strikebound. Hospitals and health centres will operate emergency cover only.

Greece's small-business federation is also backing the site.

The Indignant Citizens' movement which has demonstrated in Syntagma Square since 25 May, and whose pressure must have contributed to the union centre of the unions moving from 24-hour strikes to a 48-hour one, is holding its own rally, joining the union demonstrations later on Tuesday, and then encircling parliament on Wednesday.

However, yet more action will be needed to defeat the cuts plan, which is pushed by big world powers, promoted by Pasok (Greece's equivalent of the Labour Party), and opposed, in mainstream politics, only demagogically by New Democracy (Greece's equivalent of the Tories: they demand more cuts instead of Pasok's planned tax rises).

Vasillis Grolios writes from Thessaloniki: "Every-one will be on strike on Tuesday and Wednesday [28/29 June] and thousands of people will gather in Syntagma Square and at the White Tower in Thessaloniki. The question is whether the new bill on taxes and privatisations will be voted through by the MPs."

"I think yes, it will. There are a lot of Pasok MPs who grumble, but they will finally succumb to party discipline, as usual." A political alternative is needed, too.

By Padraig O'Brien
Demetre Fraser, 21, from Peckham, south London, has died in suspicious circumstances after a visit from the West Midlands police.

Staying in Birmingham as part of his bail conditions following an assault charge by his girlfriend (later withdrawn), Fraser was visited by police on 31 May, apparently for a routine check of his electronic tag. He died the same day after a fall from the 11th floor of the building where he was staying, the police insist the death was suicide, but neighbours report hearing a huge commotion and seeing evidence of a struggle.

Fraser is the third black man, after Smiley Culture and Kingsley Burrell, to die recently in extremely suspicious circumstances in police custody or following encounters with the police.

Fraser's mother, Ms Josette Fraser, said: "They are trying to tell me my son jumped off an 11th floor balcony and killed himself. Why? His girlfriend had withdrawn the charge against him [...]"

"The idea that my son committed suicide is some sort of sick joke. Black men are not safe in police custody."

By Ira Berkovic
Arwyn Thomas, an RMT (rail union) rep unfairly dismissed by London Underground management, was reinstated on 22 June to LU employment on drivers' pay.

Although he still faces downgrading and a six-month suspension (during which time he will be employed by the RMT as an organiser), his reinstatement is an enormous victory for Tube workers against a management which seemed, until recently, intransigent.

Arwyn is one of three prominent RMT reps sacked during the course of the 2010/2011 job cuts dispute (the others are Peter Hartiborn and Eamonn Lynch). Arwyn's reinstatement makes the storyline in that particular conflict 3-0 to the workers, after Peter and Eamonn were also reinstated earlier in the year.

Victory on the Tube: Arwyn Thomas reinstated!

Success in this campaign may give Tube workers a much-needed morale boost to take into their next battle — a fight over pay in which bosses are attempting to impose a 5-year deal at rates only very slightly above inflation. The dispute also has extremely significant consequences for the wider labour movement (see centre pages).

Janine Booth, London Transport region representative on the RMT Executive, said: "This is a very important win that reps and activists worked very hard to achieve. Arwyn has been steadfast and principled throughout, and the union adopted a strategy where we escalated action when we had to, put the rank-and-file train grades and strike committees in the driving seat, and called imaginative action which we refused to call off until Arwyn's return to work was secured. The outcome is not 100% perfect, but in the circumstances, it is a big victory."

"We will now be using this momentum to build union strength in the workplace to enable us to fight off future attacks.

"For more, see centre pages.

Further Education staff fight cuts

By a UCU member
Further education (FE) lecturers are bracing themselves for a round of cuts taking effect in the autumn. Some colleges are already in dispute with management.

Further cuts will be inevitable when the change in eligibility to free courses for those on benefits comes through. At the moment there is free provision for individuals on benefits. Next year this will only apply to those on job-seekers' allowance and who are actively seeking work. Those on inactive benefits (Income Support) will no longer be eligible for free provision and will have to pay fees which are 50% of their programme.

This affects many students who want to study on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.

In the meantime disputes are ongoing at:

- Weston College Kingsway — in dispute over redundancies and have balloted for industrial action. 88% voted for strike action and 95% for action short of strike.
- Croydon College over redundancies. Messages of support to Margot at hilml@croydon.ac.uk.
- Conel, although they have won on compulsory redundancies, are still in dispute over provision. Messages of support to Tim at timothy.dalrymple@wlc.ac.uk.
- Barnsley College are in dispute over redundancies and victimisation. Messages of support to Jenny at jsutton@staff.conel.ac.uk.
- City of Westminster over redundancies and victimisation. Messages of support to Phil at phil.flanders@cwc.ac.uk.
- Barnsley College are set to escalate their action to four days next week over redundancies and union busting. Send messages of support to Dave at d.gibson@barneys.ac.uk.

“Black men are not safe in police custody”

By Padraig O'Brien
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Further Education

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- Conel, although they have won on compulsory redundancies, are still in dispute over provision. Messages of support to Tim at timothy.dalrymple@wlc.ac.uk.
- Barnsley College are in dispute over redundancies and victimisation. Messages of support to Jenny at jsutton@staff.conel.ac.uk.
- City of Westminster over redundancies and victimisation. Messages of support to Phil at phil.flanders@cwc.ac.uk.
- Barnsley College are set to escalate their action to four days next week over redundancies and union busting. Send messages of support to Dave at d.gibson@barneys.ac.uk.

“Black men are not safe in police custody”

By Padraig O'Brien
Demetre Fraser, 21, from Peckham, south London, has died in suspicious circumstances after a visit from the West Midlands police.

Staying in Birmingham as part of his bail conditions following an assault charge by his girlfriend (later withdrawn), Fraser was visited by police on 31 May, apparently for a rou-