In East Africa 92 million people struggle to survive; tens of thousands starve

In the USA a rich minority consumes 70 times the income of millions of East Africans

See page 5

More socialist ideas and labour movement news online: www.workersliberty.org
Labour Party: unions must fight for democratic reform!

By Martin Thomas

The “Hain report” on Labour Party democracy has been published (or at least a “summary report” has been) and it is clear whether any further report will appear later. It is disappointing. Union and Labour leaders must fight to retain the “a living, breathing party”, says the report will “disappoint, bigtime.”

Even worse, the rules changes which Labour’s National Executive Committee put to the Labour Party conference this year, following the report, will not be reviewed to union and constituency delegations in a few days before conference, or maybe not even until the conference itself.

The unions affiliated to the Labour Party, in their joint submission to the conference (26 June), were also disappointing in many ways, but did propose some positive measures. At its meeting on 23 July, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Executive recommended the following motion to trade union branches and constituency delegations.

As the TULO submission recommends, the rules changes should incorporate the following.

4. Motions to conference. We strongly endorse TULO’s recommendation to remove the restrictive “contemporary” criterion which currently leads to numerous motions on issues of genuine concern being simply ruled out of order.

5. Conference voting. We support the current evenly balanced system, in which votes are equally divided (50% to CSVs and CLPs and affiliates).

The TULO submission makes the point that “we cannot treat our members as a force to be tamely disposed of. We now call on the union representatives to argue forcefully for the points above in order to make the Labour Party more responsive to our members’ legitimate and vital interests.

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Links:
After Murdoch scandal?

By Sinead Asch

Someone once famously described the outbreak of World War One - how the powder was ready and the fuse was lit - for which he was held guilty. That first fuse of the war was thrown by the news agency Associated Press which informed German newspapers that Russia had declared war on Austria-Hungary.

The momentous Murdoch scandal has cast a shadow over the world of journalism in the way that the news of the assassination of President Kennedy brought the nation to a standstill.

Murdoch, the multi-billionaire media tycoon, has been implicated in a scandal which has cast a pall on his empire and on the world of journalism.

The scandal, which has been unfolding for weeks, has involved the hacking of phone lines of celebrities, politicians and public figures, and the leaking of private information.

The scandal has caused a crisis in the world of journalism, and has raised questions about the role of the media in society.

Mike Jemison, the Director of the Media Law Trust, said that the scandal was a wake-up call for all journalists.

The Murdoch scandal has brought to light the extent to which the media can be used to gain power and influence, and has raised questions about the role of the media in society.

DEREGULATION

The roots of this scandal lie in the Reagan and Thatcher administrations' campaigns for deregulation and privatization.

The right-wing libertarians of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations have sought to deregulate and privatize various sectors of the economy, including the media.

The Murdoch scandal has exposed the extent to which these policies have led to a decline in the quality of journalism.

“Media workers need a culture of solidarity,” the one proposed by Clive Sinden, the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press in 1992. He proposed a media union which would be independent of both the industry and parliament, and would unite journalists under a single contract.

Converged technologies and ownership meaning broadcast and online media should now be regulated on the same basis as print. There needs to be more lay representation and representation for working journalists.

What did they leave us with?

By Louise Gold

Amy Winehouse seemed to walk willingly into the mould of rock’n’roll cliché, but what is her legacy?

Her songs were largely self-penned, so credit is due to her father, Mitch, for having listened to her from the moment she was born. There is no doubt that she was a very special talent.

But in the end, her inability to stop taking amphetamines, to stop taking alcohol, and to stop taking heroin, were the factors that led to her untimely death.

Poignant memories of Amy are now spread across the world in the form of words, pictures and other stories.

“Looking back at her, it’s impossible not to be touched by the intensity of her talent, the way she so completely immersed herself in her work,” said one of her closest friends.

Amy Winehouse was, as many of us have come to realize, a protégé of a commodity. Yet she had her wealth and success as a musician, and while death is usually the great equalizer, in this case death has done to her what it can’t do to the rest of us: death will immortalize her music and celebrity. But it all feels rather bittersweet.

One positive legacy may be added pressure for greater funding and support for rehabilitation drug and alcohol users.

The last specialist NHS rehabilitation centre for young people closed down last year. One can only hope that the untimely death of a star will be her harbinger of a groundswell of support needed to see change in this area.

But, as was rather put it to me recently, if the many re-habilitation units needed for young people were to increase, Winehouse would probably have rejected their attempts to “cure” her.
Facebook is not an organising tool

Eric Lee

A decade ago, it was not easy to convince some on the left to begin using net-based tools to communicate and organise. Today, we run the risk of becoming over-reliant on some of those tools, most notably Facebook.

This is not to say that Facebook has not helped to address the weaknesses of Facebook. Much of what has been written has described theoretical possibilities of things going wrong. For example, Facebook could — in theory — close down any group, page, cause or event you might set up without warning and without appeal.

We had a case a few years ago of Facebook shutting down a group organising casino workers in one of Canada's Atlantic provinces — simply because the owners of the casino asked them to.

But those examples were rare, and the risks seemed remote, and increasingly trade unions and campaigning organisations began to use Facebook to organise their events and activities.

Recently, I've come across two concrete examples in daily life of the risks we take when we do this.

One is a Facebook group I set up for a campaigning organisation. I noticed one day that it was blocking me from adding new posts to the group’s “wall.” A message pops up headlined “Oops!” and informs me that “Something’s gone wrong. We’re working to get it fixed as soon as we can.”

And it’s been that way for weeks.

I wrote to Facebook technical support to report the bug, but got no reply at all.

Not only can’t I post any new items to the group, but all the old ones have disappeared. About two years worth of weekly archived posts.

And if I want to write to all members of the group to tell them that the wall is no longer there, well, that option seems to have disappeared as well.

So I have a group with a few hundred members that I can no longer communicate with, and no place to get help.

The second example is another group, a much larger one with several thousand members. Its wall is functioning well — but I can no longer send messages to it, even see who they are or how many of them are members.

And again, there is no place to go for help — we don’t pay to use Facebook, and they’re under no obligation to provide any kind of support.

In both cases, I have websites and mailing lists independent of Facebook, so I can communicate with most (but not all) of those people. And these websites and mailing lists use open source tools which I can edit and control, and are backed up regularly by me.

Am I suggesting that we stop using Facebook? No at all. But we rely on it at our peril. We run the risk of being cut off from the very people we think we are communicating with, and not only when some employer gets angry and decides to cut us out.

Sometimes the problem is simply a technical one — “oops” — but this is just as difficult to deal with.

That's the easy part. The hard part is we need to convince our friends to stop using those tools, and not rely on Facebook as a way of staying in touch with us.

In Solidarity 191 Sofie Buckland asked whether socialists should back political parties in their service, confessing we should not (http://alltut.com/nzc8X). A debate on this has developed on our website — extracts below.

[L] The police are workers in uniform. To say so is an objective statement, not a political assertion.

The fact that we can all tell angry stories about how crap the cops treated us doesn’t alter the currently necessary work that the police also do every day — roles that will still need to be fulfilled in a society where working-class interests finally rule.

“Winning over individual police is a case of persuading them not to be police any more” is just lazy, short-sighted wot-tery. You want to get any cop who is prepared to discuss socialist ideas seriously with you to leave his job? You want to remove a potential ally from the police until you’ve won them over so you can ‘separate the wheat from the chaff’? Is it not anti-work ing-class Express readers who are its reactionary back-bone?

It is more intelligent to make links we can with politically progressive cops and encourage them to organise for an independent, rank and file union. I don’t mean that we would trust cops to be good trade unionists when they play an oppressive role in our communities.

You can also come up with proposals for how working class solidarity can be developed. It is not compatible with membership of our group — it puts you on the wrong side of the class struggle.

It also means that police unions should not be thought of as part of the labour movement. We would oppose POA motions for bringing police into the class struggle, not only on our protest marches and during strikes, but routinely — brutally, often randomly — on the estates and streets. The police understand their social role, and its consequences.

We don’t want decent young people to join a force that requires them to be routinely unpleasant and (perhaps) violent towards workers, youth and the poor. We know that they will either be spat out or, if they stay for any length of time, become corrupted.

We would oppose demands from police unions for better wages. Why? Because we don’t want to improve the morale of the people who will line up against us.

In special circumstances we might change the tactics. The Sandinistas supported a pay claim of the vte Nicaragua police force in 1979 — not because they had changed their view of the police as torturers and thugs — but because they wanted to split the state, or paralyse part of it.

When I say socialist I mean just a working-class person who recognises class society and would prefer a more democratic and egalitarian one.

I can think of four cops like that who I’ve met. Interested to know where you draw the line though: soldiers? Court workers? (Yes, we have those.)

I don’t think we should support their Police Fed demands or illusions of any kind about them. But we should encourage them to contest the ranks from their bourgeois commanders.

Theo

In the context of our discussion, it is necessary to exclude ‘true cops’ or cops who are the category of ‘real workers’. First, real managers, i.e. people with substantial control over the labour process.

Second, people in charge of the repressive functions of the state. Benefits workers, firefighters, MoD staff etc., are true workers; police, army, prison officers, and immigration officials who are directly responsible for throwing people out of the country are capitalist cops.

Gadzooks! You want to join a force that has the power to break in times of big struggle. Conscript armies are weaker than professional. And in some countries police are being reorganised under the name of “normal” workers — the norm is shorter stints, less professionalised (than UK).

Facebook closed a Canadian casino workers' union website

Eric Lee

Class divisions are replicated in the state forces, such that socialists and file operatives have a working-class experience in relation to their commanders, and are recruited from the working class. Socialists’ workplaces are also excellent, as employers and they also experience solidarity within their ranks. Although isolated from their communities by their special role, many of them interact with friends and family. There is a contradiction in their position.

Some are recruited because they already have bullying, reactionary tendencies, but many are in search more mundane or even initially idealistic reasons.

The hearts and minds of rank and file cops are ground that we can contend, without compromising our own safety or clarity. At present, “they” are not actually one homogeneous mass with the same ideological and political tendencies. Moreover, the police have a high level of discontent and alienation, both over the terms they earn and the nature of the police.

They work in uniform, I was one of the people pushing, but I also told riot cops in quieter moments that when they took our side, they would stand with us.

When two comrades from the Scottish Socialist Party stood in front of the pushing crowd at the G8 protesters were treated as uniforms, I was one of the people pushing. But I also told riot cops in quieter moments that when they took our side, they would stand with us.

The basic demands of the left run in flat contradiction to the sister one for the dispossessed and the innocent. Express in Sarajevo.

For example, abolish special police units like the DSG, abolish Special Branch; abolish the secret state (MS, MI5, MI6). Instead of the police taking a cut in their service, direct election of boards with operational and budgetary control over police forces; making sacked police guilty of racism or corruption and not treated as a criminal.

That flat contradiction must tell you something about the nature of the police.

Mark

Thoughts on left unity

C S Page — a young, unaffiliated socialist — attended the SWP’s 2011 Marxism Festival. Here are his impressions.

A few weeks ago, I attended the Socialist Worker Party’s Marxism Festival. Despite the fact that I disagree with some aspects of the SWP’s political programme and some of their methodology, I approached the Festival with an open mind, and mainly as an educational opportunity.

I enjoyed parts of it. Yet the unifying feature was that as soon as I left each lecture, on my way to the next talk or to Bookmarks bookshop, I’d be stopped by an earnest young person in a yellow t-shirt, who would thrust a leaflet at me: “Join the SWP” they would say. I would politely decline.

The fact that the SWP is trying to recruit new members does not bother me. All political organisations want to expand. It does get me, though, that Marxism 2011, despite its educational veneer, felt like little more than a SWP recruitment event.

I was given an often-fascinating titbit of information, compressed into hour-long sessions. Such brief spells of learning were completed by the simple message, spoken or unspoken, that to learn more, the only thing you needed to do was join the SWP.

I don’t hold a grudge which I would get away from the festival, was a feeling of sectarianism. They are workers in uniform! I was one of the people pushing. But I also told riot cops in quieter moments that when they took our side, they would stand with us.

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Mark
The ratings agencies have intervened powerfully in the eurozone crisis, too. Greek government IOUs (bonds) have had no chance of being rated good-as-gold, but the Eurozone governments have laboured hard to avoid having the IOUs labelled “in default” (outright rubbish). Who are Standard and Poor’s, Fitch, and Moody’s so powerful?

Because, in this market, the market god is the government. The market god wants to avoid having the IOUs of one country defaulting. Each country wants to avoid having the IOUs of another government defaulting, for then the market gods want the government to have to lend them money.

The market gods write the rules for the market and enforce the rules using the market to control the people. 

This is inherent to the operation of the market, and the market gods are needed to make sure that the system works properly for the market gods. The market gods want to control the governments and countries so that the system works properly and the market gods are rewarded. 

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Norwegian massacre: the deadly logic behind Breivik’s race war

By Tom Unterrainer

By bomb and by bullet, Anders Behring Breivik delivered mass murder upon Norway. Breivik’s lawyer says he is not his client is probably insane. But Breivik’s actions were based upon a cool, considered and in their own terms “rational” political calculation.

On the afternoon of Fri-day 22 July, a car bomb exploded in the governmental heart of Oslo. Positioned near the office of the Labour prime minister and the offices of the Norwegian Labour Party, the bomb caused considerable damage. A short time later, reports emerged of gunfire on the island of Utoeya, site of a Labour Party youth camp.

Dressed as a policeman, Breivik calmly hunted down and murdered scores of people on the island. He did so seemingly, selecting a type of ammunition designed to explode inside the human body and putting bullets through the heads of those “playing dead” in order to avoid further murder.

Breivik was well prepared in other ways. As the massacre commenced, he posted a fifteen-hun-
dred page “manifesto” on the internet. This docu ment helps to trace Breivik’s evolution from a socially conservative Christian to the radical right-wing murderer he became.

Breivik’s budget

Meanwhile the interest in his manifesto, the murders, and the barbaric atrocity they commit are the “win ning” of his “Islamic” faith are slow but surely taking over. This belief motivated Breivik’s attack on the ruling Labour Party.

Breivik’s race war is the “rational” conclusion of logic operating at the heart of wide-spread anti-Muslim racism. This same logic operates in the politics of both the BNP and EDL.

As with other Scandinavian and Dutch right-wingers could mobilise significant sup port. Anders Behring Breivik’s attack on the ruling Labour Party.

Against those who buy even a little of the anti-Muslim racism these char acters thrive upon we pose the real state of the Norwegian Left. The Norwegian Labour Party has 25 seats in parliament. In Norway, the “Progress Party” came sec ond in the 2009 parliamentary elections. This party calls for greater restrictions on immigration but is essentially a social conserva tive grouping. As such, it doesn’t offer a political home for the likes of Breivik.

What do you do if you’re convinced that Muslims are attempting to “colonise” Europe? What do you do if you believe that this “colonisation” heralds “catastrophic con sequences” for non-Muslims? What course of action do you take if you are politically marginalised and ignored?

There is only one course of action open to you: political termination. But this was not political terror as martyrdom. Breivik’s life was not taken for the “good of the cause”. His actions and the preservation of his life seem deliberate. According to his manifesto, the murders were a “preparation phase” for “armed struggle” to come. The “armed struggle” he envisions will be a race war. A war of the “West” against Muslims. A war to ethnically cleanse Europe. A war of national and racial preservation.

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US budget cuts: the class war is back

By Gerry Bates

China’s people and its media have defied state and corporate capital, and the government’s development drive is coming with a terrible cost.

As a high-speed rail crash on 24 July which killed 39 people, questions are being asked about the real motivations behind prestigious high-speed railways and the Jiaozhou Bay sea-bridge, which opened in late June 2011 despite fears that it was not safe.

In the immediate aftermath of the rail crash, the Chinese government appeared unwilling to respond. Questions about the incident and attempted concealment of the facts by the state media from probing too deeply into what had happened, leading to speculation of a cover-up. The all-powerful railways ministry was also involved in significant controversy earlier in the summer when a state audit revealed corruption and embezzlement by its financial backers.

The clear signal is that, for the Chinese government, “development” is not aimed at improving the lives of Chinese people but at为代表的, “super-rich”-sponsors.

The [Democrats'] ever-rising loyalty is to corporate capital, especially its largest donors from Wall Street and the hedge funds — and to the capitalist system. The higher up the party leadership, the stronger the discipline imposed by capital.

Yet the Democrats can succeed only by delivering benefits to their key voting base — labor, the African-American and other communities of color, women seeking gender equality and reproductive rights.

There are occasions when Democrats at lower levels act honorably, especially in response to the pressure of mass movements — and the fact that the destruction of public sector unions threatens the party’s funding base. The 14 Wisconsin state Senate Democrats who left the state, blocking the quorum necessary to pass Governor Walker’s union-smashing law, showed real courage and fighting spirit.

The record of the Democrats in power, however, is appalling — demoralising to their support base. But the biggest loser about politics (under Obama), of course, are the Employee Free Choice Act, dummed in an unmarked grave without even a decent funeral — and Health Care Reform.

In a period of capitalist decline and crisis — as opposed to the boom times of growth and prosperity — it’s really true that “you can’t leave two massive problems with fundamentally opposed class interests, and so this is a game that the Democrats will usually lose. But movements that attach themselves to the Democrats at such a time will always lose.

Even while the intensity and pure viciousness of the rightwing assault on labor creates almost unfathomable pressures to sack the Democrats as “the only alternative,” the real-life need for independent politics is greater than ever.

WHAT NEXT?

The game-of-chicken over a government shutdown around the federal deadline ended, for the moment, with a highly praised “bipartisan compromise” that hangs billions away billions from medical programs for children and the poor — those who need them most. It’s a taste of what’s to come in the next war over raising the federal debt ceiling.

Backed by ideological centers like the Peterson Institute and Cato Institute, the right wing is preparing a frontal assault on Social Security, on the pretext that “the next generation can’t afford the burden of Baby Boomer retiree,” that “only the truly poor need Social Security” and all the rest of it.

Obama and the Democrats are getting ready to offer “reforms” that will further weaken working-class people’s confidence that Social Security will be there for them in the long run.

Social Security is neither in “crisis” nor the cause of the deficit. It has produced consistent surpluses for decades, which are used to subsidize US capitalism’s assorted wars, tax reductions for corporations and the rich, etc.

Far from a “failed government program,” it is the most successful one ever, and can be funded permanently by lifting the artificial ceiling on income taxes to finance it — which precisely is why it’s now in the reactionary crosshairs.

The attack on Social Security is a quite deliberate, frontal assault on the notion that society’s members bear any kind of collective, organised responsibility for each other. “Your Health Care, Your Problem” was a sign seen at Tea Party rallies trash- ing the health care reform. It’s an ideology with some appeal to relatively better-off, mostly white working people — until the attack directly hits them.

The right wing offensive faces contradictions, however. The Republican Senate’s “Super Committee” was a failure. It’s really true that “you can’t do this with outadecentburdenoncorporatecapital.”

China’s workers, without whom projects like the high-speed railway and the Jiaozhou Bay bridge could never have been built in the first place, held the key to keeping a workable plan, that puts profits and prestige ahead of human life.

In South Korea, Police used water cannon and tear gas against 10,000 Korean workers and their families marching to a Hanjin Heavy Industries shipyard on July 9-10.

Kim Jin-suk, who was sacked by the company in 1997, and who is now a leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, has been occupying — 35 days without eating or sleeping in a shipyard’s crane since January — to protest against job losses. Arrest warrants for union leaders have been issued, up to 50 supporters have been arrested and re- leased on bail. Fine amounts exceeding 5.3 billion won in damages. Under Korea’s Penal Code 314, “Obstruction of Business,” companies are allowed to file criminal charges and seek imprisonment or damages claims against individuals and unions taking legitimate industrial action.

The Registration Bill, passed in December, when Hanjin workers were making the most recent attack against the planned layoff of 400 workers. The company’s, closed the shipyard.

http://www.labourstart.org.uk for more details and an emergent action appeal.
**MIDDLE EAST BRIEFING**

**Qaddafi must go!**

*By Dan Katz*

On Wednesday 27 July Britain became the latest state to recognise the rebel National Transition Council (NTC) as the “sole [Libyan] governmental authority.”

30 countries, including the US and China, have now recognised the NTC. UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague declared, “This decision reflects the National Transitional Council’s legitimacy, competence and success in reaching out to Libyans across the country.”

In London a Libyan diplomat was summoned to the Foreign Office to tell all Qaddafi officials must pack their bags and leave.

The NTC had been complaining that many of the financial promises made to it by foreign governments at the start of the civil war had not been met. Recognition allows the British government to unfreeze £91m in assets from a Libyan oil company. Austria also plans to free £1.7bn.

Backed by airstrikes, the anti-Qaddafi fighters have been making military progress on three fronts – around Brega, west of Misurata, and south of Tripoli in the Western mountains. The military operation is a continuation of a push by the NTC on the road routes being used.

For petrol need to wait a week to fill up. The 1990s, and it has now reactivated the old smuggling routes their fair we ather “allies” in the British government seem that the British— and others in Western governments— are signalling to Qaddafi that the details of his departure are negotiable.

Qaddafi’s regime was subjected to extensive sanctions in the 1990s, and it has now reactivated the old smuggling routes it used then. Much of Qaddafi’s petrol now comes through Algeria — although the rebels seem close to cutting the road routes being used.

The western powers had been concerned about the relia- bility of the NTC and the possible presence of Islamists among its fighters. They calculate the rebel’s winner will win, sooner or later, and are now manoeuvring to shape the settlement and Libya’s future.

This week a British Health Commissioner suggested Qaddafi might not have to go into exile should be leave power — saying it was a “question for the Libyans”.

Since it is difficult to say who internal exile could work it seems that the British — and others in Western governments — are signalling to Qaddafi that the details of his departure are negotiable.

The West does not want to rebel victory following fight- ing on the streets of Tripoli. The Western states want some sort of negotiated end – as one diplomat put it, candidly — not a black and white ending, but something, “a little grub- bier”.

The day after Hague recognised the NTC the top rebel military commander, Abdel Fattah Younis was murdered. NTC minister Ali Tarhouni claimed he was killed by members of the Obada Ibn Jarrah Brigade, an Islamist group. No doubt the British government is both alarmed and em- barrassed by the killing. Tony Defence Secretary Liam Fox declared that as Libyan democracy developed the milita nts would “have to be marginalised.” He spelt it out: “The key to the Libyan resolution will be whether or not the close cir- cle around Colonel Qaddafi recognise that he will soon or later have to leave power. When the penny drops that that is inevitable, then you’re likely to see the sort of change in the political momentum that we’ve been looking for.”

The struggle for democracy activists in Libya will be to ensure that it is the change they’re looking for — the complete overthrow and dismantlement of Qaddafi’s regime — that wins out, and not the negotiated escape route their fairwe ather “allies” in the British government appear to want to offer the tyrant.

*By Clive Bradley*

It is six months since the fall of Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, and in that time, although intense struggles have contin- ued to drive out the Arab Spring’s new heroes from power and Syria (probably the two most repressive Arab states), as yet no other dictators have fallen.

In Libya, Mubarak came to power, in 1969 — or, like the prosecution of the Mubarak family and others from the old regime, are pro- ceeding only very slowly. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which has ruled Egypt since February, has in- evitably proved unable to address the profound underlying economic issues which underlie the revolution. Mass unem- ployment continues; workers have low wages and are often not paid at all.

The military government, indeed, has introduced new re- pressive laws — and has continued to arrest activists — some 10,000 — many of whom are tried by military courts even though they are civilians. The abolition of this system is an- other demand of recent protests.

The army’s ability to impose its will is curtailed. New repressive laws were used to arrest workers from the Petrojyt company protesting outside the Ministry of Petroleum. The workers were tried in a military court and found guilty — but only received suspended sentences.

**CONSTITUTION**

One issue which was studiously kept out of the July demonstrations, however, was that of the constitution — a debate about which had dominated national politics for the previous few months.

Parliamentary elections had been scheduled for September though they have now been delayed. The new parliament will select a 100-member body to draw up a new constitution.

Most of the liberal-left, and more radical forces, have ar- gued against this system, insisting instead that the constitu- tion be written before elections. Their concerns have been three-fold: first, to make sure that newer parties have time to organise properly (especially in local areas) before elections take place; second, that the new constitution clearly defines the army’s role, ensuring that it withdraws from politics; and finally, — connected to the first — that the Muslim Brother- hood, the best-organised political party and likely to be the largest in parliament, isn’t able to dictate the new constitution. The Brotherhood, which has been extremely close to the military government, eventually decided to support the July protests.

If one feature of the broad movement now is a growing im- plication with the SCAF, the other is growing divisions within the movement itself. Some of the youth movements which emerged during the revolution are suspicious of, or hostile to, political parties as such.

In Tahrir Square, for example, some semi-anarchist groups tried to prevent a meeting being held by the Workers Demo- cratic Party — on the grounds that political parties are the problem.

But this event perhaps underscores another, deeper divi- sion — activists’ reaction to the continuing struggles of the new workers’ movement.

What tipped the balance in February was escalating na- tionwide protests, especially in the Suez canal area, with its key economic role. Strikes have continued unabated since; and an entire, new labour movement has been born.

People are not yet sure what type of state has been created. Some of these are relatively small caucuses in huge work- places; but many are mass unions in the most important in- dustries and workplaces — such as the textile plants in

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**Working-class protest sweeps Israel**

*By Shlomo Anker*

The last few weeks have seen the most powerful protest movement in Israel’s history on issues not re- lating to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On 30 July, a series of huge demonstrations took place across the country, involving 150,000 people (Israel’s popu- lation is slightly over one tenth of the UK’s). The movement has been so powerful that it has won words of support from centrist Kadima party, and even prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has conceded some ground. Kadima, like all lib- ertaries, love “vote with the wind.” They jump on the band wagon when they see a movement has public support. The fact that heartless opportunists are supporting the protests is proof of their power.

It started when a small group set up tents to protest the poor housing situation in Tel Aviv; on the highly expensive Rothschild Boulevard. The media, which in Israel tends to be a little less anti-protest than the British media, quickly re- ported on these events, and other direct action protests mushroomed dramatically. Many people who are active in other struggles joined in setting up tents at Rothschild Boulevard, to the point where the protest dominated this major street in central Tel Aviv.

Some in the media claimed that the protesters were all middle class, called them cry babies, spots kids, etc. Some may be middle-class parents, but privilege has not necessarily tricked down. In reality these protesters, many of whom work for the minimum wage or just above, are protests from all walks of life.

The focus at this point was on housing. Tel Aviv residents suffer similar problems to those in London, and Netanyahu is a disciple of Thatcher. As the movement has grown, the focus has broadened to take in other demands around education, healthcare and other social services. Activist Daphni Leef said: “We do not want to replace the govern- ment, we want much more than that — to change the rules of the game and say loud and clear: Social services are rights, not commodities."

After the first few days of these direct actions, a demon- stration was called in Tel Aviv for 24 June, attracting 20- 30,000 people. On that day the protest movement replaced the Israeli-Palestinian war as the main focus of the news. The trade unions publicly came out in support of the move- ment and helped to organise a new series of protests. Most people expected a similar turn out to 24 July, but this time 150,000 came out — the equivalent of a million demonstra- tors in Britain. The movement has seen protests of 8,000 in Haifa and 10,000 in Jerusalem. In cities like Nazareth, protests have involved both Jews and Arabs.

The exact political opinions of those who began the move- ment are unclear, but at this stage there is not an immedi- ately apparent overlap with activists in the anti-Ocupation movement. However, some members of the Anarchists Against the Wall group have taken part in the tent city protests.

In the big demonstrations, a number of Israeli revolution- ary socialists have come out of the woodwork. A far-left ex- ist in Israel (the Committee for Workers’ International, led by the Socialist Party, has a section there, named Ma’avak, and other groups also operate) but left groups tend to be focused on the Palestinian issue. It is mainly due to the role of Hadash, Israel’s largest left-wing organisation (at the centre of which is the ex-Stalinist Communist Party), that red flags and other socialist imagery have been seen on the demos. Some of the chants have been revolutionary, and a headline in Ha’aretz used the word “revolution” to de- scribe the movement.

The Meretz party, (essentially liberal social democrats), were also present. But the average protester seems to have been the young Israeli who is at best semi-political, not a committed member of any group and shakyon the Palestinian issue.

Whenever the country is attacked by a bomb or missile, they tend to get scared and retreat into their right-wing torture doll, and give at least passive support to the government against the Palestinians. But when the situation is calmer, this mass of the secular Jewish population leans left on this question too.

How the Palestine issue and the current movement will interrelate remains to be seen.
The bourgeois parties, and some of the revolutionary youth movements, hold that these workers' demands and struggles are divisive and "sectional", and should be restrained in the "national interest". The truth is, for a worker who has not been paid in two months, "restraint" is impossible.

As yet the new workers' movement, although it has proven itself a real force in national politics, has no political voice of its own. There are initiatives in that direction, notably the already-mentioned Workers Democratic Party (whose main activists seem to be from the Revolutionary Socialists group, but which does include important workers' leaders).

Such initiatives are very new, and financially-restrictive laws make it unlikely they will be able to participate in the forthcoming elections. Polisario still suggest the Muslim Brotherhood will be the largest group in the parliament — although one poll, at least, indicated the Brotherhood could only rely on 15% of the vote. The Brothers — anxious to reassure, in particular, the Obama administration, have promised not to field candidates in more than 50% of seats. (The elections involve an extremely complex system, part of which is PR).

In practice it’s not clear what this will mean. The Muslim Brothers have officially formed a party — the Peace and Justice Party; but there are in total five parties which have emerged from the Brotherhood in the past months (in addition to the Centre Party — a split in the 1990s). These new parties seem to be at serious loggerheads with each other, indicating, perhaps, a crisis in the movement.

The most significant of these is the Egyptian Current Party, formed by 4,000 (mainly) youth expelled by the central leadership. These are Brotherhood activists who were involved, for instance, in protests against Israel's war in Gaza and who have been, it seems, influenced by the secular left.

They believe in a separation between religion and politics, which represents an enormous break with the politics of the parent movement.

International unions slam Egypt's government on workers' rights

On 21 June the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) wrote a letter of protest to the acting Egyptian prime minister, Essam Sharaf, denouncing Decree No. 34 — drafted and approved by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces — which criminalises strikes and protest actions.

The ITUC describes the Decree as a “backward step,” that would “lead to legal disaster.” An ITUC report of 28 July, surveying Egypt's labour laws, comments: “Exemptions from certain labour provisions in export processing zones, combined with poor enforcement of the law, have resulted in rights abuses and poor working conditions there. Furthermore a law passed by the new government in March 2011 denies the right to strike.”

The government that emerged from the Egyptian uprising is opposed to workers' rights and the workers' movement. The ITUC complain that child labour is widespread: “There are between 2.7 million and 5.5 million working children, amounting to 6-13% of children aged 5-14, and the worst forms of child labour are common.” Moreover, “forced labour is a serious problem. The government has been slow in reacting to cases of forced labour and trafficking.”

Army forces attempt to clear out Tahrir Square as Egypt's protest movement revives in opposition to the military government

Syria: regime sinks to new low

By Dan Katz

The Syrian state under Bashar al-Assad used tank fire and heavy machine guns on Sunday 31 July as the army overran barricades erected by the citizens of Hama. 500,000 had marched in Hama on Friday 29 demanding “the regime must go!”

Shooting wildly, soldiers attacked mainly peaceful demonstrators who — amazingly, bravely — ran into the firing from the ramshackle barriers, demanding the tanks stop. The Syrian National Organisation for Human Rights estimates 142 people died on Sunday in Hama and three other Syrian towns.

It seems the regime wants to break the protests before the start of the month of Ramadan on 1 August. They fear that Syrians will use daily attendance at Mosques during Ramadan to step-up protests. The demonstrations have been growing; on each Friday during July one million have marched.

HAMA MASSACRE

Hama is a conservative Sunni town of 800,000 in the west of Syria. It was the site of a notorious massacre in February 1982 when Assad’s father, Hafez Assad, put down an Islamist rising, killing 20,000 people.

According to the campaigning organisation Araaz, the regime has now butchered 1634 people during the four and a half months of the pro-democracy uprising. Avaaz claims a further 2918 people have disappeared. Thousands have been arrested and many tortured.

The regime says “armed gangs”, who have been “vandalising public and private property”, are responsible for the violence. In fact the violence is being orchestrated by the military and secret police, flanked by pro-regime, sectarian gangs called Shabiha (Ghosts). The press attaché at the US embassy in Damascus described the government’s version of events as, “completely delusional. They are making up fanciful stories that no one believes.”

Without any sense of irony — given their own poisonous interventions in the affairs of Lebanon, Palestine and Israel — the Syrian state has complained about foreign interference in its internal affairs.

Although there have been no major splits in the government forces there have been regular, smaller-scale defections as troops refuse to fire, or switch sides. To overthrow the regime a significant rebellion in state forces must take place.

Although Western governments have condemned the crackdown in Syria, and imposed sanctions, there have been few protests from Arab states.

Scores of Syrians protested outside the Arab League office in central Cairo last week demanding the pan-Arab organisation oppose the state's violence.

Slogans included: “We condemn Arab silence at what is taking place in Syria.”

Activists carry the coffin of, amongst others, Ibrahim Ghasheesh, a firefighter from Hama who wrote poetry and songs in support the uprising. His throat was cut out by pro-regime forces.
The English Defence League plans to march through Tower Hamlets and beyond need to organise to contain the EDL, working-class activists in Tower Hamlets and beyond need to organise to contain the EDL and prevent them from marching. Unfor-
tunately, the EDL has found a strategy that will not work. Workers: unite!

Trotsky argued that, after the fall of the tsarist regime, the working-class revolutionaries in Russian towns and cities should not engage in a “matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race.” Lenin had a different idea, at the end of Marx’s letter to Lincoln:

“There is not much sense in Marx’s writings of the need for a permanent revolutionary war, but the right to organise and resist will be the safeguard of the working class. The struggle for the freedom of the working class will be a real struggle for the freedom of the world. Let us not lose our sight of this. And, on the other hand, recognise the limit of the struggle, for Marx himself had his own conclusions following the revolutions of 1848: for working class independence.”

Marx and Abraham Lincoln

Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln by Robin Blackburn

This book is available for a bit more than £8 on Amazon, which makes it a bargain. It is

The author — Robin Blackburn — is a former editor of New Left Review, and has previously written two good books on slavery (The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery and The Making of New World Slavery). Unfinished Revolution is divided into two sections: a 10-page introduction, followed by 150 pages of documents. It is a long time since I bought a new book which includes a section of historical writings — in this case from Marx, Engels, Lincoln and others. It makes a good change to find a writer who thinks readers should study historical sources. Blackburn’s introduction is interesting, but is an odd pub lit shape. He starts by contrasting Lincoln with Marx — but can’t go too far because Lincoln is assassinated at the end of the civil war, in April 1865 (and the period of post-war reconstruction does not end until 1877). The last section of Blackburn’s book is a brief overview of the development of the working class movement in the wake of the American Civil War. Lincoln makes one claim which seems wrong, and more important — fails to make one criticism of Marx which should be made. The two are connected.

The fake claim is this: “Marx and Engels were often uneasy about the narrow-mindedness of their American followers, but they were themselves partly responsible for this, since they had not developed a consistent and coherent strategy for trade unions on the one hand and political parties on the other.” This seems, at the very least, a little harsh, by the late (1860s) Marx’s standards. (We are discussing the question of trade unionism for more than 20 years.)

Marx and Engels had been the first major figures in the socialist movement, and had “given support to the formation of trade unions and trade unions on principle” (Dreau, Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution, Vol. 2), waging a war on sectarianism and sexual equality and its moral repercussions in the context of a thinly disguised Tory grandee family and from the observation point of a young student. It was a masterpiece of precision and honesty — matched only in these isles by Colm Toibin’s similar analysis of homosexuality and the left. It remains a politically conservative book.

The Stranger’s Child is very different to The Line of Beauty in context if not in tone. It recounts the story of a grand aristocratic family at the end of the Edwardian era and at the beginning of the 20th century, when the son of the second of the two main characters at home of his lover George. Over a weekend he writes a long poem about the house calling it “the middle to upper-middle-class RF voice”, the voice of authority, the voice of power”. This reflex has led to new fictional directions, exploring subaltern voices of which the most successful have been Kehlan himself on the Scottish working class, John Berger’s political narrative of rural Britain. Are we not to ask the same of the middletoupper-middle class who are constantly speaking on their behalf?

We have one question on Trotskyism — seeking unity only with organisations “Trotskyist” group, has forgotten the lessons of that period. Abandon the EDL marching. Bans (by the local council in this case) are not the way to oppose the far right.

Many people in local Asian communities are religious and the mosque will represent a socio-political centre of gravity for them. But the same was true of the synagogues in the 1930s when Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts threatened to march through the Jewish East End. Then the Independent Labour Party, which was the early 1890s DI group which had won a seat in the New York Tribune expects unions to carry their work over into political action.

I think Robin Blackburn is right to criticise Marx and blame him, to some degree, for the narrowness of his US supporters — but not for the lack of a clear idea of the difference between trade union and political action (as Blackburn notes, this was not true in Germany or France, where Marx discussed the question, with clarity, at length).

Rather, the criticism should be different. Right the way through his writings on the US civil war Marx failed to clearly differentiate his supporters, and the workers, from Lincoln’s camp. And the clearest evidence for this is the open letter Marx wrote for the First International to Lincoln in January 1863 and to his successor, Andrew Johnson, in May 1865 (both printedin this book).

The letter to Lincoln — a cautious war leader against slavery and the nation — is very different to the advocate of capitalism reason appears to be this idea, at the end of Marx’s letter to Lincoln:

“The American war of Independence initiated a new era of development for the US, and an anti-slave war will do for the working classes.”

This appears to be saying: first, war over slavery, then the trade unions. Workers need to be done better to remember his own conclusions following the revolutions of 1848: for working class independence.
The school that practises educational egalitarianism

By Patrick Yarker

In the early 1980s, Crown Woods School was London’s largest comprehensive. It had a thriving sixth form. It had a “farm” which students tended, and a Rural Studies course. It had a farm radio set-up. Unusually for a state school, all thegirls and boys who arrived were from the two-thousand students were on the school’s roll. They came from different boroughs, from across London, and between them several dozen different languages. But the students of the class of 1981 could have been no more apportioned within the school than the schoolteacher to start the school year than I was. Crown Woods was my first teaching post.

The school I knew and worked in for almost twenty years has recently ceased to exist. Its entrance-foyer, classrooms, labs, gyms and workshops will shortly be razed to the ground. In its place, newly-built at a cost of £50 million and financed by a PFI scheme, Crown Woods College has opened.

The College is distinguished not only by new modern facilities, but also by a way of seeing and treating students fundamentally hostile to the values of comprehensive education which the school I knew had helped pioneered. The ethos of Crown Woods College exemplifies instead the values of edu-business and the marketisation of organised learning. It is now a school for our regressive times.

Crown Woods College presents itself as four schools in one. Each “mini-school” has a discrete set of buildings, open spaces, libraries, laboratories and organisation, and student population. In its publicity the school says this approach is akin to the US system of “schools within schools”. But the guiding principle at Crown Woods College is not to do with the creation of smaller, more autonomous learning-communities. It has nothing in common with the movement for Humanizing School Education, whose hallmarks are democracy, fairness and respect.

Crown Woods College adopts an old strategy, the rub of which is academic selection. Cohorts of students are divided up on the basis of test-scores achieved at Primary School and Secondary School entrance exams. This selection mechanism purports to ensure that each mini-school contains studentsthatpossess broadly similar academic capabilities. There is a mini-school for the “able”, another for the “average”, and a third for the “less able”. (The fourth mini-school is the Sixth Form.)

Classification and selection continues within each mini-school, sub-dividing the already-segregated populations of each into “ability-streams”.

The College will call this a method of grouping students. In fact it is how the institution has decided to regard students, and to make them known to themselves and each other. It is also a lesson for the students about those they should understand the world and what is possible in it.

KNOW YOUR PLACE

This approach is both technocratic, fixed and unchangeable. Know your place and make the best of it. This approach to student-grouping and all implies re-ignoring the human dimension of the most fundamental notion of “general academic ability” promulgated by certain educational psychologists, and which is at the heart of the Eugenics movement in the 1920s and 1930s and used to justify a triple-track system of state education after World War Two. It is precisely what the original comprehensive school movement against and worked to replace.

Pioneers of comprehensive education exposed in the 1950s the ways grouping students into “streams” in Primary schools was seen as an attempt to divide students along lines of “mixed ability” as against “mixed ability” grouping. The latter policy was held to create less homogenous classes, with educational and social benefits. Changes to student-grouping implied changing pedagogy, and recognition that teaching, if it is to be effective, cannot be reduced to “deliver-y.”

It also required the involvement of teachers in decisions about the school’s curriculum-offer. If teaching is not “deliver-y”, still less is it “delivery” of content teachers have had no hand in deciding. The role of students in helping each other learn, the nature and centrality of student-talk (rather than the teacher), and the role of student activism and democratic approaches to all aspects of the life of the school: the moral and social aspects of education were brought to the fore and stimulate these and many other new ways of improving schools.

Crown Woods College now sets its face against all this. Students in each mini-school outside the Sixth Form, sorted by ability, wear discretely-coloured names and go through their school-day separated from the rest of their peers. They do not share lunchtimes. They do not share educational activities. They do not share futures, at least in the eyes of the College. Colour-coded according to a specific view of their relative educability, students understand the hierarchy is at work which imposes itself on every aspect of their educational experience. The College’s prospectus tells them a “school is a school where... students follow a curriculum consisting of a range of both academic and vocational qualifications. At KS1 learning will be skills-based with a... focus on literacy and numeracy...”

“Schools are essentially business.”

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Crown Woods College headteacher Michael Murphy says “Schools are essentially business”.

The educational outlook materialised in the buildings, organisation, uniform, curriculum-offer and pedagogical approaches. The educational approach at Crown Woods College ignores this wealth of research. In the words of Michael Murphy, the Headteacher, (as quoted by the Independent) “With the best the College may offer the child is the chance to “fulfil its potential”. Note the use of the impersonal pronoun. At Crown Woods College, where the child’s potential has been determined before she or he starts, the child is an ‘it’.

When he took up post, Michael Murphy said that “Schools are essentially businesses.” Interviewed in the Guardian, July 25 2001 about the newly-opened College he came to the same conclusion and grounds to justify his segregationist approach. Instead he quoted Margaret Thatcher about the unignorability of the market. Creating a mini-school exclusively for those deemed “very able”, and ensuring they are sealed off from contact with their “less able” peers, is supposed to appeal to a certain kind of parent.

EDU-BUSINESS

Businesses have certainly been closely involved in creating Crown Woods College. Balloir Beatty and G4S are two partners in the PFI scheme which financed the new and segregated sets of buildings. Balloir Beatty was fined £5 million in 2009 for being party, along with other firms, to arrange the overcharging of public bodies, and deceiving local councils over the costs of public service contracts. Much earlier, the company was found by a Serious Fraud Office investigation to have handed out £2.25 million of “unlawful proceeds” gained from irregular payments in relation to a prestigious construction project in Egypt. Similar examples of corrupt practices occur regularly through the corporate sector.

G4S is the world’s largest private security firm. In this country it runs four prisons, three immigration removal centres, almost four hundred schools, 140 holding centres and hundreds of police cells. It was until recently responsible for deporting people whose asylum-applications had been refused. G4S lost this lucrative government contract following the death of Mr Jimmy Mubenga, who was subjected to life-threatening and ultimately fatal restraint techniques by three G4S employees as he was being deported. Last year, a record year for complaints against the company, forty-eight claims of assault were lodged against its employees, of which three were upheld. Two claims of racism were also upheld.

In business the bottom line is all. If Crown Woods College is a “school for our regressive times”, essentially a business, exam-results are its bottom-line. The current Head took over Crown Woods School in September 2007. He had been “asked to assist” in the management of another school, when the previous Headteacher was forced to leave. Their school’s results were poor.

When he first took up his post, Michael Murphy said that: “As Michael Murphy urges, essentially a business, exam-results are its bottom-line. The current Head took over Crown Woods School in September 2007. He had been “asked to assist” in the management of another school, when the previous Headteacher was forced to leave. Their school’s results were poor.

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The damage streaming and setting inflict, and the social effects such grouping-methods serve, have been made very clear.

The most impoverished students, and those for whom English is not a first language, are over-represented in bottom streams and sets. Boys are over-represented in bottom and top streams and sets, girls in middle ones. Those at the bottom tend to be taught by the least experienced staff. Expectations for what these students might achieve are lower than those for members of middle or top streams or sets.

Girls in top sets or streams put themselves under overly-intense pressure to achieve highly, sometimes with dangerous consequences. Those in bottom sets and streams, alienated by the administrative actions of the school, generate their own oppositional culture, and often feel themselves psychologically impsonised for life by being labelled “less able”. Movement up and down between sets is minimal, despite assurances to the contrary.

The tests by which students are sorted into streams or sets are riddled with class, gender and ethnic dimensions, discriminating against particular groups. The effect of streaming and setting on exam-results is negligible, if it exists at all.

One thing is well-known, though. These grouping-practices enhance, do not mitigate, the social, economic and generate and perpetuate inequities. Hence they have been deemed unlawful in, for example, Sweden, and contested in court in the UK in the past.

The educational outlook materialised in the buildings, organisation, uniform, curriculum-offer and pedagogical approaches at Crown Woods College ignores this wealth of research. In the words of Michael Murphy, the Headteacher, (as quoted by the Independent) “With the best the College may offer the child is the chance to “fulfil its potential”. Note the use of the impersonal pronoun. At Crown Woods College, where the child’s potential has been determined before she or he starts, the child is an ‘it’. When he took up post, Michael Murphy said that “Schools are essentially businesses.” Interviewed in the Guardian, July 25 2001 about the newly-opened College he came to the same conclusion and grounds to justify his segregationist approach. Instead he quoted Margaret Thatcher about the unignorability of the market. Creating a mini-school exclusively for those deemed “very able”, and ensuring they are sealed off from contact with their “less able” peers, is supposed to appeal to a certain kind of parent.
How the press moulds “public opinion”

Mohammed Mossadeq, Prime Minister of Iran and Time magazine man of the year in 1951. No doubt they managed to get all that when he was6evered in CIA-inspired coup in 1953.

Isn’t that pretty important?

“Now. About the trouble with Polish visa. Kind of fascin- ing. Got to build it up. Elaborate. Set it off so nobody misses. Add a few sentences there.”

“Military strength in Russia. Build that up. Get stuff out of files here. Stick it in.”

The narrator, who was a green man on the staff, demurred at this butchery of an objective report, but it didn’t do him any good. The editor just grinned and said: “Take it easy, will you? You’re getting all steamed up about nothing. What the devil, it’s only another story... Hell, we’re not saints up here. We’re in business.”

Further: “Listen, it’s just routine editing. Mostly cutting things out, not much putting anything in. The piece as it stands is too long, see? It rambles: it needs tightening up. It’s not exactly a revolutionary assignment, Dick, asking a man to do some cutting.

That was the way they cut Struther Carson’s unrepri- meder of report of what he saw in eastern Europe and made it fit its conception of what he should have seen.

Hatchet jobs of this kind on every item and article in every department, fashioned Present Day into a club to beat pub- lical opinion into the desired shape, and gave the editor-in- chief the self-satisfaction of a man of accomplishment, a man with a mission. It’s a good and important job we’ve got, Dick: molding people’s minds, shaking them out of their rut and putting them on the road to the future.” By the end of 1951 Present Day had become the most influential magazine in the history of the world. It was the “future” the editor meant more of the present: more of “Our Way of Life” extolled by the magazine, a “way” generally recommended by its beneficiaries to its victims.

THE WORKERS

The Big Wheel does more than describe the mechan- isms of the devious enterprise. It is a novel and its major theme is people. The author introduces us to the liter- ary craftsmen who work on the assembly line of this misinformation factory, and lets them speak for them- selves about the motivations which bind them to their grimy trade. The dialogue reveals their philosophy of life — if you want to call it that.

They are all conventionally educated men, presumably instructed in the basic precept of the Christian doctrine that it’s a sin to tell a lie, and the more cogent Yankee supple- ment that honesty is the best policy from a practical stand- point. But in their case the instruction didn’t take. The world-weary cynics on Present Day are convinced that the lie runs faster than the truth and pays better, too.

The staff members couldn’t answer back or dispute the plain talk they were subjected to. As one of them said to an- other: “You know how easy we are to replace. They could an entire new staff up here by tomorrow morning, and a good one. Ever see the lines waiting down on Thirty-seven, in person?”

You can’t get the people to man the staffs of the great magazines where news and culture are processed and squeezed into sleek, neat packages for the masses? From what ranges and fees do the literary cattle rounded up and shipped to the market? Quite a few, especially on such publications as Present Day, regarded as “probably the most powerful force against communism” today. There are graduates of the radical movement which had offered the compensation of working for the truth, but where the pick- ings were slim.

“You know,” said [the editor] Masterson — who was an old “ex-radical” himself — “you know we still have some of our old ‘ex-radicals’ among us. And some of the ones that are left. As Present Day are clawing with one time radicals and dis- sidents have found themselves ‘learned’ by the party, the lie has entered the existing social system is tough going, and now devote their talents, and the smattering of knowledge on social questions they picked up in the radical movement, to oppo- site ends.

I once knew a man, a writer with an exceptional-style and considerable reputation who was better acquainted with Marx than most people who think they have “read” him. He knew all the ins and outs of the labor movement, and even wrote understandingly about the Moscow Trials of the Thirties from the revolutionary standpoint of their victims. It’s not in a time of revolution, a time to be a pow- erful new champion. He soon tired of that, however — it wasn’t getting him anywhere in his profession. When I ar- gued with him that his writings could have a great influ- ence on the younger generation, and urged him to write more, he would ask “What’s the use? The lie has entered the party system. I would devote his whole talent to revolutionary journalism he answered me wearily. ‘Where am I going to publish it? No magazine or paper of large circulation will take such writings.

Soon after that conversation, he turned around and began to write for the other side of the social question. He had no trouble in finding publishers for that kind of stuff. The more he prospered the more conservative his writing became. He finally ended up as a publicist in the right wing of the Re- publican Party, and died there not long ago. I knew him well, and sometimes wondered where he went when he died.

Regeney has become a paying profession in the United States as in the Soviet Union. Taking advantage of the greater freedom offered by the un- derground press and radio and television stations — are owne d and con- trolled by a monopoly of a small group.

One of the consequences of the present-day freedom of the press, they argue and quarrel over secondary issues. But on the main questions of social implication they all tell the same story: democracy — the greatness of the Soviet Union, the best of all possible worlds, sarcasm and unchangeable. Its true name is “Free Enterprise”, the national poetic version of which is “The American Way of Life”. This way of life has the unique distinction of being good for everybody, for the majority of the exploited as well as the minority of the ex- ploited.

Of course, you are free to dissent if this contention vio- lates your sense of logic and knowledge of the history and prehistory of man, or contradicts your personal interests as one of the exploited. You can even write an article to that ef- fect if you want to. But you can’t publish it in any of the mo- nopolised publications which reach the millions. That’s the gimmick in the formal, constitutional freedom of the press in the United States as of today. This kind of free press is 99 percent fraud. There is no honest, objective reporting of all the news. It is all one-sided. There is no real free play of opinion and controversy. No real freedom of choice.

They use the same methods to create the same calcu- lated demagogy with which the people are bombarded by the monopolised press, how will they ever learn the truth and the truth will not act it is not going to be the strug- gle between the truth and the lie appears to be an unequal one. The small number of radical writers that appear to be a hopeless struggle. But that is not really so.

The truth has great allies. The falsifiers and distorters of the real truth, the enemies of the people, the liars, the reality does not therefore cease to be. Sooner or later the con- tradiction between the misrepresentations and the re- ality will lead to an explosive movement.
J T Murphy was a Sheffield metal-worker and one of the founding members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. He was involved in the shop stewards' movement which arose during the First World War and grew out of the CP-initiated Minority Movement, one of the most significant manifestations of the expansion of labour movements in Britain during the 1920s.

Murphy was jailed in 1925 for seditious libel and incitement to mutiny. From the mid-1920s, when the Stalinist counter-revolution in Russia began to spread across Europe's Communist Parties, Murphy took the wrong side and was expelled with his rival Leon Trotzky. Murphy himself later fell foul of the Party and was expelled in 1932.

In this and our next issue Solidarity will serialise Murphy's best known work, the pamphlet *The Workers' Committee* written in 1917. Although written at a time when the shape of British industry and the British working-class were both very different from what they are today, we believe the pamphlet still has a huge amount to teach us.

It explains how the conflicts and tensions between grassroots members of a trade union and union officials manifest themselves in day-to-day struggle and how they can play out on the shop floor. And it gives guidance on what political and organisational forms are necessary to give maximum power and democratic control over struggle to rank-and-file workers. Murphy's advice for shop stewards is more direct and useful than the "organising agendas" they will receive from their unions today.

In 1917 Murphy was a member of the Socialist Labour Party (one of whose members formed the British Communist Party). At its inception, in the early 1900s, the group was influenced by the ideas of American Marxist Daniel De Leon. De Leon believed in revolution, but considered his union propaganda with syndicalist ideas and asserted that industrial unions could, in and of themselves, organise to become the vanguard of the working-class as well as a source of counter-power within capitalist society. This approach to syndicalism was misunderstood and called for political organisation. Nonetheless, the syndicalists' emphasis on industrial, all-grades unions and democratic control of the unions from the shop-floor level up can inform our fights in trade unions today.

In a period in which our unions are heavily bureaucratised and the rank-and-file are controlled by people whose lifestyles and material interests are closer to the bosses than the workers they are supposed to represent, the question of who makes democratic workers' organisation is vital if we want our unions to be fit for purpose in the fights ahead.

One of the most noticeable features in recent trade union elections is the range of candidates from the ranks of the trade unions and their officials, and it is a feature which, if not remedied, will lead us all into muddle and ultimately disaster.

We have not time to spend in abuse, our whole attention must be directed to understanding why our organisations produce men who think in the terms they do, and why the rank and file in the workshops think differently.

A perusal of the history of the labour movement, both industrial and political, will reveal to the critical eye certain tendencies and certain features which, when acted upon by external conditions, will produce the type of persons familiar to us as trade union officials and labour leaders.

Everyone is aware that usually a man gets into office on the strength of revolutionary speeches, which strangely contrast with those of a later date after a period in office. This contrast is usually explained away by a dissertation on the difference between propaganda and administration. That there is a difference between these two functions we readily admit, but that the difference sufficiently explains the change we deny. The social atmosphere in which we move, the economic events of every day life, the people we converse, the struggle to make ends meet, the conditions of labour, all these determine our outlook on life.

Do I feel that the man on the next machine is competing for my job? Do I feel that the vast army who have entered the workshops in order to obtain the means of a livelihood? My attitude towards the dilution of labour will obviously be conditioned by the man who is not likely to be subject to such an experience.

Now compare the outlook of the man in the workshop and the man in the office. The man in the workshop sees the shop he feels every change; the workshop atmosphere is his atmosphere; the conditions under which he labours are primary. The man in the office sees the conditions of secondary, he sometimes even more remote. But let the same man get into office. He is removed out of the workshop, he meets a fresh class of people, and breathes a different atmosphere. Those things which were once primary are now secondary. He becomes buried in the constitution, and of necessity looks from a new point of view on those things which he has ceased to feel acutely. Not that he has ceased to feel interested, not that he has become dishonest, not that he has not the interests of labour at heart, but because human nature is what it is, he feels the influence of new factors, and the result is a change of outlook.

Thus we obtain a contrast between those who reflect the working-class conditions and those who are remote from them.

Officials have the power to rule whether a strike is constitutional or unconstitutional, and according to pay or with hold strike pay. [This] allows small groups who are, as we have already shown, remote from actual workshop experience to govern the mass and involve the mass into working under conditions which they have had no opportunity of considering prior to their inception. The need of the hour is a drastic revision of this constitutional procedure which demands that the function of the rank-and-file shall be simply that of obedience.

This is reflected in all our activities. We expect officials to lead, to shoulder responsibility, to think for us. Hence we get labour leaders, official and unofficial, the one in office, the other out of office, speaking and acting as if the workers were pliable goods, to be moulded and formed according to their desires and judgement. However sincere they may be, and we do not doubt the sincerity of the majority, these methods will not do.

**PARTICIPATION**

Real democratic practice demands that every member of an organisation shall participate actively in the conduct of the business of the society.

We need, therefore, to reverse the present situation, and instead of leaders and officials being in the forefront of our thoughts, the questions of the day which have to be answered should occupy that position. It matters little to us whether leaders be official or unofficial: so long as they sway the mass, little thinking is done by the mass. If one man can sway the crowd in one direction, another man can move them in the opposite direction. We desire the mass of men and women to think for themselves.

Thought is revolutionary: it breaks down barriers, transforms institutions, and leads on towards a larger life. To be afraid of thought is to be afraid of life, and to become an instrument of darkness and oppression.

The function of an Elected Committee, therefore, should be such that instead of arriving at decisions FOR the rank-and-file they would provide the means whereby full information relative to any question of policy should receive the attention and consideration OF the rank-and-file, the results to be expressed by ballot.

Now we have shown some of the principal defects in the constitutional procedure, we will show how these defects have been and are encouraged by defects in the structure.

The ballot box is no new thing, every trade unionist understands the use of the ballot where there is an election of officers, for example, or a ballot on some particular question, rarely more than 40 per cent vote; that means there are 60 per cent who do not trouble. Being vexed with the 60 per cent will not help us. An organisation which only stimulates 40 per cent to activity must be somewhat defective and it is our duty to find those defects and remedy them.

A ballot is usually taken in the branches, and the meeting is always summoned by the leader of the branch, who considers now the branch as a unit of the organisation. It is usually composed of members of the branch in rotation, and is active of where they work, and irrespective of the turn on which they work.

These are important factors, and account for a great deal of neglect. Men working together every day become familiar to each other and easily associate, because their interests are common. This makes common expression possible. They may live, however, in various districts, and belong to various branches. Fresh associations have therefore to be formed, which are the best are temporary, because only revived once a fortnight at the most, and there is no direct relationship between the branch group and the workshop group. The particular grievances of any workshop are thus fresh to a majority of members of a branch. The persons concerned are unfamiliar persons, the jobs unfamiliar jobs, and the workshop remote; hence the members do not feel a personal interest in the branch meetings as they would if that business were directly connected with their every day experience. The consequence is bad attendance at branch meetings and little interest.

That voter, then, to the conclusion that there must be direct connection between the workshop and the branch in order to obtain the maximum concentration on business. The workers in one workshop should therefore be members of one branch.

Immediately we contemplate this phase of our difficulties we see the brute against the human interest plan, which shows a dissipation of energy that can only be described as appalling. We organise all workers in the workshops not divided not only amongst a score of branches but a score of unions, and in a single district scores of unions, and in the whole of the country eleven hundreds unions.

Modern methods of production are social in character. We recognise the statement that workers work together, and are necessary to each to produce goods. The interests of one, therefore, are the interests of all. Mechanism cannot get along without labourers or without crane drivers; none of these can dispense with the blacksmith, the grinder, the fomer, etc., yet in spite of this interdependence, which extends throughout all industry, the organisations of the workers are almost anti-social in character.

They keep the workers divided by organising them on the basis of skill, so as to produce different classes. Born at a period when large scale machine production had not arrived, when skill was at a greater premium than it is to-day, they have maintained the principle that each organisation naturally cultivate, while during the same period of growth the changes in methods of production were changing the position in relation to the masters erected by them. With the advent of the general labour unions catering for men and women workers the differences became organised differences, and the adjustment of labour to the changes increasingly complex. The skilled men resent the encroachments of the unskilled, the unskilled often resent what appears to them the domineering tactics of the skilled, and both resent the encroachments of the women workers. An examination of their respective positions will reveal the futility of maintaining these sectional prejudices.

We are the natural position of the skilled workers. They have years of tradition behind them, also five years apprenticeship to their particular trade. The serving of an apprenticeship is in itself sufficient to form a strong prejudice for their position in industry. But whilst the skilled unions have maintained the serving of an apprenticeship as a primary condition of membership, industrial methods have been changing until the all-round mechanic, for example, is the exception and not the rule. Specialisation in certain industries has been replaced by a more generalised skill is the direction of locomotion of the trades. So we can safely say that this historical development takes away the monopoly position of skilled workers in...
How the AWL's democracy works

The AWL's annual conference takes place on 22-23 October. As a relatively small organisation, the conference is necessarily focused on what we can do next, because we know that we have a lot of work to do. Our task is to build a movement that is strong enough to challenge the forces of the right and bring about social change.

The way our conference works tells you something about the kind of organisation Workers' Liberty is. We want the maximum possible democratic control by every member, in all decisions, at all levels, by all means. We believe in openness and accountability, and we value the participation of every member.

Women factory workers in World War One

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Do I feel that the man on the next machine is competing with the man on the next business? Of course not. They each have their own interests, their own concerns. But the fact remains that the two men are competing, and that competition is what we call society. And it is in society that we find the source of our power and our strength. The way our conference works tells you something about the kind of organisation Workers' Liberty is. We want the maximum possible democratic control by every member, in all decisions, at all levels, by all means. We believe in openness and accountability, and we value the participation of every member.

The AWL news

By Sasha Imsaia

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made this possible:

workers are isolated,

working as individuals

or in teams in schools

that are often miles apart.

We fought this this winter

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organisers got round to each workplace and

maintained face-to-face contact with all

members about the dispute.

Making sure they were kept

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Linking up with the

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The workers have de-

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We began calling for Unison to hold a full ballot, and in the meantime we

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Lambeth libraries: strong campaigns can save jobs

By a library worker
Lambeth Council in south London agreed to a deal which will save all the jobs in the library service following the workers announcing strike action against libraries cuts. Lambeth Council wanted a staffing restructuring in its libraries which would mas- sacre frontline services and leave 40 people at risk of redundancy. By combining a high-profile public campaign with the threat of strike action, every job in the service has been saved; reading groups, storytimes and enquiry services will continue.

This is a tribute to the unity and determination of trade union members in the libraries, who were ready to strike to defend the library service and protect their jobs. This is a lesson to every other worker — in Lambeth Council and elsewhere — that to look after your inter- ests you have to be prepared to take industrial action.

Ruth Cashman, Libraries Shop Steward and Lambeth Unison Assistant Branch Secretary said: “Lambeth Labour Party could learn a lot from these workers. When they faced the cuts they fought with every tool they had.” They campaigned and they were willing to strike. They faced the cutters with their heads high and fought not just for their jobs or their colleagues’ jobs, but for the right of people of Lambeth to have a decent library service.

“This is not the end of our fight, next year the council will try and cut the library service again. They will disguise library clos- ings by ‘handing the libraries over to the community’.

“We think councils should be providing services, like libraries, not look- ing to cut jobs, cut services and shift responsibility. So next year, we will fight again — but this was a great first step.”

Strike action due to begin on Friday 22 July was sus- pended following manage- ment’s offer which secured no compulsory redundan- cies in the section. There is still a live strike ballot in the section and every detail of the new structure will need to be agreed by a full members meeting before Unison will call off the ac- tion entirely.

Solidarity spoke to some of the workers involved in the campaign:

“When [Lambeth Council] announced the cuts, we knew we had two options — fight or lose. Nearly all of us are in Unison (there is 90% union density in the sector). We know we’ve got the best union reps and we know more about libraries than the people who wrote that structure. We don’t pay our money every month to get cheap car insurance and then lose our jobs, we want a union that will fight. We won because of our union. We’ve seen it in other depart- ments and other councils, people are losing their job and managers just get on with cutting. They had to listen to us because we won the strike vote and all the li- braries were going to shut [on the strike day] unless every job was safe.”

Lambeth Librarian

By Chris Reynolds

Heading for the double-dip?

On top of the public sec- tor job cuts, private-sec- tor industry is cutting jobs too.

On 27 July the bosses’ as- sociation CBI published a survey results showing that most manufacturing em- ployers plan to cut jobs over the next three months. Until spring this year, manufacturing employ- ment was increasing a bit from its slump levels in 2009. The increase was not enough to validate the coalition government’s claim that public sector cuts, by holding down pub- lic debt levels and so inter- est rates, will produce a counterbalancing private-sector boom. But there was an increase. No longer.

Manufacturing bosses are planning to cut spend- ing on new plant and ma- chinery. The Bombardier Derby job cuts are not ex- ceptions, but part of a pat- tern.

If the government re- duces its contribution to ef- fective demand in the economy, and households plagued by debt and re- dundancies do the same, then the whole economy must go down unless ex- ports boom. The eurozone crisis and the US budget crisis make the prospects poor for ex- ports. Expansion is not the first priority for the bosses.

Their first priority is restor- ing their rate of profit from the hit it took in 2008-9, and taking advantage of the slump to reshape work- places, wages, and work- forces so as to allow bigger profits in a future expan- sion.

So far, top bosses at the top 100 companies have seen their median earnings rise 52 per cent last year (Financial Times, 27 July), while workers’ real wages have dropped 2.7% (Daily Telegraph, 13 July).

The financial and insur- ance sector paid £14 billion in bonuses in the last finan- cial year (FT, 19 July) — not as high as the £19 billion in 2007-8, before the crash, but heading upwards fast. The rate of profit — the net rate of return for pri- vate non-financial compa- nies — in the UK reached its peak in the last quarter of 2007. It was 15.5%, the highest figure since consis- tent statistics began in 1965. With the crisis, it dropped to 10.8% in the third quarter of 2009.

Since then it has risen steadily, to 12.7% in the first quarter of 2011.

Workers’ Liberty summer camp, West Yorkshire, 19-21 August
Height Gate, near Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, OL14 6DL

In August, young members and friends of Workers’ Liberty will be throwing a summer jamboree in the beautiful hills of West Yorkshire. The event will be a mix of socialism and socialising, with political discussions, activist training, and knocking about in a seasonally-appropriate and outdoorsy fashion. Rumours that we will be re-enacting famous pitched battles between striking workers and cops are sadly unfounded. We will however be discussing topics including the following:

• The mechanics of exploitation: how capitalism works
• The story and lessons of the miners’ strike
• Organising at work
• Why is the left male-dominated, what can we do about it?
• Students and class

All this can be yours for the paltry sum of £20, which includes food and crash accommodation. If getting there is a problem, we can help. Spaces are limited though so book now to avoid disappointment.
e: edward.maltby@gmail.com t: 07775 763 750