

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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Workers' answer to Euro-crisis

TAKE OVER THE BANKS

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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.

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Private firm takes over NHS hospital

By Stuart Jordan

This week Circle Healthcare group became the first private company to take over the running of an NHS hospital — Hinchingsbrooke hospital in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

Hinchingsbrooke is one of the so-called "failed hospitals". Under the internal market, it has run up a debt of £40 million. The for-profit, offshore, hedge-fund backed, Tory-donor organisation Circle Healthcare have taken over the hospital buildings and the hiring and firing of staff under a £1 billion deal.

In a recent company report they explained that they expect their need to maximise profit will have a negative impact on patient care!

As the government seeks to cut NHS costs by 37% over the next five years, there will be many more privatisations of this sort.

This process will be accelerated by the Health and Social Care Bill.

The Bill is currently opposed by almost everyone except the government and private health corporations. It is so controversial that Malcolm Grant, the newly appointed head of the NHS Commissioning Board (the organisation that will have to implement the Bill) has described it as completely unintelligible.

But the Tories have already driven the NHS down the road towards a US-style private healthcare system.

CUTS

Many patients are being denied treatment for painful but non-life threatening conditions.

In north-east Manchester 57 types of surgery are no longer available on NHS. Hysterectomies are only being offered in an emergency, and many patients are being denied cataract operations and hip and knee replacements. Some patients choose to go private rather than wait in pain.

£1 billion worth of community services will be opened to the market from April 2012. Whilst the world's attention was focussed on Rupert Murdoch and the phone-hacking scandal, Andrew Lansley took the opportunity to announce the privatisation of eight NHS community services worth £1 billion.

As of April 2012 the following services will be opened up for bids from the private sector:

- Services for back and neck pain
- Adult hearing services in the community
- Continence services

(adults and children)

- Direct Access Diagnostic tests
- Wheelchair services (children)
- Leg ulcer and wound healing
- Primary Care Psychological Therapies
- Podiatry services

In November 2010 David Cameron gave Central Surrey Health a "Big Society" award, championing this staff-run social enterprise as a model for clinician-led services. Less than a year later, CSH failed to win community health services, outbidding by Virgin Healthcare subsidiary Assura Medical. Unconfirmed reports suggest CSH was unable to raise the capital to compete. Social enterprise is another route to backdoor privatisation.

COMMISSIONING

According to *Pulse* magazine, private companies snapping up a series of GP practices previously run by trusts.

Pulse revealed that 41 practices in England have either been re-tendered or are due to be, and at least two are due to close.

GPs are not equipped to commission services and are having to buy in extra support from the private sector. To make this process more efficient Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are rapidly merging, replacing PCTs, which have just been abolished, but with a much greater role for the private sector.

The Practice Plc runs 60 GP surgeries and further clinical assessment and treatment services (CATS) across the UK. It has recently acquired the UK provider arm of US healthcare giant UnitedHealth and is now controlling commissioning budgets in Buckinghamshire, where it has formed a small consortium of its two practices in the county.

With GPs in control of the NHS budget, clinical decisions may easily be influenced by personal financial gain. If they can keep costs down, or commission services to a private company where they hold shares, then GPs could see significant personal rewards.

The Bureau of Investiga-

tive Journalism found that over half of the board members in some GP consortia have links with Assura Medical, part of Richard Branson's Virgin Group.

THE BILL

With privatisation running at such a pace, what difference will the Bill make?

Clause 1 devolves responsibility for deciding what constitutes NHS care to individual GP consortia. At the moment the Secretary of State has a legal duty to ensure NHS care is free at the point of need and thus has to decide which medical treatments fall within the remit of the free service. Without this legal responsibility on the Secretary of State, GP consortia will have the power to decide what treatments they are willing to offer as part of the free service.

Moreover, the move from PCTs to GP consortia means there are no NHS bodies responsible for all the people within a geographical area. So we can imagine a situation where some patients are rejected by their local GP surgery in the same way that many people can no longer access a NHS dentist.

The links between government and business are now seen at all levels of the health service. A Freedom of Information Act request revealed that NHS Partners Network, a lobby group which represents companies including Care UK, Circle, General Healthcare Group, Bupa and United Health, helped draft a letter requesting a formal investigation into how firms were being blocked from getting NHS work.

The lobby group took the regulator out to a £250-a-head gala dinner.

The network began lobbying for the investigation in October 2010 and it was given the go-ahead two months later.

The resulting report published in July 2011 included recommendations to offer patients "more choice" because people were "dying" while waiting for operations in NHS hospitals.

In September 2011 the *Guardian* revealed top level talks between the Department of Health, NHS Lon-

don and German healthcare giant Helios. This meeting, orchestrated by management consultant firm McKinsey's, talked about how Helios could break into the £8 billion acute hospital sector, specifically taking over London hospitals. Helios have a reputation for driving down wages and staffing levels.

Most shocking is the talks between government and a subsidiary of Netcare, a firm that has admitted organ-harvesting kidneys from children in South Africa. These people may shortly be running the NHS's organ transplant operation!

The privatisation of Hinchingsbrooke hospital will be celebrated in the board rooms of the health corporations around the world. For the last twenty years, the health giants have been trying to break into the European healthcare market. Hinchingsbrooke is just the first in a number of planned privatisations. Three hospital trusts, Trafford Healthcare NHS Trust, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital and the Whiston Hospital (St Helens), have publicly announced that they would also consider this option.

The government is far from secure about their plans. But what has been lacking is a vocal working-class force capable of forcing them back. The Labour Party, which advanced NHS privatisation during its time in office, is not offering any significant opposition.

The working-class force may yet come with the upcoming pensions dispute. The major barrier to full scale privatisation is the NHS pension scheme.

When the Tories initially commissioned Lord Hutton to write his report on public sector pensions they were motivated by the fact that public sector pensions "presented a barrier to greater plurality of provision of public services".

When the Tories and Lib Dems say that public sector pensions are unaffordable they mean they are unaffordable for the private sector.

The fight to defend our pensions is also a fight for the social provision of healthcare for all.

Unions to be banned from funding political parties?

By Gerry Bates

The very viability of the Labour Party, or of any union-based political party, could be thrown into question on 22 November, when the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL, a sort of quango, set up in 1994, with members appointed by the Government and the three big parties) publishes its long-brewed report on party funding.

According to the Guardian (28 October), the CSPL will propose:

- Parties get £3 in public money for each vote they receive in a general election;

- Donations to political parties be capped at £50,000.

It is not clear whether union affiliation money for the Labour Party would escape the £50,000 limit on the grounds that is only an aggregation of individual union members' levy payments. Presumably extra donations to Labour, made by unions from their political funds in addition to affiliation fees, would be banned.

The Guardian says the Tories want the CSPL to recommend unions be obliged to ask members to opt *in* to the political levy, rather than giving them the chance to opt *out*. That would sharply reduce Labour income.

Labour needs to take a clear stand against capping

The early-Blair-years flurry of big-business funding for the Labour Party faded long ago, and shows no sign of returning. The rumoured recommendations are a big danger for Labour and for any union-based political effort. Plutocrats will be able to evade a £50,000 cap more easily by dividing up big donations into smaller ones ostensibly coming from the plutocrats' family members, friends, and lackeys.

Maggie O'Boyle from the CSPL tells *Solidarity* that the Guardian story does not come from CSPL sources, so the actual CSPL

report may differ from the rumours. Even if it doesn't, the proposals can be stopped. Government handouts to political parties are not popular. The Tories and the Lib Dems are divided on these issues.

Dangerously, however, Ed Miliband said during the Labour leadership campaign, when questioned by the *Financial Times* (24 September 2010) and by the *Left Foot Forward* blog (9 September 2010), that he wanted to "make progress on party funding together with other parties".

In October 2010, Ray Collins, who was then general secretary of the Labour Party, gave evidence to the CSPL — officially, on behalf of the Labour Party, though without consulting or informing Labour's National Executive — recommending a smaller cap on donations.

The thinking was apparently that it would "clever" to wrongfoot the Tories by proposing a smaller cap.

The unions should demand a clear stand by Labour against capping, against increased state funding for political parties, and for the right of working-class organisations to gain political representation by collectively funding political parties.

Labour: beware of part two!

By Rhodri Evans

31 January has been set as the deadline for consultation over part two of "Refounding Labour", the Labour leadership's botched promise of a review of Labour Party structure.

Part one ended with the Labour Party conference in Liverpool at the end of September being presented, at only a few hours' notice, with a slew of rule changes from the leadership, and instructed to vote yes or no to the whole package with effectively no debate, while rule change proposals from local Labour Parties were ruled off the agenda on spurious grounds.

However, the unions stood firm on most of the bad changes wanted by the Labour leadership, and they didn't get to the conference. A further "consultation" was scheduled.

At the executive meeting of the Campaign for

Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) on 12 November, contradictory rumours were reported: some, that the Labour leadership is only going through the motions of "part two" as a face-saver; others, that Ed Miliband's office is continuing to press hard for bad changes.

It is wise to prepare for the worst. CLPD will be issuing advice for local Labour Parties to draw on and urging them to respond to the consultation.

The meeting also reviewed Labour Party conference 2011. The number of Constituency Labour Party (CLP) delegates increased from 530 to 630, and the number of CLPs sending delegates, to 522.

There was a more feisty and left-wing atmosphere, reflected in applause, booing, and bigger minority votes for some challenges to the platform.

However, the changed mood was not reflected in bigger left votes for Na-

tional Constitutional Committee and Conference Arrangements Committee positions, or in a bigger vote for the one democratic rule-change proposal which got to the floor in 2010 and in 2011. The left share of those votes remained almost unchanged.

71 out of 181 contemporary motions submitted by CLPs were ruled out of order, and no significantly left-wing composites reached the floor of conference.

The conclusion of the discussion is that the diehard-Blairite wing is still very strong in the Labour Party machine and among Labour MPs, but is more on the back foot than it was. The trend around Ed Miliband, seen as "more traditional right-wing social democrat", has control for now.

There is promise in the conference-floor stirrings, but they remain to be built on.
• clpd.org.uk

20,000 students struck and demonstrated in Montreal, Canada, in protest at proposed hikes in tuition fees. The new fees regime would see students paying bills of nearly \$3,793 by 2017, over \$1,000 more than the current rates (\$2,415). The demonstration was co-organised by a range of Student Union federations and ended in an occupation of the admin office of the prestigious McGill University, which was later violently evicted by police. The 24-hour strike was the most significant student mobilisation in Quebec since a similar, but smaller, action in 2005.

Police raid Occupy Wall Street

New York police conducted a late-night raid on 14 November to clear the Occupy Wall Street protest, arresting at least 70 people.

The raid, which was begun suddenly, saw armed riot police heavily-handedly remove protesters, including through the use of tear gas, and smash up the infrastructure of the camp. Press were barred from reporting on the eviction, leading to an effective media blackout with Al-Jazeera the only major

media outlet to cover the raid from the frontlines. Other media sources such as the *New York Times* were prevented from gaining access to Zucotti Park, where the raid was taking place.

The eviction follows a similar raid on the Occupy Oakland camp, which mobilised the 2 November "general strike" protest in the Californian city.

As *Solidarity* went to press, New York occupiers were regrouping in nearby Foley Square to plan their next steps.

Tackling sexism at Occupy London

The Occupy protest camps at St. Paul's Cathedral and Finsbury Square are digging in for the winter — with heaters, allowing the camp to hold more "indoor" events.

Debates over strategy continue.

Workers' Liberty supporter Emily Muna comments:

"Arguably the biggest issue currently being discussed is the amount of sexist behaviour towards women. This has been heightened by the horrific gang rape of a woman at

Occupy Glasgow.

"At Occupy London there have been attempts to try and change the male-dominated atmosphere after many women left because they were put off and felt unsafe in the environment. Occupy Patriarchy and Occupy Feminists have been holding daily meetings at both sites, and a women's only tent has been set up."

The next WL discussion will be "the case for class-struggle feminism" with Jean Lane, 6pm on Tuesday 22 November at the Finsbury Square TCU.

Ohio overturns anti-union law

Voters in the American state of Ohio have voted to repeal legislation which restricted the collective bargaining ability of public sector workers.

The vote gives hope that similar legislation in Wisconsin — the introduction of which sparked a bitter labour war which involved the occupation of the state's capitol building — could also be overturned.

61% of voters voted to abolish the law, which banned strikes by public sector workers as part of a radical overhaul of the state's labour law.

Under the terms of the law certain issues (such as health insurance) were excluded from bargaining al-

together and bosses were given wide-ranging powers to unilaterally determine almost every aspect of working life, including starting and quitting times, without any requirement to negotiate or consult with unions.

The Republican governor behind the law, John Kasich, also introduced a cuts budget and enacted anti-immigrant legislation.

The labour movement and the left still have work to do in Ohio; voters have also voted to endorse right-wing legislation blocking mild healthcare reform.

• For background to the Ohio situation, see <http://bit.ly/vmORP1>

Assad isolated as rebellion continues

By Dan Katz

Arab League leaders meeting in Cairo on 12 November suspended Syria from its meetings and urged Arab states to withdraw their ambassadors.

Syria has reneged on an agreement with the League to release prisoners, withdraw the army from the streets and begin a dialogue with the opposition. In part the suspension reflects pressure on Arab leaders to act against Syria. While the Arab League met Syrian protesters chanted outside in front of "body bags" symbolising the 3,500 people killed since the pro-democracy movement erupted onto the streets in March.

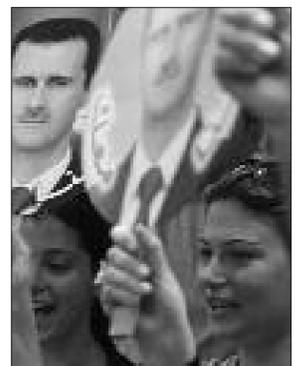
However the League — a largely ineffectual club for undemocratic Arab regimes — is mainly acting under the influence of the Saudis. Saudi Arabia is run by autocratic religious bigots, who are no friends of democracy. The Saudis are acting cautiously, for their own strategic reasons, against Syria. The Saudis see blows against Syria as damaging Syria's ally and their main regional enemy, Iran. However, they are also alarmed by the possible outcome in Syria itself.

The Saudis and Western governments fear that Syria will descend into sectarian civil war, or even break up.

Following the Arab League's decision mobs attacked the Saudi and Qatari embassies in the Syrian capital, Damascus. Such protests would be impossible without the Syrian state's authorisation.

Meanwhile, as the Arab leaders met, twelve more protesters were killed in Syria.

Inside the country demands are growing for a Libyan-style No Fly Zone and foreign observers to be placed inside Syrian towns.



Pro-Assad demonstrators, but how long can he stay in power?

Tony Cliff's chauffeur

Dave Osler

They say that no man is a hero to his valet. But the late Tony Cliff was very obviously a hero — and more — to one of his chauffeurs. Ian Birchall, who took 10 years to research and write his mammoth 559-page life story of the founder of the Socialist Workers' Party, casually mentions in the book that he used to undertake driving duties for his subject.

Obviously there can be no objection to authors writing lengthy volumes on persons they admire greatly. Were that not the case, few biographies other than the ghost-written memoirs of footballers and pop stars would ever be produced.

But my guess here is that Bookmarks, the SWP's internal publishing house, did not have to fight off a flurry of interest from commercial publishers desperately lodging six figure bids to secure exclusive rights on this one.

So was this a decade well spent? By the yardsticks that dominate in this society, Cliff's sole achievement was to create a political organisation with a four-figure membership that has almost nothing concrete to show for 60 years of continuous struggle.

Leading SWPers routinely make laughably inflated claims for the influence of the organisation. The truth is rather harsher than the cadre can bring themselves to admit; Cliff's SWP simply is not a factor in British politics.

That stipulation applies to the socialist left as a whole, I hasten to stress. It's just that some of us can recognise the reality rather better than others.

Yet as one of the principal architects of today's left, Cliff's life does deserve examination, not least in a bid to ascertain responsibility for some of the obvious faults in the building.

The point that Birchall endlessly reiterates by way of justification — that for half a century Cliff was an inspirational figure for countless activists — is to a considerable extent true.

ATTRACTIVE

To many in my generation and the one before it, Cliff seemed vastly more attractive than boring old Ted Grant or bombastic Gerry Healy.

He rightly stressed the idea of the self-emancipation of the working class, at a time when his rivals did not, and was more strongly influenced by what this newspaper calls "the Other Trotskyism" than he himself ever cared to admit. In a sense, he was the Third Campist who dare not speak the doctrine's name.

Cliff's obvious charisma on a public platform was one of the SWP's prime recruitment weapons. Among the people who signed up for the party largely as a result was the twenty-something me. The culture I found inside it seemed to me in obvious contrast to the one that Cliff had been advertising, including a vast degree of automatic deference to the de facto leader, even though he was never described as such.

Birchall's book does acknowledge Cliff's failings, particularly his frequent ruthlessness in dealings with others. When I say that he "acknowledges" them, I mean exactly that. The point is never really explored. On the few occasions in which it is conceded that these criticisms possibly have some substance, they are brushed aside as somehow necessary for the greater good.

Controversial incidents in SWP history receive only a few cursory paragraphs. There are noticeable errors of omission, too. Why no word of the disagreements with Militant Tendency over Liverpool, which, while of little importance now, seemed significant at the time?

Yet for all the detail, there is little here that would be new to anyone versed in the literature on the history of British Trotskyism, although perhaps younger comrades will learn something. There is also disappointingly little on Cliff the man, especially his personal relations. He may not always have been as doting a husband as he is portrayed in these pages.

Birchall also argues strongly throughout that Cliff made important independent contributions to Marxist theory. The validity of that assertion requires more detail than can be slotted into a short column, although neither the concepts of state capitalism or the permanent arms economy were original ideas.

It is for these reasons that this book is not a "must read". Yes, it is of value in understanding a chapter from the past, and a chapter of the past that older activists had a hand in shaping. But it is a chapter that today's far left must rise above if it is ever to make real progress and begin to enjoy mass support.

The Tory press struggles with border controls



Last week the *Express*, *Mail* and *Telegraph* were, unsurprisingly, leading on the scandal around Theresa May and the "relaxation" of passport checks by the UK Border Agency. But aside from the predictable xenophobia it wasn't at all clear what they actually made of it.

It is striking that, despite this being the subject closest to their hearts (challenged only by the linked obsession with Europe), these papers are not the place to go if you want to understand what the problem is or what has caused it.

In Parliament the debate has focused on whether May was acting improperly by rushing to blame a senior civil servant who could not answer for himself and whether she lied in doing so. He (Brodie Clark) resigned claiming that May had lied and promising to prove it in a constructive dismissal case. May claims Clark allowed border controls to be too relaxed to make it easier to manage entry into the UK. Clark says he only eased checks when requested to by the police or because of Home Office policy.

For the *Express* and *Mail* there is only one angle to this story — far too many people are getting into the country, we are being swamped by foreigners, and it has to stop.

The *Sunday Express* described Britain as "an open house" which allows "many thousands of bogus asylum seeker and economic migrants" to enter "on the nod". The *Express* coverage was based on an "investigation" they carried out at the Croydon base of the Border Agency. Their story ran with the headline "Criminals enter UK as border staff battle over targets".

No distinction is made between people fleeing persecution or poverty or simply visiting friends and family, and hardened criminals. Repeated twice in the lead story and then again in an editorial is the claim that "Jamaican gangsters and Nigerian fraudsters were allowed entry to Britain because staff did not have time to check their cases".

The *Express* really likes to give their readers something to fear and these combinations — not just gangsters and fraudsters but the especially unknowable Jamaican and Nigerian versions — are sure to conjure up the required vision of a Britain where no white man can sleep safe in his bed.

But the comments here aren't just about gangsters and fraudsters, they're about all immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Arguably it's about all incomers, all travellers. The *Express* editorial finished with this: "The British people want a zero tolerance policy on immigration. If the Government doesn't take tough action it will further betray our citizens and store up even bigger problems for the future."

The same technique was used in the *Mail* which claimed that "Britain has never been easier to enter". On whether May or Brady is to blame, they dodge the issue by blaming

Labour when they were in power. Only Peter Hitchens in the *Mail* extends the blame to the Tories. In particular what he describes as (and I am not making this up), "the liberal, PC Home Secretary" (Theresa May!).

None of this addresses either the specifics of the dispute between May and Clark or the bigger issue of why no recent government has been able to deliver on its tough-talking, illiberal promises on immigration. Both Labour and Tories in recent years have spoken the language of overcrowding and restriction. And the specific and general are inextricably linked here. Both the relaxation of controls which May knew about and approved (in favour of EU citizens) and the one she complains about (where the police request it) were introduced to avoid gridlock, huge queues and potential disorder at airports and ports.

Millions of people travel in and out of Britain every year, mainly tourists, workers, people on business in both directions. They want to do that as easily and with as little unnecessary hassle as possible. It's one thing to promise ever tighter controls but it's quite another to enforce without simply closing borders. It is even more unrealistic when the Coalition's austerity programme has cut Border Agency staff by 25%.

POPULIST

The Tories are discovering that the populist dog-whistle politics of attacking immigration and promising to be tough on border control conflicts with capitalist society as it actually exists.

Their real dilemma is highlighted in the press of the rational bosses — the *Financial Times*.

"The UK government's approach to immigration has been rightly criticised for policy goals that obsess with keeping people out while paying mere lip service to welcoming people in, to the detriment of business and growth. Now Theresa May, the home secretary, is under fire for how her department implements policy on the ground.

"In this case the government and its critics show an equal preference for popular pandering over rational policy..."

"Westminster is consumed with what can be pinned on Ms May, and government and opposition joust to paint each other as unconcerned with terrorists entering the country. This circus ignores the true scandal: that at a time when Britain needs growth more than ever, the country is far from being 'open to business'."

Not our politics, for sure, but evidence that the persistent (and, sadly, effective) campaign by the *Express*, *Mail*, *Sun* and their like to convince people that our borders are far too open is plain racist and xenophobic fear-mongering. The *FT* thinks that it is necessary to have what they call "a sensible immigration policy". They don't say what that is but we can assume it would involve making it easier to catch gangsters (wherever they come from) and maybe fraudsters (though that might be more of a problem for the bosses).

They do, however, nail the problem for Tory and Labour populists when they ridicule "the obstinate view that the only goal of immigration rules is to keep people out".

Iron Lady

The "Iron Lady" movie, out on 6 January, would be a good opportunity to do a meeting about what Thatcher was really like and show a film of the miners' strike.

The trailer is horrendous; the blurb on the website says this: "The Iron Lady tells the compelling story of Margaret Thatcher, a woman who smashed through the barriers of gender and class to be heard in a male-dominated world. The story concerns power and the price that is paid for power, and is a surprising and intimate portrait of an extraordinary and complex woman."

Critics have called the film Thatcher without Thatcherism. It's our job to remind people how bad Thatcherism was and show how it continues to plague us today.

Jenny Doe, Liverpool

Maximum wage

What would we think of saying councils should pay top execs no more than, say, 10 times the lowest paid?

As propaganda but also as something achievable, i.e., abolish bottom or top grades? Of course it doesn't say all we need to say — no cuts, build more homes, etc.

But it would highlight the obscenity of £160k public servants cutting care homes, play services, nurseries and mainly low paid jobs.

Ed Whitby, Newcastle



Letters

An olive branch?

As an anarchist I would like to congratulate Yves Coleman on his article "What Trotskyists should know about today's young anarchists" (*Solidarity* 224), and the AWL for publishing it.

It's obviously a generalisation, as the author admits, but it captures parts of reality that it would be a mistake to miss.

I've been reading the releases on the AWL website for a while now. It's the first time I've found something that feel genuinely talks about anarchists (other than anarchist rebuttals that occasionally appear), not endless strawman attacks on particular individuals within the anarchist movement (most of which I and a lot of other anarchists would also want to condemn for particular actions — anarchism is a broad ideology not a party or a hero cult), or rewriting history in such a way that it looks like Trotskyist propaganda rather than an account of what actually happened.

Anybody wanting to engage with anarchists would do well to read this article and I personally see it as a bit of an olive branch.

Jordan

Unite workers to remake Europe

German Chancellor [prime minister] Angela Merkel has called for “completing economic union” and “building political union in Europe step by step”. Urging radical new moves to save the collapsing eurozone, she advocated on 14 November that the European Union’s Council of Ministers be redefined as an upper house of the elected European Parliament, and direct election of a president of the European Commission.

Working-class activists and socialists should want a democratic united federal Europe. Within Europe, “capitalism in one country” — a system of each country managing its capitalist affairs on its own, with only marginal interaction with others — is a dream based on conditions of small-scale localised production which vanished long ago. Under highly-developed capitalism, the economic affairs of different European states are closely intertwined, whatever the political arrangements. Better some political mechanism to discuss and regulate the intertwining than that it be worked out by crude competition on the market or the ultimate arbitration of war.

Merkel’s way to unity, however, would be radically different from ours. Merkel wants unity on the basis of coordinating European capital, the better to impose a harsh neo-liberal regime of perpetual cuts, privatisation, and marketisation on the working classes of Europe.

WAY

It would be suicidal for the labour movement to try to help Merkel in her efforts for European unity, carried through in her way. And probably wasted effort.

If the capitalist leaders of the EU could not push through their mildly integrationist draft EU constitution in 2004, in conditions of capitalist prosperity, it is very unlikely that they can agree smoothly and push something much more integrationist through now, in the midst of a deep economic depression, when they will be linking the integration to painful cuts.

The bureaucratic and opaque ways of the European Union have generated deep nationalist resentment in many countries. Britain is exceptional. In the last Europe-wide survey, in spring 2011, it had a lower percentage of people thinking that they benefited from being in the European Union than any other country in the EU: only 35%, as compared to 78% in Ireland, 73% in Poland, 70% in Denmark, and 52% across the EU.

The capitalist leaders of Europe are deeply alarmed, and so ready for radical moves where previously they would have continued with routine. But even in more “europhile” countries, people are hostile and suspicious about further European integration.

A realistic programme for European unity has to offer the peoples of Europe a broad democracy and a generous social “levelling-up” if it is to overcome obvious and deep-



Italian Fiat workers on the streets earlier this year

rooted national reluctances and suspicions. People like Merkel cannot and will not offer that.

The workers of Greece are not willing to accept social devastation and economic supervision by German bankers for the sake of easing things for the euro. Nor should they. The first step in breaking the European Union from the narrow-minded neo-liberal course which is leading Europe to chaos is for the Greek workers to say no, and for workers all across Europe to support them.

Defiance by the Greek workers, supported by workers across Europe, can force concessions from the leaders of the EU. Those leaders, like Merkel, know that their latest “rescue” plan, decided on 27 October, is not working even in its own terms.

It was supposed to fence off Greece and reassure the global markets that Italy will pay its debts. In fact it has led to Italy having to offer unviably high interest rates in order to sell its IOUs on the global markets.

It was supposed to set up a formidable European Financial Stability Facility. In fact the EFSF is nowhere near raising the desired stocks of credit.

It was supposed to secure the future of Europe’s banks. In fact it maps out only a limited “recapitalisation”, widely thought to be inadequate, whose main effect so far has been to cut back world-wide lending by European banks and thus to deepen the global depression.

The EU leaders will have to devise new rescue plans, and can be forced to admit that these new rescue plans must include concessions to the workers’ defiance. They have sufficient stocks of wealth to make concessions, and they know that the break-up of the euro would cost them more than very large concessions.

EASILY

They will not make concessions easily or willingly. Defiance by Greek workers may lead to Greece being evicted by the eurozone.

The eviction, of itself, will not help the Greek workers: a euro-exited Greece will still face the loot-lust of the global markets, and from a weak position. But there will be no progress without defiance; and defiance can and will inspire working-class solidarity across the continent.

The labour movement can rise to the event, rally its activists and broader working-class forces around them, and win concessions, only as a by-product of formulating and fighting for its own democratic, revolutionary, and socialist programme for remaking Europe.

That starts with three demands:

- Tax the rich, Europe-wide.
- Expropriate the banks, Europe-wide. End their death-grip on social life. Put them under workers’ and democratic control. Gear their resources to the reconstruction of public services, decent jobs, and social welfare.
- **Thorough-going democracy across Europe. Social levelling-up across the continent, to the best level of workers’ rights and conditions won in any part of it.**

An Iranian road?

Mustafa Abdel Jalil, chair of the National Transitional Council in Libya, has declared that post-Qaddafi Libya will be governed by Islamic sharia law, and so polygamy will be legalised and usury banned.

In Tunisia’s Constituent Assembly elections at the end of October, the Islamist party Nahda won over 41% both of the votes and of the seats, a better result than had been predicted.

An October opinion poll in Egypt (*Al Masry Al Youm*, 11 October) found fully 67% undecided, 10% refusing to answer, 13% opting for liberal or secular parties, and 9% for Islamist parties. (Though on Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel, people were clear: 76% want to keep it).

The Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party is, by all accounts, the best-organised political operation in Egypt, and so must have good chances of mopping up a large part of the “undecided” vote.

The Muslim Brotherhood is also reported to be influential in the opposition in Syria.

None of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa where dictatorships have overthrown this year are yet locked in to a course like that of Iran in 1979, where the fall of the Shah led to the victory of an even bloodier and more brutal regime led by Ayatollah Khomeiny and other Islamic clerical-fascists.

In all of them, the working class currently has openings to organise and begin to shape developments.

The tightly-organised religious hierarchy of Shia Islam gave the Iranian Islamists a ready-made cadre force which

none of the Islamist parties in mostly-Sunni countries can emulate.

Yet politics abhors vacuums. Liberal and secular bourgeois parties are weak in all these countries. Though left-wing groups are developing in Egypt and Tunisia, none of these countries has a large working-class based socialist party. The risk of the Islamists coming out on top thus remains serious.

The Islamist leaders in Egypt and Tunisia protest that they are moderate and tolerant. Nahda says it will not try to ban alcohol or bikinis. Jalil, in Libya, has hastened to say that he does not propose to change any laws immediately, and that “we Libyans are Muslims but moderate Muslims”.

For Western consumption, the Islamist leaders have compared themselves to Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party, which has been in office since 2003 but stepped softly, operating more like an Islamic equivalent of a European Christian Democratic Party.

Both the Muslim Brotherhood and Nahda have, however, also made clear that they reject Erdogan’s explicit de facto acceptance of a secular state. And Khomeiny, in Iran, spoke relatively softly before gaining power.

We do not know enough to predict. An “Iranian road” remains possible. That would be a catastrophe for the workers, women, and democrats of the region, and a betrayal of all the best hopes of the “Arab spring”.

The best way to counter that danger is to support the socialists and the workers’ movements in the region.

Greece: down with the

By Theodora Polenta

On 10 November, Greece's two main parliamentary parties, Pasok (roughly similar to Labour) and ND (equivalent of the Tories), agreed after marathon negotiations to appoint Lucas Papademos as prime minister.

LAOS, the ultra-right populist party, and DHSY, a split from ND, enthusiastically supported him. The Green Party and DHMAR (a centre-left split from the Eurocommunists) discreetly supported him.

All the above parties form a "black coalition" to meet the demands of the EU-ECB-IMF Troika, the financial speculators, and the asset strippers, and make the majority of the Greek population pay for the crisis.

Politicians from all the mainstream political parties (including the majority of Pasok MPs) have denounced former Pasok prime minister George Papandreou's decision on 31 October to call for a referendum on the EU's new 27 October package. They claim that it compromised Greece's position in the eurozone, almost brought Greece to bankruptcy, and caused Europe and even world-wide turmoil in the markets.

Theodoros Pangalos (Pasok, and vice president of the government) said that the referendum should not have been called because it clashes with EU rules, and the issues at stake are too complicated to be reduced to a referendum question and too complicated for the Greek people to be able to make an informed decision!

In other words, the very last thing that the capitalist class minority wants is for the Greek people to have a say over the policies that are ruining their lives.

The fact that the new prime minister is a former central banker who has never been elected to anything is cited by all media pundits as an advantage. He is not electorally responsive to the people, so he cannot break any electoral promises. On the contrary, he is appointed to keep the promises to the Troika.

The "new" government is anything but new. The cabinet ministers of the Pasok government are still there, except for-

mer minister of state Kastanidis, who has been punished for supporting and encouraging Papandreou to go for the referendum. The only shifts are in a more reactionary, more neo-liberal, more anti-working-class direction.

Four MPs from the ultra-right LAOS party are part of the government of technocrats. This shows the convergence of the ultra neo-liberal tendencies of the political establishment with the ultra-right nationalistic and populist tendencies.

As a lot of discussion has taken place about the threat of a military coup in Greece, it is interesting to mention the history of the newly appointed LAOS minister of transportation, Makis Boridis.

Before joining LAOS party in 2005, he was the youth secretary of EPEN, a party that was created from prison by the 1967-73 military dictator Georgios Papadopoulos. EPEN was the party where Michaloliakos, the current secretary of Xrysi Aygi, the Greek BNP, started his political career.

As a student, Boridis participated in violent attacks on anarchists. There are pictures with him posing alongside French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

This man is part of the unelected, but uniformly approved, government, and none of his social democratic fellow cabinet members have stated their concern.

BORIDIS

The French Socialist Party (Pasok sister party), despite its endorsement of neo-liberal policies, has declared: "The French socialists express their shock at the entry of the ultra-right party LAOS into the Greek Government... President Sarkozy has congratulated the Lucas Papademos government. The French socialists refuse to do so".

LAOS leader George Karatzaferis stated his conditions for backing the new government. He wants the very limited legislation of the Pasok government on immigrants' rights and their right to apply for a Greek citizenship and electoral rights after ten years in Greece to be withdrawn.

The mission of the new government is to push through

even more vicious austerity measures, an even more tougher 2012 budget, more attacks on the working class and workers' rights.

Papademos's motto is that Greece's position within the eurozone is at stake, and thus any sacrifice from the Greek population should be acceptable. Papademos has stated the following targets:

- Take the necessary measures to accomplish the aims set by the 2011 budget. Submit the 2012 budget before 20 November and vote it through by the end of December, with a target of collecting €11 billion from the Greek population.

- Speed up the austerity measures which have not been implemented due to the workers' resistance. 30,000 public sector workers should be placed in *efedreia* ("reserve employment") by the end of December. 30% of public organisations are to shut down or merge by the end of December, adding a further 4,000 to 5,000 public sector workers to the "reserve". Those workers' wages will be slashed by 50% to 60% and eventually (within a year) they will be sacked.

- More public sector organisations are to be closed or merged in 2012. A further 70,000 public sector workers being placed in "reserve". Legislation to allow the recruitment of new public sector workers with reduced wages and restricted rights and conditions. Cut down wages and pensions via the "homogeneous salary scheme" for all public sector, utility sector, and council workers.

- Further reductions in pensions; increase in retirement age; an increase in contributions and a reduction in health and other social benefits. These reductions will be on the top of the already implemented reductions in pensions of 20% and up to 40% reductions for younger pensioners.

- The further enforcement and collection of taxation via the utility bills. The new property tax to become permanent, not a two-year emergency measure. The abolition or significant reduction of tax reliefs for money spent on rent, health, education, food.

- The implementation of laws to open up "closed" professions such as taxi drivers, lorry drivers, pharmacists, etc.

Italy: a crisis also for the left

By Hugh Edwards

As the world's financial markets closed in to kill off Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi, his equally odious Minister of Defence, the ex-fascist Ignazio La Russa, underlined sarcastically the grim paradox of the dramatic events unfolding in Rome.

"It makes me laugh to see how all the leaders of the Italian left are so happy to celebrate the arrival in government of their class enemy Mario Monti and with him the world

of finance, bankers, capital and the forces that they stand for." For once, La Russa was spot-on!

Berlusconi's ignominious exit owed little to the left. It owed everything to the forces La Russa described, whose interests and priorities the former European commissioner and Goldman Sachs director represents. Now he is plucked from relative obscurity to the highest political office in order to avert a crisis threatening the country and along with it the social, economic and political order of world capitalism.

And yet here was the so-called political opposition of centre-left and radical left offering up hosannas to the "liberation" of the country, fully conscious that the Financial Stability Bill was but the draconian foretaste of the "blood and tears" to come promised by state president, Napolitano, the man who is actually pulling the strings.

The malignant regime of Berlusconi was already deeply in crisis, with large sections of workers, students and the young increasingly angry at the seemingly unending "sacrifices" exacted on their lives while the rich and the privileged thrived.

But now, as in the early 1990s, "national salvation" has become the watchword of the moment. The whole political class and all the organs of mass communication of the bourgeoisie have united in an orgy of suffocating "patriotism", calculated to obliterate the fact that Napolitano's summoning of the technocrat Monti is a theft of the masses' right to vote and the means to further unload on their backs the burden of saving Italian capitalism.

As in the 90s the opposition parties, especially the left and radical, and the trade union leadership have accepted

Monti as prime minister, and therefore the suppression of any possibility of elections and the wide ventilation of the issues an election would bring.

Right now the mood of the working masses, in spite of illusions in Napolitano, remains uncertain; this is before Monti spells out his programme. That explains why the left in parliament didn't participate in the critical votes in Parliament. They couldn't be seen to have voted with Berlusconi, but nor could they oppose the Financial Stability Bill — the pillar on which the incoming Monti was to launch his austerity crusade. They seek to buy time and flexibility to best judge the mood on the ground. They will rely on the trade union confederations to once more dragoon their members around the bosses' interests, and isolate the inevitable spontaneous actions by the most militant.

But one can expect action from both the FIOM metalworkers and the Base organisations, and, in the present context of angry distrust of the political caste as a species, large sections of workers may be drawn into struggle.

The struggle cannot rely on disparate acts of single protest. The central task of all revolutionaries must be to fight for a clear political perspective that meets the urgent needs of the moment: that demands and battles for new elections, the unity of the working masses in struggle, a general strike against the austerity decrees, and the goal of a workers' government. A perspective of a do or die confrontation with the system as a whole.

The syndicalist myopia that for too long has characterised the militant wings of the Italian workers' movement has to be superseded if the Italian workers are once again to take up that fight.

FIOM trade union demonstration

bankers' government!

- Speed-up of the privatisation programme. Sell off €1.5 billion of public property and public services by the end of 2011, €11 billion by the end of 2012, and a total of €50 billion by the end of 2015.

- Get the sixth instalment of the bailout (€8 billion) by 15 December. Ratify in parliament, as soon as possible, the new Troika bailout fund of €130 billion and the 50% haircut on Greek debt.

- Initiate and conclude negotiations with Troika for a new austerity package by 15 of December.

Even the creditors are already calculating on the failure of these austerity measures. A recent study by the Bank of America and Merrill Lynch says that "the governments of the eurozone are getting prepared for Greece's disorderly bankruptcy".

Amid a crisis and regression, the response by the government and the Troika is more and more extensive attacks on the working class. Those will further reduce tax contributions from workers and make more workers unemployed and dependent on the benefit system, with reduced purchasing power. As the vicious circle turns, it sucks workers' pensions and wages into the bankers' black hole.

Already 908,000 people are unemployed, or 18.4%. Unemployment exceeds 20% in the north of Greece (e.g., 23% in the west of Macedonia), 43.5% among under-25s, and 22% among women. Within one year the unemployment rate has risen 50%. In other words, the 300,000 jobs that were created in 10 years of growth were destroyed by one year of the austerity measures.

The threat of unemployment has led a lot of workers to sign individual agreements rather than collective bargaining agreements, cutting their wages from the meagre 760 euros per month to 560 euros. Some 320,000 workers receiving a

monthly income of 456 euros per month (below the 460 euros per month of unemployment benefit).

GSEE, the union organisation for private sector workers, and ADEDY (public sector) are in a state of paralysis. Detached from the workers' lives and conditions, the bureaucrats are driven solely by their attempt to secure their funds, their legal status, their offices, and their own wages.

Before the final coalition agreement, ADEDY, under Pasok influence, decided to call off strikes planned for Thursday 10 November, on the grounds that they did not want to disrupt the attempts being made for the formation of a national government.

The president of GSEE said: "No specific date for action has been decided yet as the current political situation is fluid and our country in a very compromised position".

Both KKE (the diehard-Stalinist Greek Communist Party) and Syriza (a coalition around the former Eurocommunist faction) have rightly refused direct or indirect participation in the national government, and have resisted the hysterical calls for national unity in the name of Greece's "European Road" and remaining in the eurozone.

However, their reaction to Papandreou's call for a referendum was at most that of numbness. They fell far behind the fighting mood of the workers and youth. They did not expose the move to call off the referendum for what it was: the taken away from 99% of the population by the 1 per cent of their democratic right to have a say over the policies that are running their lives.

Both KKE and Syriza are calling for elections now and the escalation of the workers' struggle. KKE is calling rallies all around Greece to organise the resistance, but they resemble pre-election rallies, directing most of the workers' anger to the expression of their discontent via the ballot box and an

enter the eurozone. Sarkozy's and Merkel's outrage, 10 years later, about Greece's fake statistics, is exposed as hypocritical.

- During the 1999-2001 stock market scandal, he was the director of the Bank of Greece.
- From 2002 to 2010 he was the vice president of the ECB.
- From 2010 onwards he was a special economic advisor to George Papandreou and his discredited government.
- Last but not least, he is still a member and a lobbyist for the Trilateral Commission. The Trilateral Commission is an organisation formed in the 1970s by the multinational corporations from the then three major imperialist centres (USA, Western Europe, Japan).

Papademos is not the solution to the problem. On the contrary he is at the very heart of the problem.

electorally strengthened KKE.

Syriza is still stuck with its Euro-Keynesian response to the crisis, advocating Eurobonds and productive investments as part of a progressive democratisation of the European Union and eurozone. Its legalistic roots were revealed when Syriza's leader requested to meet the president of Greece after 28 October protests to discuss how to restore the smooth and democratic functioning of society.

KKE is stuck with a policy of seeking an "anti-monopoly" popular people's government and a theory of stages. It has put forward a nationalistic version of Keynesian policies, through Greek exit from the eurozone and the EU, without any direct connection to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. KKE refuses to raise aggressive transitional demands and reduces itself to raising defensive slogans (for the working class to secure its current wages and working conditions).

KKE's refusal to participate in a united front against austerity measures front shows its sectarian and isolationist politics. Using revolutionary lingo and talking about the need to form an anti-monopoly people's front, KKE is still refusing to form a united front with the majority of workers who are leaving the Pasok party and are losing their faith upon their trade union leaders.

The workers' movement cannot afford to restrict itself to lukewarm actions or to place itself to a defensive waiting state. It is imperative to organise general meetings, coordinate the struggle of different sections of the workers' movement, link with the community movement, and occupy every public sector organisation that threatens to place even one worker in "reserve" and every private company that makes even one worker redundant.

It is the duty of the revolutionary left to speed up the process by not only participating and observing the struggles but organising and being the vanguard.

EXIT

The hell that the working people of Greece are currently experiencing is due to the rotten, decaying, and disastrous capitalist system.

That is why the slogan of exit from the eurozone and the European Union cannot offer an exit from the crisis as long as the capitalist system remains intact.

Greek workers should aim at a continuous general strike alongside the poor peasants, the ruined small shop-owners, the pensioners, the unemployed, the school and university students and the neighbourhood community movements who are resisting the degradation of services and quality of life in their communities. It is important for the workers to form, in every workplace, workers' committees to organise and direct their struggle from below. It is important for the rank and file movement to be in control of their struggles.

A central organ that supports, organises, coordinates and promotes committees of self-defence for every struggle should be formed.

The solution lies in the power of workers' struggles. As the struggles evolve and escalate the workers are looking for solutions, to defend their lives and rights, outside the "whole system" and its laws and structures.

- Overthrow the national unity government. No to the dictatorship of the bankers.

- Refuse to pay for the crisis, in euros or in drachmas.
- No sacrifice for the euro.
- Abolish the debt. Not a penny to the creditors.
- Freeze and abolish any workers' debts.
- Civil disobedience and refusal to pay government-imposed taxes.
- Nationalisation under workers' control of the banks and big business, with no compensation.
- Workers' control of prices, wage increases, reduction in working hours, work for all.
- Pension increases in line with wages, reduction in the age of retirement.
- Ban redundancies. Unemployment benefit in line with wages.
- Open borders. Legalise all migrant workers. Equal pay, equal workers' rights — Greek and migrant workers united against racism.
- **For a public sector in the service of the people and society's needs. For an extension of education, health, transport and welfare.**



Lucas Papademos

- Lucas Papademos was a prominent manager of the Bank of Greece in 1985, when Andreas Papandreou, then prime minister of a Pasok government, initiated the first package of austerity measures.

- In 1989 he was an adviser of the then coalition government and contributed to the establishment (via supplying with licences) of the private mobile phone companies.

- He was for eight years to 2002 the director of the Bank of Greece, and a special advisor to the then Pasok prime minister Simitis. He contributed to the cooking of the statistics and the fiddling of the books which enabled Greece to

Decisions shaped by class interests

In *Solidarity* 224 Les Hearn argued for socialists to welcome some of the latest developments in nuclear technology as one alternative, amongst others, to fossil fuels. Stuart Jordan debates the issues.

This year a group of scientists in Tel Aviv successfully replaced a part of a rat's brain with a computer chip. This remarkable achievement could be the first step, along with other developments such as cochlear implants and prosthetic limbs, to a future human civilisation where human organs are enhanced by machines — a world of cyborgs.

Whether or not such technologies are desirable will not be the subject of democratic debate or at least not a debate of equals.

We live at a time when our productive forces are such that any decisions about technological development could determine the future of human civilisation. Yet, under capitalism, these decisions will be made in the board rooms of multi-national corporations and in the most secretive and unaccountable enclaves of the capitalist state. Our task as socialists is to fight for a world where these decisions are placed under democratic control. In the meantime we seek to mobilise a movement to contest the capitalists' right to make these decisions unilaterally.

THE NUCLEAR DEBATE

Over the past few years, *Workers Liberty* has developed policy on environmental issues, drawing on the largely forgotten ecological works of classical Marxism. In 2009 this led to the development of policy that included opposition to nuclear energy. In light of Les Hearn's contributions on the benefits of thorium-based nuclear technology I think it is worth revisiting this question, although not necessarily for the reasons that Les sets out.

Les's position is one common in the green movement but somewhat alien to level-headed Marxist analysis. His concern is that the level of CO₂ emissions are so great that we are almost certainly heading for an ecological catastrophe. At best this would be a serious setback for the socialist project. At worst it could threaten the existence of life on earth.

Horrified at this prospect Les searches around for solutions and finds a technological fix. He then throws his weight behind the pro-nuclear lobby. He minimises the problems of high-grade waste and nuclear weapons proliferation and maximises the negative ecological consequences of renewables.

His gloss of scientific rigour is somewhat doubtful. For instance in his May 2011 article (*Solidarity* 203, <http://bit.ly/qffeKv>) he spun Axel Klieidon's research on earth systems and thermodynamics to claim that heat pollution from wind turbines would cause climate change.

Actually the article said that if wind turbines were used to harness 70tW of "free energy" (over four times the amount we currently consume in fossil fuels) then it would have a similar global warming effect as doubling the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Even without Les's sensationalist spin, leading climate scientists challenged Klieidon's modelling and maths (e.g., he ignores the amount of heat energy currently produced by non-renewables). Klieidon's research is not an argument for slowing down on wind turbine development.

The Marxist method is to stare reality squarely in the face and then base our programme on the analysis that follows. It is vital that we use the best science to inform our discussion, not use the science to back up a pre-conceived political conclusion. The productive powers now at our disposal mean that any decisions that are made will determine the future direction of human civilisation. We should take this democratic responsibility seriously.

Workers' Liberty's approach starts with the two key contributions of classical Marxism to ecological issues. This first is Marx's theory of the metabolic rift which describes how capitalist production despoils nature and depletes the world's natural resources. The second is the understanding of the inter-relationships between developing technology, social relations, the reproduction of everyday life, relations between humanity and nature, and mental conceptions and ideology.

Marx saw that widespread commodity production fundamentally changed humanity's relationship with nature. In pre-capitalist times, there was a relatively limited division of labour. Production was overwhelmingly concerned with servicing the needs of the local population. The waste of human consumption — excrement, ash, dead bodies and general detritus — was returned to the soil and unwittingly human civilisation was able to maintain the fertility of the soil for thousands of years.

With the development of commodity production this changes. Production becomes increasingly complex with an increasingly specialised division of labour, seen most clearly in the separation of town and country. In these circum-

Punch cartoon of the year of the "Great Stink," 1858: a polluted Father Thames presents his offspring [Diphtheria, Cholera, Scrofula] to the fair City of London

stances, the produce of the soil is transported hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles and the waste of human consumption becomes concentrated in polluted rivers, landfill and is burnt to pollute the atmosphere. As Marx says: "In London, they find no better use for the excretion of four and a half million human beings than to contaminate the Thames with it at heavy expense".

When Marx talks about the "metabolic rift" he is describing a waste management problem that is part of the very structure of capitalist societies. Capitalist production seizes the natural resources of the earth, transforms them through multiple production processes and then sends them to market. At the point of sale, the value contained in those commodities returns to the capitalist so that the whole process can start again. The act of consumption and the resulting waste are kept strictly off the balance sheet. As Marx says, "The movement of capital is both the starting point and the concluding point, and this certainly also involves consumption for the commodity, the product, has to be sold. But once this is assumed to have happened, it is immaterial, for the movement of individual capital, what later becomes of this commodity." (*Capital* Vol. 2)

State intervention (eg, rubbish collection, sanitation, emissions trading schemes) limits capitalism's twin tendencies of resource depletion and despoilation of nature. Or if the damage is already done and has created a new ecological necessities, then new industries spring up to cope with the new situation. Thus, as capitalist farming turned Britain's agricultural lands into deserts, entrepreneurial colonists made their fortunes in the mining and shipping of guano, and later with chemical fertilizers. As Marx explains "In capitalist society...any kind of social rationality asserts itself post festum [lit. after the feast]" (*Capital* Vol. 2).

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

A socialist approach, where democratic planning replaces ecological and social fire-fighting, needs to consider the effects of technological development on our future social and ecological development.

David Harvey suggests a footnote in chapter 15 of *Capital* Vol.1 provides a criteria by which we judge new technologies: "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them." Whether or not significant capital investment is ploughed into uranium-fuelled nuclear reactors or building up the infrastructure and technology for thorium-based, nuclear power will have an effect on the way our descendants relate to each other, how they relate to their environment, and to the way they think.

The story of thorium technology is instructive. In 1950s Alvin Weinberg developed the first successful Molten Salt Reactor using thorium as the main fuel. This technology had many advantages over uranium based technology. It had a higher neutron yield, a better fission rating, longer fuel cycle, a failsafe shutdown system. It can burn up much of the nuclear waste legacy and old bombs and it cannot be adapted to produce weapons-grade plutonium. However, the technology was almost entirely abandoned.

Professor Bob Cynwinski of the University of Huddersfield suggested that the need for weapons-grade plutonium led to thorium technology being abandoned. It is also arguable that the project was not economically attractive. Like

any nuclear facility, thorium reactors involve a large initial investment in fixed capital. However, the plant can virtually run itself. From a capitalist point of view this means an enormous initial investment combined with very low levels of exploited labour.

Despite the fact that thorium-based nuclear power promised the elusive goal of "too-cheap-to-meter" electricity, capitalist social relations (in the form of both nuclear cold war and exploitation of labour) required that this technology was abandoned. Les's blanket support for all nuclear technology fails to recognise this history and the way in which technological decisions are shaped by class interests.

Les is right that we cannot tolerate an energy shortfall, least of all at a time when we are entering a period of ecological crisis. A communist society would be one that seeks to heal the metabolic rift by democratically planning so that all (or nearly all) waste products are recycled. And the greatest rift of our times is the huge quantity of carbon dioxide and methane in the earth's atmosphere, chemicals that were once securely fixed in the earth's crust. But as David Schwarzmann demonstrates in his essay, "Solar Communism", if we are able to harness enough energy, human civilisation will be able to repair the rift and move forward to an ecologically sustainable future.

Schwarzmann, against Klieidon, calculates that the amount of solar flux (solar energy that hits the earth and then bounces back to space) is enormous compared to the current energy requirements. The use of fossil fuels adds only 0.03% of the normal solar flux to the global heat budget. The far larger problem is the water vapour, carbon dioxide and methane that creates a greenhouse effect and traps some of this flux back into the Earth's atmosphere. "A solar-based world economy would not affect the Earth's surface heat budget (except in its initial parasitic phase, relying on fossil fuels and nuclear power), providing the tapping of solar energy involves no net transfers of carbon dioxide, methane or other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere/ocean system (eg, by deforestation, flooding from big hydropower projects)."

Ultimately, I think our communist descendants will need to develop such a solar based economy and a system of total (or near total) recycling. However, we have to recognise that this technology remains, at best, a technical possibility. At present there are no means of harnessing solar energy without relying heavily on fossil fuels and nuclear technology. And if we are simultaneously hit by peak oil and escalating ecological crisis, then nuclear energy will at least provide us with some limited fire-power.

Our previous opposition to nuclear technology was based on the actually existing nuclear projects proposed by the UK government. While some of these projects can be converted to use some thorium fuel, the MSR's and similar technology will need to be developed and built from scratch. These technologies seem to be in accord with our ecological principles, not least in removing a large portion of the nuclear waste legacy and thus fulfilling the role of healing a metabolic rift. The investment necessary to develop the technology and the infrastructure for thorium nuclear energy is considerable and there is a danger that vested interests will tie us into uranium nuclear power for the next few generations.

Where we can we should intervene in this struggle and fight in the labour movement for workers' control of research, development and investment decisions.

Anti-euro? Anti-capitalist?

By Rhodri Evans

Should the left campaign for Greece to quit the euro? Or should it campaign for anti-capitalist demands, accepting that this may lead to a break-up of the euro, but aiming for a united Europe restructured on different lines?

That was the key issue of dispute in a well-attended debate in London on 12 November, organised as part of the annual conference convened by the journal *Historical Materialism*.

The platform speakers were:

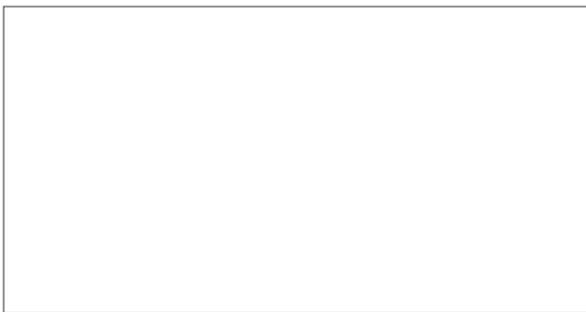
- The French Marxist economist Michel Husson, speaking to the approach he advocated in *Solidarity* 224 (www.workersliberty.org/node/17731);
- Costas Lapavistas, a professor of economics at SOAS in London, who has also presented his views in *Solidarity* (www.workersliberty.org/node/14252);
- Ozlem Onaran, a lecturer in economics at Middlesex University.

Husson summarised the arguments in his *Solidarity* 224 article. He argued that although the euro has been botched, the crisis may well lead to its breakup, and working-class struggles may speed a break-up, it is wrong to pose quitting the euro as a left-wing objective, or as a starting point.

A campaign for three points — monetisation of the debt by the European Central Bank [i.e. the ECB buying up troubled states' IOUs], cancellation of part of the debt, and nationalisation of the banks — could point instead towards a united Europe reshaped by working-class struggles.

The logic of quitting the euro is one of states seeking to deal with the crisis by competitive devaluation, and thus a nationalist one.

Lapavistas started by declaring that “the European working class has no stake in the euro”. The euro serves European banks and big business, facilitates an imperial hierarchy in Europe headed by Germany, and is a trap for the countries of the periphery.



Michel Husson

It cannot be reformed in the interests of the working class, and it cannot even be reformed to deal with the current crisis, because it is based on the principle that the core states will not help out the periphery.

Greece should go for a debtor-led default, which would “not be a tea party” but could be followed by a programme of capital controls, nationalisation of banks, redistribution of income, industrial policy, and cleansing of the corrupt state machine.

Onaran argued a view close to Husson's. The demand for this or that country to leave the euro would not be a productive way of building a united left-wing platform across Europe. An exit from the euro might follow from a battle for left-wing policies, but that is a different matter.

An exit, in and of itself, implies competitive devaluation by the exiting countries, a radical fall in real wages in those countries, and an economic great depression across Europe. The idea that it could bring progress is reminiscent of the illusions of “socialism in one country”.

Debate on the floor was lively. Oddly, most of the activist left groups took no part, and it is hard to deduce what they think from their press. They say that the big capitalist governments do not know what to do, but without indicating they themselves know what the labour movement

should do, other than in general terms to favour socialism.

The Socialist Party says: “The present crisis shows ever more clearly that capitalism is incapable of overcoming the limits of the nation state”. *Socialist Worker* observes a “crisis of capitalist leadership” and says: “Many politicians would like to integrate the eurozone into a fiscal union, with one powerful central government to try and overcome this. Others call for breaking it up. Neither would solve the economic problems that underlie the crisis”.

Ozlem Onaran is affiliated with the “Mandelite” current linked to the NPA in France, but that current did not intervene as such.

Martin Thomas from AWL intervened from the floor. Even if the European working class has no stake in the euro, he said, it does have a stake in reducing barriers between nations in Europe, and in establishing a common programme across Europe for itself.

It is fallacious to present the eurozone as a completely rigid structure from which the working class can force no concessions, and a euro-exited Greece, under a bourgeois government, as an environment where the working class can easily extract favourable policies.

Summing up, Lapavistas criticised the Greek left for not campaigning sharply for exit from the euro (which it doesn't, although some segments of the Greek left are generally anti-EU). He said that the euro is breaking-up anyway, and if the left does not lead the exit, then “people in uniforms” will. Default and exit can be key demands towards socialism, as bread, land, and peace were in 1917.

Husson remonstrated that for the left to campaign against the euro would present the problem as not one between classes, but one between one's own country and Germany. In France, he said, the far-right Front National is the only force which makes “quit the euro” its campaigning demand.

Onaran concurred. Both in Spain and in Ireland, she said, the activist left is clear that it would be diversionary to propose to campaign for exit from the euro.

Socialists and Europe

By Gerry Bates

Nations have not always existed. In Europe, the growth of trade created units with a common language, culture, laws, tax systems and communications, the nation states which developed between the 16th and 19th centuries.

But then a contradiction developed. The capitalist economy became more and more tied up with the nation state. Today, even after all the Tory talk about “rolling back the state”, the state is still a tremendous factor in the British economy. Over 30% of national income passes through the hands of the state. On the other hand there is a tendency for capital to outgrow the limits of the nation state, to become more and more international and global.

So capitalism creates nation states and ties itself to them, but also overflows those limits. In Europe this contradiction has been managed in different ways at different times. In the first part of the 20th century it was managed by trade wars and by world wars.

After 1951, the capitalist states of Western Europe tried to manage it in a different way — by edging towards unification of those states. The background was:

- The semi-destruction of the European states' colonial empires after World War Two;
- The weakness of their economies then, which meant they were under the US's thumb;
- That the US wanted a stable Western Europe which would be a bulwark against the USSR and a better arena for the American multinationals.

Paradoxically, although the European Union has developed to provide a bigger home market for European capitalist corporations to compete with American companies, it was also a development pushed on Europe by American capital.

The development went from the European Coal and Steel Community of 1951 (France, Germany, Italy, Benelux), step by step through to successive enlargements and to the creation of the euro at the start of 1999. We cannot respond by seeing what the capitalists want and proposing the opposite. We cannot simply put a minus where the ruling class puts a plus. If we did that we would lose all independence of judgement.

We are for the breaking down of barriers between nations, and for larger political units. The reason why have not “supported” the slow semi-unification of Europe over the last 60 years is that the capitalist classes have done it *in their own way*, not that we prefer higher barriers between nations.

The bosses have constructed a very bureaucratic, undemocratic and wasteful unity, with a deliberate policy of high food prices, for example, and higher barriers against immigrants from outside Europe while barriers inside Europe are reduced.

We oppose those things — but not by counterposing the British state and the past to Europe and the present.

Britain did not join the EEC (forerunner of the EU) when it was first set up in 1957, or for a further 15 years. There was nothing progressive or socialistic about its staying out. Of all the powers in Europe, Britain had by far the biggest empire remaining after World War 2 and the closest economic links with the US. The British ruling class could look to an economic policy oriented towards the old Empire and to the US.

Also, in the time around Britain's entry into the European Union in 1972, many in the British labour movement felt they were in a stronger position than labour movements in continental Europe. It was a sort of national self-satisfaction. They believed that in Britain the unions had the ear of the government, and in a broader Europe it would not be so easy.

It was a sort of “reformist capitalism in one country” doctrine.

NOSTALGIA

As Marxists we have no sympathy for the nostalgia, the desire to orient to a declining Empire and the US, or for “reformist capitalism in one country”.

In debates over whether Britain should join the European Union, we refused to take sides. We would not favour entry, because of the capitalist, undemocratic nature of the European Union, and neither would we oppose it by saying “Keep Britain Out”. No matter what the capitalists decided, we said, our answer must be Europe-wide workers' unity.

When British entry into the EU was first mooted in 1962-3, the Communist Party (then strong) opposed it, trading on the labour movement's national self-satisfaction but really motivated by the USSR's desire to keep West European powers disunited and at odds with each other. The (right-wing) Labour Party leadership also opposed it, counterposing “the Commonwealth” (ex-Empire).

All the Trotskyist currents rejected the CP and Labour leadership lines. They argued that the job of Marxists was to counterpose Europe-wide workers' unity against both capitalist options, “in” or “out”.

As Britain moved closer to entry, and labour-movement agitation against entry grew, however, the would-be Trotskyist currents bent under the pressure and shifted to a

“keep Britain out” stance. The now-defunct Socialist Labour League, then the biggest would-be Trotskyist group and the one that made most noise about being “revolutionary” and “intransigent”, was the first to make that opportunist turn. Others followed. The last was IS (forerunner of the SWP) in 1971. The only group that stuck to its principles was Workers' Fight, forerunner of the AWL.

In 1999 an inner core of the European Union adopted a single currency, the euro. The aim was to reduce the risks and costs of trade within the EU, and to give an impulse towards a uniform financial system in the EU, to economic integration, and to genuine European multinationals (whose base would be Europe rather than a particular European state).

The venture was botched. We said so at the time. The Maastricht Treaty, which was supposed to install the conditions required for the single currency, had about as much to do with its viability as a university degree in classics had to do with showing that people were the “proper sort” to run India in the heyday of the British Empire.

The EU bosses reckoned that a government prepared to cut in the way demanded by the Maastricht conditions would be the “proper sort” of government to take part in the single currency. A single currency gave more opportunities to run budget deficits than the separate currencies, and the big powers in the EU wanted to restrict that. In fact those big powers themselves soon breached the Maastricht conditions, which became little more than a wishlist.

EU chiefs gave the European Central Bank undemocratic powers and a mandate to keep inflation low at all costs and never to bail out governments.

Thus we did not endorse the EU's single-currency project. We did not say “no” to the single currency, either, and for the same reasons that we do not say just “no” to the general tendency of the internationalisation of capitalism.

The immediate alternative to the single currency is and was not a socialist Europe, but a capitalist Europe with greater economic barriers between nations. That is not a better option for the working class.

One currency or many is a matter for the capitalists. It is not our job to give the capitalists advice. We are in favour of a single currency in principle. We were against the way the euro was introduced, and against the people doing it.

Our answer is workers' unity, and a fight for levelling up of benefits, pensions, wages, conditions, union rights across Europe. It is a fight for democracy in Europe, and towards a socialist Europe.

[Adapted from *Workers' Liberty* 53].

Why governments always run debts

By Colin Foster

A five-pound note carries the words: “I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of five pounds”, signed by the cashier of the Bank of England. Until 1931 (though with breaks around wars), you could take a five-pound note to the Bank of England and get the equivalent value in gold.

Now, all the Bank of England will “pay the bearer on demand” is... another five-pound note. Money, in Britain as in other countries, is a system of never-paid-off IOUs from the government (or rather from the central bank linked to the government). Those IOUs function as universal equivalent because of laws saying that they can validly discharge any debt and because they represent an aliquot of future British labour time.

So why then do governments run *another* system of IOUs — bonds (repayable after periods of over one year, commonly after 10 years) and bills (repayable after periods shorter than one year) — on which they have to pay interest?

If they run short of cash, why don't they just print, or get their central banks to print, more banknote-type IOUs, instead of issuing more bonds or bills? Why do they sell bond-IOUs in order only to get back their own (banknote) IOUs?

And why do they run such *big* debts? Often governments run debts as big or bigger than the country's annual gross domestic product, so maybe about three times as big as the government's annual revenue.

Households sometimes run big debts to buy houses. But they do that with a view to paying off the debt over a time, usually 25 years. And until they have paid off the debt, the bank or whoever else has lent the money remains the owner of the house, and can repossess it.

Government debts are different. Bondholders have no claim over the government's buildings, land, or other physical assets. And the government borrows, not in order to acquire any particular new physical asset, but generally just to help cover current spending.

The system of national debt originates with wars, and decisively with the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) which “encumbered each power with unprecedented amounts of accumulated debts — debts that formed the eventual basis for national debts as we know them today” [1].

For a long time some politicians, and then numerous cranks, talked wistfully of “paying off the national debt”. But governments never got close to that. Burgeoning capitalism found that the national debt, and the system of financial markets built on it as a baseline, suited it very well.

The system of national debt means that firms and financiers can readily convert spare cash into a “fictitious” form of *capital* (wealth which yields income), and just as readily convert it back again. Nothing else in the financial markets does quite the same trick of quick-change between cash and capital.

In universities these days, business management students are instructed that government bonds, in greater or lesser (or sometimes, by arcane financial manipulation, *negative*) quantities, are an essential element of every “portfolio” of wealth. Government bonds are an essential lubricant of financial markets.

Far from being an unnecessary addition to cash (banknote-IOUs), bonds (time-limited, interest-bearing IOUs)

are central to the way that new cash gets into the economic system. When the Bank of England wants to pump more cash into the system, it goes onto the financial markets and buys up government bonds. Very occasionally, it does “quantitative easing” — buying up other sorts of interest-bearing paper, and thus replacing them in circulation by cash. When it wants to reduce the stock of cash in circulation, it sells government bonds from its stock.

National debt ties governments tightly yet unobtrusively, almost automatically, to the interests of the bondholders, which these days are mostly banks and financial firms operating in the global markets.

The Cameron government's bluster about “paying off the debt” is nonsense. No capitalist government pays off its debt; it only pays off old IOUs and replaces them by new ones. The British government sells new bonds almost every week. All the government even claims is to reduce the deficit — the rate at which the government debt *increases*.

There are good and reasonable arguments, within the logic of capitalist economic management, that the Cameron government's aimed-for deficit reduction is too fast and too soon, and in any case may backfire. If a government tries to reduce its deficit too quickly, by cutting its expenditure, then it increases unemployment and depresses households' and firms' spending. It cuts its own tax revenues, and so the deficit-reduction drive may well produce an *increase* in the deficit.

Government debt is an integral part of capitalism, and operates to serve the interests of the rich. When the rich suddenly raise an outcry about the debt being excessive, or needing to be reduced soon or fast, they have some other motive than financial prudence.

[1] bit.ly/debtorig

KARL MARX ON GOVERNMENT DEBT

“[With the] national debt... a negative quantity appears as capital — just as interest-bearing capital, in general, is the fountainhead of all manner of insane forms, so that debts, for instance, can appear to the banker as commodities...”

“The system of public credit, i.e., of national debts, whose origin we discover in Genoa and Venice as early as the Middle Ages, took possession of Europe generally during the manufacturing period... National debt, i.e., the alienation of the state — whether despotic, constitutional or republican — marked with its stamp the capitalistic era. The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of modern peoples is their national debt...”

“The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The state creditors actually give nothing away, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable, which go on functioning in their hands just as so much hard cash would.

“But further, apart from the class of lazy annuitants thus created, and from the improvised wealth of the financiers, middlemen between the government and the nation — as also apart from the tax-farmers, merchants, private manufacturers, to whom a good part of every national loan ren-

ders the service of a capital fallen from heaven — the national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds, and to agiotage, in a word to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy...”

“With the national debt arose an international credit system...”

“As the national debt finds its support in the public revenue, which must cover the yearly payments for interest, etc., the modern system of taxation was the necessary complement of the system of national loans. The loans enable the government to meet extraordinary expenses, without the tax-payers feeling it immediately, but they necessitate, as a consequence, increased taxes. On the other hand, the raising of taxation caused by the accumulation of debts contracted one after another, compels the government always to have recourse to new loans for new extraordinary expenses...”

[*Capital* vol. 3 (first para), and vol. 1 (remainder)]

WALL STREET

“A large, liquid market in government debt [i.e. a market so active that every buyer can find sellers, and every seller can find buyers], with a central bank at its core, is the base of modern financial systems.

“Central banks manage their domestic money supply through the purchase and sale of official paper, and historically government borrowers have usually been at the vanguard of the development of a national financial system...”

“Practically speaking, interest rates on public debts act as a benchmark for the rest of the credit system; interest rates for borrowers other than a central government — state and local governments, households, corporations — are usually set in reference to government rates at the same maturity. Markets in general seem to need benchmarks like this...”

“Public paper [i.e. debt, or bonds, the bits of paper which certify you hold government debt] is a nice mechanism for profit making and income redistribution. It provides rich underwriting and trading profits for investment bankers and interest income for individual and institutional rentiers, courtesy of nonrich taxpayers... Instead of taxing rich people, governments borrow from them, and pay them interest for the privilege...”

“Government debt not only promotes the development of a central national capital market, it promotes the development of a world capital market as well. Short-term paper like treasury bills — places that investors can park short-term cash — is important for a currency's admission to world markets...”

“Modern versions [of financial markets] took shape first in Amsterdam in the 17th century and then in London in the 18th, with the growth of government debt and corporate shares. Free-market ideology to the contrary, the role of government debt in the development of finance can't be exaggerated... What was being established were markets to claims to future income — fictitious capital, in Marx's famous phrase... This enables a whole class to own an economy's productive assets, rather than being bound to a specific property as they once were.

“The transformation of a future stream of dividend or interest payments into an easily tradeable capital asset is the founding principle of all financial markets...”

[Doug Henwood, *Wall Street*, bit.ly/henwood]

New Zealand: class-based Maori party formed

By Bill Holmes

A new political movement allying social justice and indigenous rights is gathering strength in New Zealand in the run up to the general election.

Maori-led and class-based, the Mana movement began a few months ago as a localised group contesting a by-election, which they won, and has become a national structure fighting on a number of policies which are for the most part socialist. Though Maori-based, it is not exclusively Maori; some of its leading representatives are European-origin NZers, and it tries to reach out to Islander-origin people.

In the upcoming election they are contesting not just Maori-specific seats but also general list and general seats.

It is worth exploring what it means to be Maori and working class. The vast majority of Maoris are marginalised and working class, but the development of class consciousness within them as a distinct racial grouping has developed relatively recently — pre-Western Maori society had no concept of private property and a lack of surplus meant capitalism did not exist.

Now 80% of Maoris are urbanised and de-tribalised. That has done more to create a distinct Maori identity than any former tribal structure. Maoris, unlike Native Americans, were not forced onto reserves but integrated and allowed to claim protection for tribal sites.

Mike Kyriazopoulos, a member of the New Zealand Workers' Party, thinks there is a “healthy democratic space” inside Mana, which will allow socialists to organise. It is thought on the New Zealand left that more upper- and middle-class elements of Maori society will be drawn to the Maori Party and the Alliance, rather than to the class-conscious politics of Mana.

Many Mana members are happy to discuss socialist ideas, says Mike, even without yet identifying themselves as being in a socialist tradition, while some activists do talk about revolution.

Around 60% of activists within Mana are women, and members include trade unionists and the unemployed.

Policies put forward by Mana include:

- Troops out of Afghanistan
- A Tobin tax and abolition of VAT
- Free school meals

- Social housing building programme.
- Increasing the minimum wage to two-thirds of the average wage

They also have a robust environmental policy which includes the idea of a just transition for workers in the fossil fuel industry.

There are some worrying policies, such as calls for New Zealand residents to be given priority in jobs which sound similar to the “British jobs for British workers” slogan in the UK.

However the potential of the Mana movement is that it can pull Maori issues which are class-based away from a nationalist ideology. Separate Maori parliamentary seats have existed for 100 years. Mana wants to keep them for as long as Maoris want them. But Mana activists seem open to politics based on equality rather than separateness.

A movement which offers a left-wing alternative and provides a space within which socialists can organise should be welcomed by the New Zealand far left.

New Zealand goes to the polls on 26 November. More: mana.net.nz

Rank-and-file control on N30

By Patrick Murphy, Leeds National Union of Teachers (pc), and Ira Berkovic

It now looks as if events in Leeds on 30 November will be lively and big, but only after local trade unions decided they had to take control of organ-

ising for themselves in the face of an attempt by the regional TUC to shape the day without consulting us.

The Yorkshire Region TUC set up a small sub-committee which planned four rallies across the region (in Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds and Hull). The plan is for each of the

'bigwig' speakers to be followed by a couple of 'ordinary workers', and to have the whole thing completed within 30-45 minutes.

The timings of these rallies were based on what was convenient for the imposed speakers and not what best suited the workers and unions actually taking the action.

The 'ordinary worker' speakers have been given a really tight remit too. They are there to talk about how much hardship they would suffer if these pension changes came in. No politics, no mentioning of what should be done next, just a couple of sob stories. The 'bigwig' would be entirely in control of setting the political tone.

ORGANISING

It was obvious to those of us organising on the ground that we weren't going to be allowed much say in this.

It has also been revealed recently who the main speaker is to be in Leeds and Bradford and suffice to say there won't be many people coming specially to hear him. If this was all that happened we would manage the amazing feat of having a much bigger strike than 30 June but with a much less impressive public event.

In response the local trade unionists who had

previously organised for 30 June have met together a number of times, invited the unions balloting to join the action and planned our own event.

ASSEMBLE

All Leeds trade unionists and their supporters are asked to assemble at Woodhouse Moor (just north of the city centre and University) with flags, banners etc from 10am for a rally with local speakers organised by Leeds TUC starting at 10.30.

We won't be boycotting the regional event, in fact we expect to form by far the largest part of it.

We will be leaving Woodhouse Moor soon after 11am for a march into town to join the TUC rally which starts at Victoria Gardens at 12.

Various groups of workers and campaigners are hoping to organise feeder marches from picket lines, schools, colleges and offices to join us at 10am and create a mass march into town.

● **Nationally, more and more unions are returning ballots in favour of the strike.**

As we go to press ballot results among Unite and GMB members were due to be announced. Strong votes were in favour of strike ac-

tion were expected.

Senior civil servants' unions FDA and Prospect have returned large majorities in favour, on relatively high turnouts.

FDA members voted by 81% in favour of the strike on a 54% turnout, with Prospect voting by 75% on a 52% turnout.

Several specialist unions in healthcare have also voted by large margins to join the strike.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (86% on a 66% turnout), The Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists (85% on a 52% turnout) and The Society of Radiographers (84% on a 58% turnout) will all be joining the 30 November day of action.

CONFIDENCE

The challenge for activists in the weeks remaining is to build the strike in workplaces.

We must ensure that even those who didn't vote in ballots are given the confidence to take action.

Workplace meetings and local strike committees are essential to provide channels through which ordinary union members can take control of their own dispute and discuss the next steps after 30 November.

This battle is far too important to be left to the top union leaders.

Organising in Northampton

By a teacher activist

We started from a fairly healthy position because Northampton NUT took a lead in getting the Trades Council to set up a strike committee in the run-up to the June 30 strike.

The strike committee has been reactivated recently to prepare for N30, though we having to address the problem of the Regional TUC sending union bureaucrats down to run the show.

Fortunately, the Trades Council was able to convene a strike committee meeting this week at which the one nominated Unite bureaucrat present had to more or less behave himself.

The NUT meeting passed an amended version of the AWL motion. The paragraph on workers' government was removed, but there was a good political discussion about what sort of strategy was necessary to win — now and in the longer term.

It now seems that the decisions agreed by the strike committee are to be subjected to a further meeting called by the nominated representative of the Regional TUC.

Quite why this meeting has been convened remains to be seen.

Support in Sheffield

On 10 November, the DWP Sheffield (frontline workers) branch of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) passed a motion based on the AWL's model motion on the N30 strikes (tinyurl.com/n30modelmotion) with amendments regarding the formation of a cross-union Sheffield strike committee and an ongoing local strategy.

This motion was passed unanimously in the branch, which is an achievement in itself: although the branch's political line has largely been shaped by the Independent Left group (of which AWL comrades are a part), many of those on the current Branch Executive Committee are new, and some are relatively right-wing in PCS terms.

The solid support for

the motion seemed to be due to the general agreement that the union leadership had failed to build on the energy and momentum around the 30 June strike, and develop it into a winning campaign. These thoughts were discussed by existing AWL, IL, and independent members alike.

What is more interesting is that this particular branch meeting was attended by PCS leader Mark Serwotka as guest speaker. Despite 40 minutes of explaining why the leadership thought selective action was "weak", and that all action taken must now be based on unity with other unions, he didn't even manage to persuade the members in the room of Left Unity (a grouping which is usually supportive of Serwotka's leadership).

Defend Pat Markey!

By an NUT activist

Pat Markey, a teacher at Duston School in Northampton for 17 years and branch secretary of Northampton NUT, is facing dismissal from his teaching job.

His crime? Being a trade unionist activist and campaigning for the principles of comprehensive education and in defence of trade union rights.

Faced with the withdrawal of one day per week union facility time as a result of the school attempting to become an academy, local trade unionists understood that this was an attack on the broader trade union move-

ment. They organised a protest outside the school, which involved erecting a gazebo which symbolized the union office. The chant of "where's Pat Markey?" was taken up by numerous students on their way into

school.

Rather than see this as a good-humoured but serious attempt to reopen negotiations about the issue, school management suspended Pat Markey. He now faces dismissal at a disciplinary hearing next week.

NUT members at Duston School have voted to strike in the event of Pat's dismissal, but may well come under pressure not to strike from school management.

• Messages of support to NUT members at Duston School should be sent to the acting NUT Rep, Dean Cornwall at dean2k@hotmail.com

lating action rather than incidental one-day strikes. New branches to pass the motion include Northampton National Union of Teachers and the Sheffield DWP branch of the PCS union.

To download the motion, see tinyurl.com/n30modelmotion.

Make Labour support the strike

By Darren Bedford

Some Labour councillors, and some full councils, have now declared their support for the 30 November strike.

Labour councillors in Islington were lambasted by their Tory counterparts for supporting the strike, and a motion in support of the action was passed by Lambeth's Labour council on Wednesday 9 November. The motion, which "supports local government employees in defending their pension scheme", was passed by a margin of 40 votes to 17, while a Lib Dem amendment which asked trade unions not to take strike action was voted down by 18 to 39. In Tower Hamlets, former Labour councillor Rania Khan (now part of an independent minority administration at the Labour-majority council) told a meeting of shop stewards on Tuesday 8 November that the council would put its resources at their disposal on the day of the strike.

Trade unions should demand that Labour Party MPs and councillors make good on such promises. Will the promised support

from Khan amount to mere words, or will the town hall be shut and councillors on picket lines?

Some local Labour Parties, including CLPs in East Leeds and Enfield Southgate in North London, are organising support for the strike including pre-strike rallies and leafleting. Both Unison and GMB have produced model motions for

union delegates to take to CLPs demanding that the Labour Party support the strike.

Support from the Labour Party could add significant political weight to the strike; the Labour-union link should be used to make sure that weight is brought to bear.

Huge win for Carlisle cleaners

Union officials have hailed a "groundbreaking" achievement by cleaning workers employed by Carlisle Cleaning and Support Services (CCSS) on the Virgin West Coast Mainline, who called off a planned 48-hour strike after bosses agreed to their demand for a 10% pay rise.

The workers will receive a 5% rise immediately, with an increase of a further 5% phased in over the next 10 months.

The latest victory means that, when the full increase is implemented, the workers will have secured wage increases of nearly 25% in total since last June, moving from £5.80 to £7.12 an

hour. Impellam Group, the company which owns CCSS, saw a 30% increase in its profits in the past year but initially refused to budge from its pay offer of just 1%.

The campaign, which involved a solid 24-hour strike on 28 October, explodes the myth that workers cannot win better pay during a recession.

Craig Johnston, Regional Organiser for the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT), said:

"The solidarity that was shown across the West Coast network when we were on the picket lines was fantastic. Our members have been successful."

A rank-and-file strategy for 30 November: pass this motion!

A growing list of labour-movement bodies has now passed a version of the AWL's model motion for the 30 November strike.

The motion sets out a rank-and-file strategy for the dispute and argues for workers to set up local committees to provide a

counterweight to bureaucratic control of the strike and the danger of sell-out. It also argues that unions should set out a programme for the next set of actions now, rather than waiting until after 30 November, and that these actions should include rolling, selective and esca-

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Don't cut Sure Start!

By Rosalind Robson

The government's own figures say there are now 124 fewer Sure Start centres than there were when the coalition took office.

Sure Start Centres provide childcare, play opportunities for under fives as well as support for parents such as healthcare and job training.

For children, for parents, for the poorest families headed-up by single parents, and women in particular they have been — or at least could have been — a life line.

Before the last election Cameron said, "Not only do we back Sure Start, but we will improve it, because at the moment the people who need Sure Start the most — disadvantaged families — are not getting enough of the benefit."

But services for children and youth were some of hardest hit in last year's round of local government cuts.

With the new year will come a second round of council cuts. Many more of the 3,500 centres will close or be merged with others.

These centres, despite usual problems with bureaucratic "delivery", were made stronger by the fact they were universal — intended for entire communities — rather than for the "most needy". Services that are "designed" for the most needy are services that are cut to the bone.

How cuts like these —

against the background of a worsening economic crisis — will affect the everyday lives of working-class people and working-class women in particular will be the central discussion of the AWL's conference "Is this as Good As it Gets?" on 26 November.

This crisis, and how the left and the labour movement responds, will define political life for us all for years and maybe decades into this century. The political problems thrown up by the new conditions will be complex, varied and require us to educate ourselves. That is the aim of this conference.

While we know the cuts will disproportionately affect women, in the main working-class women, the existing response from "mainstream" labour movement and feminist organisations, are passive and weak. This weekend a Fawcett Society demonstration will march in defence of women's rights. Yes, we will march for that! But the main plank of their campaigning is for a judicial review of the budget.

We need much more: bloody-minded fights against cuts in every area, occupations of Children's Centres if threatened with closure, labour-movement based campaigns that focus on those that will be hardest hit.

How do we get there? Come along to the conference and take part in the discussion!

Kettled electricians 9 November. Photo: Tim Dalinian Jones

The police are a lethal weapon

By Vicki Morris

In the days leading up to the student demonstration on 9 November, the Metropolitan Police announced that police would be able to fire plastic bullets [aka baton rounds] at protestors.

In Northern Ireland, between 1970-2005, 125,000 baton rounds were fired. They killed 17 people, the last in 1989. A larger number of people were permanently injured after being shot.

Plastic bullets are a so-called "less-lethal" weapon, allegedly to be used against individuals who pose an immediate

physical threat, by being armed and dangerous. Their use in policing was pioneered in Northern Ireland; their use in other parts of the UK approved in 2001.

After August's riots, Hugh Orde, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, came out against using plastic bullets against rioters. He had been responsible for their use in Northern Ireland: "I do not think it would be sensible in any way... to deploy water cannon or baton rounds in London. I would only deploy [baton rounds] in life-threatening situations. What is happening in London is not an

insurgency that is going to topple the country."

Yet, the Met said it was ready to break them out for the student demonstration on 9 November.

Part of the purpose of the police was to put people off marching. The Met also sent letters to people who had been charged in connection with previous political protests — e.g. the student demonstrations last autumn — warning them:

"It is in the public and your own interest that you do not involve yourself in any type of criminal or anti-social behaviour... Should you do so we will at the earliest opportunity arrest and place you before the court." (see <http://alturl.com/qp4mu>)

Part of their purpose was to avoid a repeat of any such event as the storming of Conservative Party HQ at Millbank Tower last year — they were under political pressure. But they also have their own agenda: to increase their own power.

Out of sight of most of the public, they have been "tooling up" for many years, since the last period of mass labour unrest in the late 1970s. They have a vast new armoury and range of techniques to use, including tasers and surveillance equipment.

The police can be lethal. Since 1969 there have been more than 1,000 deaths in police custody, yet there has not been one successful prosecution. Three people died after being shot with tasers during eight days this August. Mark Duggan was shot dead by police in Tottenham on 4 August, an event that sparked the riots.

A lot of police power was on display on 9 No-

vember. They had promised "total policing" on the day and 4,000 police were deployed to corral and herd 10,000 people through the streets of London. It has been called a "moving kettle".

On the day, riot police kettled several hundred electricians to prevent them joining the student march. They told young people they couldn't go and buy a sandwich. Uniformed officers arrested some hooded youngsters who climbed on scaffolding. "Plainclothes" officers, badly disguised to look like demonstrators, steamed into the crowd to snatch some targeted individual. Large areas of the City, beyond the demonstration route, were shut down by the police.

At their debriefing sessions that evening the Met presumably congratulated themselves on a job well done, a volatile force channelled and contained and a few techniques in crowd control honed. The rest of us went home with a sour taste in our mouths.

In the coming weeks and months many more protestors, including older trade unionists, will be seeing a lot more of the police, and how they keep "law and order". What that means in the context of policing protest, and even picket lines, is weighing in on the side of property and vested interest, upholding the cuts, the job losses, the privatisation.

The labour movement needs to take more of an interest in what force and techniques the police use. If we don't, they will do what they like to us.

10,000 students march against cuts

Despite threats of severe police repression and a police presence that amounted to a "moving kettle", 10,000 students from across the country

demonstrated in London today on the national demonstration against cuts to education and public services organised by the NCAFC.

Despite only token support from the National Union of Students, and a distinctly luke warm response from some NUS leadership-loyal student unions, SUs, student anticuts groups and trade unionists who want to see a serious fightback against the Tories' education policies mobilised an impressive and militant demonstration.

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